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Contesting History: The Unpublished Manuscripts of Benjamin Read

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Benjamin M. Read, Neomexicano Historian, Attorney, and Legislator
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Benjamin Maurice Read, born five years after the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, was a genuine son of the new "New Mexico." This southwestern land, isolated from the Spanish and Mexican governments that had ruled it in the past, was rapidly changing its way of life and emerging as an important center of commerce on the expanding United States frontier. New Mexico was part of the region that influential historian Frederick Jackson Turner would describe in 1893 as "a new field of opportunity, a gate of escape from the bondage of the past."[1] Just what this bondage signified, of course, depended on one's semiotic perspective. For Turner, the frontier experience advanced the cause of American institutions, built social democracy, and promoted "the formation of a composite nationality."[2] However, Turner gave little consideration to the indigenous and mestizo cultures that had made their home in the Southwest for centuries; his focus was the mix of Anglo European immigrants who had journeyed west in increasing numbers since the early nineteenth century to seek their fortunes and establish a western economic sphere free of eastern influence. Benjamin Read,

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whose heritage was both Anglo and Hispanic and who lived on that western frontier in its most turbulent years, could have enlightened Turner about the limitations of his Anglocentric thesis. Read's own devotion to the history of the southwestern frontier told from a different perspective offers an interesting counterpoint to Turner's notions of building an American nation and forging an American identity.

In my book, *Speaking for Themselves: Neomexicano Cultural Identity and the Spanish-Language Press, 1880–1920* (1996), I devote a chapter to Benjamin Read and a handful of other authors in New Mexico who tried to insert Hispanic voices into the telling of American history. My book, however, focuses only on Read's published works,[3] whereas in this paper I will explore some of his unpublished writings conserved among his papers in the New Mexico State Records Center and Archives in Santa Fe. Most significant among these are three manuscripts: a history of New Mexican contributions to American wars since its annexation as a territory; a biography of Hernán Cortés based on material unknown to Anglo historians of the conquest; and a translation of an unpublished biography of padre Antonio José Martínez, written by his foster son and Taos resident, Santiago Valdez. I will discuss these works briefly and comment on how they fit into Read's personal mission to redefine the role of Hispanics in American history.

Benjamin Read exemplified a kind of Neomexicano experience that does not fit the standard notion of the victimized Other. On both sides of his family, he could point to levels of education, achievement, and social standing shared by only a minority of Hispanic New Mexicans of his time. Read's particular position as a highly literate person of Mexican and Anglo descent enabled him to understand the texts and contexts of his life in a way that has rarely been documented in American history. His maternal grandfather, don Ignacio Cano, a native-born Mexican, came to the northern territories in the early nineteenth century and settled in the Ortiz mountains south of Santa Fe. There he became a landowner and prospector. To his good fortune, he struck a large vein of gold that led to the first gold rush in the Southwest in the 1830s.[4] Shortly after the outbreak of the Mexican-American War and American invasion in 1846, the don's daughter, Ignacia, met Benjamin Franklin Read, an Anglo government agent who had come to New Mexico with Brig. Gen. Stephen W. Kearny's troops. A Marylander of Quaker stock, Read was a nephew of a signer of the Declaration of Independence.[5] It is possible that the couple met when American troops undertook a survey of New Mexican mining ventures shortly after their arrival. In those days on the Santa Fe Trail,

the marriage of an Anglo newcomer to the daughter of a Mexican landowner would not have been unusual, for such unions were often considered economically and politically advantageous to both families.[6] Benjamin Franklin Read married Ignacia Cano in 1849 and they produced three sons within six years. Benjamin Maurice, the second issue of this Mexican-Anglo union, was born in 1853.

Contrary to what might be expected, young Benjamin and his two brothers did not enjoy an easy childhood. Don Ignacio's mining claim was contested by greedy partners and his mother's family lost its savings and the claim in costly lawsuits. In 1858, Benjamin's father died when his three sons were only a few years old.[7] Left with no inheritance, his mother had to struggle to provide for her boys. She eventually married a Hispanic man and had three more children. According to Benjamin's later testimony, when he and his brothers could no longer afford the schoolbooks they needed, the newly appointed bishop of Santa Fe, Jean Baptiste Lamy, supplied the funds in admiration of their mother's hard work and devotion to her sons. As a result, the Read boys received an excellent education at St. Michael's private academy in Santa Fe founded by the Christian brothers in 1859.

Like many of his classmates at St. Michael's, Benjamin Read grew up in a traditional Hispanic environment in multicultural Santa Fe—a cosmopolitan town at the crossroads of well-traveled routes across the United States and into Mexico. St. Michael's Academy taught both Spanish and English while using a curriculum that reflected the Anglo-European orientation of its instructors. Academy graduates in Read's time either went on to universities in the East or apprenticed in careers that helped shape the future of the territory, often working alongside Anglos who were recent immigrants to the West. Benjamin's first jobs after he finished school were with the new railroad industry and then with the territorial governor's office where he decided to study law. Before long, Read gained a reputation as a respected attorney and a distinguished public speaker, and was elected to serve in the territorial legislature in 1891. His successful professional life afforded him the status and income he needed to support a family and to give more time to his passion for researching history.

Why this passion? In spite of working closely with Anglos his entire life, Read identified first and foremost with his mother's culture, and, as he wrote in a letter to the editor of a Santa Fe newspaper in 1909, he was angry that the American public did not consider Hispanics in New Mexico equal citizens.

In his own words, "Nuestra gente ha sido tratada tan vilmente desde que el territorio fue incorporado á la nación americana, que desde entonces hemos estado nosotros y los que nos precedieron constantemente ocupados en refutar asaltos inmotivados, injustos, crueles y cobardes. La prueba de la buena ciudadanía se halla en el verdadero patriotismo. ¿Ha dado el pueblo nativo esa prueba? Que responda la historia."[8]* Read wrote all kinds of historical papers in an effort to refute this cultural misrepresentation. He was driven by an obsession for accuracy and historical justice, and he meticulously researched and documented his works. Crucial to his personal credo as a self-taught historian was his insistence on reading historical documents with impartiality and in the original Spanish. Many Anglo historians could not do the latter. Sensitive to potential criticism by Anglos that his interpretation of history might be colored by Hispanic ethnocentrism, Read wrote in the 1910 prologue to his first published book, devoted to the Mexican-American war: "Pide el autor al lector que se le crea que . . . todo su anhelo ha sido un sincero deseo de exponer y dar á conocer la verdad sin preocupación y con entera imparcialidad, puesto que sólo haciéndolo así se puede obrar con justicia á ambas dos naciones. Siendo ésta la primera obra de historia escrita por un hijo nativo de Nuevo México, descendiente de ambas dos razas, la anglo-sajona y la latina, siente su autor gran satisfacción en presentarla al público. . . ."[9]† As a bilingual man of letters and a lawyer, Read had a deep respect for the power of the written text to establish authority in Anglo society. He also considered himself a mediator between two cultures. On the one hand, he was a great admirer of United States institutions of government, while on the other, he was very proud of the accomplishments of his Hispanic forebears. His sense of urgency to correct the errors of Anglo historiography, however, had a more immediate dimension: New Mexico's long

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*Our people have been treated so despicably since this territory was incorporated into the American nation, that since then our ancestors and ourselves have had the constant burden of refuting undeserved, unjust, cruel, and cowardly attacks. The test of good citizenship lies in true patriotism. Have native [Hispanic] New Mexicans lived up to this test? Let history answer that question.

†The author asks the reader to believe that . . . his deepest and most sincere desire has been to bring to light and divulge the truth without prejudice and with complete impartiality, this being the only way to give just treatment to both peoples. Since this is the first work of history written by a native son of New Mexico, a descendent of both races, Anglo-Saxon and Latin, its author feels a deep satisfaction in presenting it to the public.

delay in becoming a state was directly related to misperceptions about its Hispanic peoples. In the early 1900s, when statehood finally seemed imminent, Read argued that Hispanic New Mexicans would have to be treated as equal citizens—and see themselves as such—or they would remain peripheral to the national community and the imagined construct of American identity.

Read wanted to write for many kinds of audiences, from Anglos back East who slandered Neomexicanos, to local *Santafesinos* and students in the schools who lacked Hispanic role models and information about their own history.[10] Unfortunately, Read spent less time on his narrative style than he did pursuing historical accuracy, and thus his books garnered wide praise as works of scholarship but they were not entertaining reading, as were his shorter pieces published in the local newspapers. Predictably, he found difficulty locating a willing publisher; so he published most of his longer monographs at his own expense, conducted most of his own publicity, and gave away sample copies to draw attention to their existence. Their sales further hampered by low levels of literacy in the territory, Read's works received little recognition beyond the territory's borders. Without academic credentials, Read had to content himself with being a citizen-historian, admired by his peers in New Mexico but largely ignored by the Anglo establishment. [11]

One of the unfortunate consequences of Read's low profile outside New Mexico Territory has been his obscurity to date in the roster of historians of the Spanish borderlands. The concept of "borderlands history," developed in the early 1920s by Professor Herbert Eugene Bolton[12] of the University of California at Berkeley incorporated a more inclusive, Spanish-oriented approach to southwestern history. Bolton himself learned Spanish in order to research primary materials in the archives of Mexico and Spain. With the publication of *The Spanish Borderlands* in 1921 he strongly contested the Anglocentric historiography of the region that ignored the important accomplishments of Spanish explorers, missionaries, and colonists.[13] Bolton left behind a legacy of disciples who in turn influenced the writing of borderlands history up until the 1970s, when younger historians began to question his limited perspective with regard to the influences of other races, ethnicities, and gender in the region.[14]

Benjamin Read was, in fact, a precursor of the Boltonian school. He conducted comparable original research, with the advantage of reading Spanish documents as his native language, and he published his first book, *Guerra México-Americana* in 1910. In this work, widely praised by the press in New

Mexico,[15] he claimed that earlier historians of this war had not studied fully enough the roots of Anglo-American expansionism, which he traced back to the early American colonial period. By writing with this wider continental perspective, Read was arguably the first historian to offer an integrative vision of borderlands history but, ironically, his writing in Spanish worked against his receiving the recognition he deserved. [16]

"Nuevo México en las Guerras de la Unión Americana, 1855–1919"[17] is the first of these manuscripts that Read wrote when World War I was just concluding in Europe. As one of three members of the New Mexico State Historical Committee in 1917, Read had access to many original war documents and firsthand testimonies. This material formed the basis for the major part of his book-length study. However, Read's intention was not just to focus on the present, but to place the contributions of New Mexico to U.S. war efforts in a larger, more ethnically inclusive historical perspective. Read therefore begins his study with a brief synopsis of the Spanish explorations and settlement of New Mexico in the sixteenth century. Significantly, he points not just to the past but to the historical continuity of the Hispanic presence in the United States and to the character traits that have distinguished the Hispanic people from the time of Cortés until the present. In Read's own words, "Los exploradores y conquistadores de Nuevo México eran de la misma sangre de los que acabamos de mencionar [Cortés y sus soldados], y de sus conciudadanos, de lo que procede la continuación de la valerosa determinación de todos ellos."[18]* Read's objective is to document the exceptional military service Neomexicanos have rendered to the United States since the earliest days of the territorial period, beginning with the Indian wars of 1855. His reading of New Mexican history puts him squarely in the camp of those who see the Mexican period (1821–1846) as a low point of civilization and progress due to Mexico's disregard of its northern provinces, and the change to American rule as the arrival of modernity, freedom, and prosperity for his homeland. In this sense, Benjamin Read admired his father's Anglo lineage and its democratic ideals. Spiritually and culturally, however, he was Ignacia Cano's son—a believer in Hispano-Catholic traditions and proud of his Spanish ancestry. To reconcile these two cultures and their different value

*The explorers and conquerors of New Mexico carried the same blood in their veins as those whom we just mentioned [Cortés and his soldiers], and their compatriots, constituting a continuing legacy of brave determination.

systems within the American community, Read intended to show his readers that Hispanic Americans were as patriotic as other Americans with a strong commitment to volunteerism. In the Civil War, he points out, most of the six thousand volunteers from the New Mexico territory who fought on the side of the Union were Hispanic Americans. Read was particularly preoccupied with vindicating the honor of these Neomexicano volunteers for the battles they fought on New Mexican soil. In the case of the Battle of Valverde, he cites documents of the period to prove that decisions made by Anglo officers, not cowardice on the part of Hispanic soldiers, were to blame for the loss to the Confederates. In the Union victory at the Battle of Glorieta, Read notes that Hispanics were among the most heroic fighters, and he names those deserving particular commendation. Of this period, Read said only Hubert H. Bancroft's history told an accurate, if incomplete, story of Hispanic American military participation in the Civil War.[19]

The greatest test of patriotism, however, came in 1898 when the Spanish-American War broke out in Cuba. Read wrote, "[P]ara los hispano-americanos de Nuevo México, esa guerra fue la prueba suprema, habiendo sido llamados a pelear con su misma sangre y linaje."* Among Teddy Roosevelt's Rough Riders were many Neomexicanos, "los cuales . . . marcharon al frente a pelear por la bandera americana, contra la que había sido su madre patria."[20†]

Read's 154-page manuscript devotes most of its chapters to World War I, with special attention given to the bravery of Neomexicano recruits. Efforts had been made at the time in New Mexico by a commission appointed by the governor to convince the U.S. War Department to form separate Hispanic American regiments under Spanish-speaking officers, but this request was denied. Read documents the firsthand testimony of young soldiers like Andrés Rivera, who survived a gas attack in France, and Felipe Martínez, a Santa Fe policeman's son who left high school to join up with the Allied forces. They, along with Anglo recruits from New Mexico, were a source of pride for those back home as well as for their commanding general. At the conclusion of his manuscript, Read prominently quotes and translates the words of Maj. Gen. Leonard Wood, who gave a public address in New

*[F]or Hispanic Americans from New Mexico, that war was the supreme test, since they were called to fight against their own blood and heritage.

†Who . . . marched to the front to fight for the American flag, and against which had been the flag of their motherland.

Mexico after the war's end in 1919: "Hay una sola clase de lealtad; lugar para una sola bandera; [y por eso] es necesario extirpar todas las distinciones de clase y de raza, y ser americanos todos."[21*]

To Benjamin Read, "ser americano"—belonging to the American community— was not just a matter of legal status or even of military volunteerism, as evidenced in his narrative. The perception of others in the body politic is equally crucial. To be a citizen under the law but be written out of history and treated as an alien is to be denied the benefits of a democratic society. Self-esteem is diminished in proportion to the extent to which a people is denied a place in the story of nationhood, as Benedict Anderson would say, the "national geneaology" from which American communal identity is constructed.[22] Read repeatedly insisted on the sad irony of Hispanic historical continuity in America: "El pueblo de Nuevo México estuvo aquí años, muchos años antes que los 74 millones de estranjeros [*sic*] viniesen a América. Bajo todas consideraciones la gente nativa del territorio puede reclamar un derecho más claro y más fuerte a [la] ciudadanía Americana."[23†] Racial and religious bias against Hispanic peoples, which had roots in Elizabethan England and the early days of American Puritanism, was still thriving in the twentieth century, said Read, and the authority of certain canonized texts had stimulated the national imagination and molded public opinion regarding non-Anglo races. In the nineteenth century, one of those texts was Josiah Gregg's *Commerce of the Prairies*, published in 1844. Others included W. W. H. Davis's *El Gringo* (1856) and Harvey Ferguson Jr.'s *The Blood of the Conquerors* (1921), which contained, in Read's opinion, "extremely degrading and libelous slurs on the morals, intelligence, and character of the Spanish-speaking population of New Mexico."[24] Similar negative stereotypes in dime novels and the national print media distorted history by fostering the myth of the Anglo hero who braved the journey west in order to civilize a savage and untamed frontier.[25] This kind of exclusionary rhetoric in the national press was not well received in Santa Fe, considering that Anglos often lived alongside and married into Hispanic families. In fact,

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*There is only one kind of loyalty; room for only one flag; [and therefore] it is necessary to root out all forms of racial and class difference, and to be Americans one and all.

†The native community of New Mexico was here for years, many years before those seventy-four million foreigners came to America. By any criteria, this territory's native people can claim a stronger and clearer right to American citizenship.

across ethnic lines the city boosters tried to counteract the impact of the Anglocentric frontier myth with the colorful Santa Fe Fiesta days, a yearly celebration, started in the early 1900s, that romanticized the history of the Spanish conquistadors and Pueblo Indian traditions. Read himself took part in these popular reinventions of local history, but he was not content with such superficial displays for tourist consumption.[26] As evidenced in his writing, he believed that if the degrading cultural myths about Hispanics were to be changed, new texts would have to contest the authority of older ones, and the actual West, not the imagined West, would have to become the basis for understanding American identity. [27]

The entanglement of myth and history in the ongoing narrative of the American West has been studied in recent decades by new western historians like Patricia Nelson Limerick in *The Legacy of Conquest* (1987) and Richard White in *"It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own"* (1991). White points to the paradox that while "myth, the imagined West, is a historical product, we must remember that history . . . is also a product of myth. As people accept and assimilate myth, they act on the myths, and the myths become the basis for actions that shape history. Historians find they cannot understand people's actions without understanding their intentions, and those intentions are often shaped by cultural myths. The mythic West imagined by Americans has shaped the West of history just as the West of history has helped create the West Americans have imagined. The two cannot be neatly severed."[28] Although Benjamin Read did not articulate this symbiotic relationship in the same way, his vantage point as an educated, bicultural citizen of Santa Fe, New Mexico—where cultural trails had crossed for many years on a frontier that predated the American occupation by centuries[29]—gave him a unique perspective on the troublesome interaction of history and myth in the formative discourse of nationhood and identity in the United States. The son of Ignacia Cano knew that the Hispanic presence in the narrative of the American frontier had been marginalized and devalued. He was not willing to let this omission go unchallenged, particularly since he knew that the cultural myths of his day would influence the history of tomorrow.

Among all of Read's works, the one that traces the Hispanic presence in America back to its earliest roots is his biography of Hernán Cortés written in 1914 and revised several times thereafter as he unsuccessfully searched for a publisher.[30] This manuscript, divided into twenty-five chapters, cites a broad list of consulted works, which range from Cortés's letters and chronicles of his contemporaries to histories of the Spanish Southwest by Anglos like

Hubert H. Bancroft and Frederick W. Hodge. Among Read's most important sources were unpublished documents obtained from the Archives of the Indies in Spain and a new 1904 edition of Bernal Díaz del Castillo's *Historia Verdadera de la Conquista de México* published by Genaro García, a Mexican scholar who was the first to have access in modern times to the Bernal Díaz manuscript held in Guatemala. All previous editions of Díaz's colorful narrative had been based on a 1632 edition published in Spain by fray Alonso Remón. This Mercedarian friar, according to Genaro García, had altered the original Díaz manuscript for reasons of his own: "Suprimió folios enteros del autógrafo, interpoló otros, adulteró los hechos, varió los nombres de personas y lugares, aumentó o disminuyó las cifras, modificó el estilo y rejuveneció la ortografía; movido, ora por espíritu religioso y falso patriotismo, ora por simpatías personales y pésimo gusto literario. . . . [así] resultaba que en realidad no conocíamos la Historia Verdadera."[31]* Once in possession of this new edition published in Mexico, Benjamin Read felt compelled to share this knowledge with the American public, including fellow historians who based their impressions of Cortés on inaccurate and incomplete information. In the preface to his manuscript, Read draws the distinction between his own way of writing history, in which "the reader will be given the true facts in the simplest form," to "the art of 'roving too freely over the field of imagination,' which is the artifice employed by many authors who give the world fiction for facts."[32] Mindful that he could be accused of partiality in praising Cortés's great exploits, Read cites the admiration Anglo historians like William Prescott and Bancroft felt for the conqueror. He also explained that "some critics might present objections and exceptions because of the fact that I am of Spanish descent, on my mother's side."[33] This self-consciousness of his vulnerability as a Hispanic American writing history may well explain his highly controlled style of writing and his frequent citation of primary and secondary sources.

What did Read intend to contribute to the already voluminous historical literature on the Spanish conquest of Mexico? Certainly, he wanted to make

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*He left out whole pages of the original manuscript, interpellated others, adulterated the facts, changed names of people and places, added to or subtracted from figures, modified the style and brought the orthography up to date; he was motivated, at times by religious belief and false patriotism, at others by personal sympathies and awful literary taste. . . . this is why in reality we did not know the True Story.

use of the new and complete edition of Bernal Díaz's chronicle because it shed light on previously misunderstood aspects of Cortés's character and leadership; but he also wanted to show his readers that Cortés was not the excessively cruel conquistador that many histories had portrayed. Díaz's narrative, without fray Remón's creative alterations, revealed a more humane leader who had respect for the Indians he conquered, provided schools and religious education for them, and a code of laws for New Spain. Read notes that Cortés opposed the brutal enslavement of Indians and was therefore the object of lies spread by slave traders and by others who resented his power and wealth. The primary issue for Read was the concept of heroism as it related to ethnic identity. He knew that the insidious legacy of the Black Legend of Spain still endured in the American imagination and influenced the way Anglos perceived Hispanic heroes even in his own day. Toward the end of his manuscript, which is one-fifth the length of Prescott's very popular history of the conquest,[34] Read asks his reader to consider Cortés's merits alongside other European heroes like Caesar or Napoleon. Cortés was not wontonly cruel, says Read, if one judges him in the context of his time. Read's emphasis on social context and comparative cultures, coupled with his focus on a Hispanic hero widely familiar to the American public, shows that his motives in writing this biography were directly related to his concerns regarding the Hispanic identity within the American national community.

A third and different sort of manuscript lying unfinished among related papers in the Read collection[35] is his English translation of a biography of padre Antonio José Martínez, the outspoken Taos priest. The original author was Santiago Valdez, a local man of some stature who had been educated in the padre's law school and was his legally adopted son.[36] Padre Martínez, who lived during the Mexican and early territorial periods of New Mexico, was a highly visible and controversial Hispanic leader, both in the church and political life of northern New Mexico during the transition to American rule. Some later histories, most notably one by Ralph E. Twitchell in Read's own time, reflected the ethnic and religious bias of many Martínez detractors who accused the padre of being an anti-American fomenter of the Taos revolt of 1847.[37] Benjamin Read had in his possession both Valdez's biography and other historical documents that proved Twitchell's allegations to be false. For Read, Twitchell's work was another example of how Hispanic New Mexicans were misrepresented by Anglo-American historians, falsely portraying them as disloyal citizens and denying their rightful place in the history of the nation. The translation of the Valdez biography, begun when Read was in his

late twenties, was one of his first involvements in Hispanic historiography. Although never published, he frequently drew on it in his later works in which he praised the padre, saying: "fué en el mundo cívico una de las figuras más brillantes de su época. . . . Todo lo sacrificó por amor al terruño que lo viera nacer."[38]*

Benjamin Read probably had scant personal contact with padre Martínez, who died when Read was only fourteen. He became involved with the Martínez papers and related documents through his younger brother, Larkin Read, who married Santiago Valdez's daughter. These papers had been left to Valdez, Martínez's sole legal heir, who, as an educated man, realized their importance as the basis for telling the padre's life story and offering it as an example to other Hispanic New Mexicans. Valdez apparently began writing the Martínez biography in December 1867, six months after the padre's death.[39] Interspersed throughout the text are padre Martínez's words and many of the personal documents he collected in his lifetime. The manuscripts now in the Santa Fe archives and Huntington Library indicate that Valdez continued to work on the biography for several years and then likely asked his new son-in-law to copy it. Larkin did so in 1877, right after his marriage. At the same time, Valdez was undoubtedly aware of the growing reputation of Larkin's scholarly brother, and he probably suggested that Benjamin translate the biography into English—or this may have been Benjamin's idea. In any event, attached to the Spanish version is a note in the latter's hand: "para ser revisada, anotada y aumentada por el Lic. Benjamin M. Read."† The note indicates that Read intended to do more with the Valdez work than just translate it into English.

This article is not the place to discuss the contents of the biography, especially since Read's role was tangential to its composition. However, I want to underscore that this document is valuable in its own right as well as in the context of Read's *ouevre*. His participation in the Martínez biography shows us the importance he ascribed to translating a work for readers who would otherwise not know of the extraordinary life of a man his Hispanic compatriots considered a legendary figure of the Mexican and American frontier. Valdez's biography, however, is not just the story of the man he refers to as "the spiritual and temporal Father of his Country"; it also sketches a social and

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*In the civic sphere he was one of the most brilliant figures of his time. . . . He sacrificed everything out of love for the beloved soil from which he was born.

†To be edited, annotated, and augmented by the Hon. Benjamin M. Read.

political history of northern New Mexico during padre Martínez's lifetime. The tone of the work is openly pro-American, yet it reveals a defensive posture that echoes Martínez's own obsession with documenting his accomplishments through the accumulation of official papers.[40] Santiago Valdez knew the controversy that surrounded the padre's life and he anticipated the correction of false accounts that were already circulating among the padre's political enemies. From this experience, Benjamin Read learned a lesson as a budding historian: political struggles in New Mexico during the territorial period (compounded by ethnic prejudice in the East) undermined local efforts to achieve statehood and made the accurate recording of historical events even more difficult. Read buttressed his own account of this period, *Historia Ilustrada de Nuevo México* (1911), with copious official documentation, indicating that he knew the influence of history on the discourse of American identity and the pitfalls Hispanic Americans faced in that field.

The final question to be asked is why were these Benjamin Read manuscripts never published. Certainly a portion of the answer lies in the limitations of his own talent as a writer and his tendency to cite sources dryly rather than offer an engaging interpretation of the facts. He never did find a national publisher for any of these works, but we may suspect that this poor reception had to do with subject matter as much as with his style. One could point to a kind of Catch-22 for Hispanic historians whose material needed a wider audience in order to interest publishers. Then there was the problem of language and audience: was he writing for Neomexicanos or for Anglos, or both? He fluctuated between using Spanish and English, as if he felt both languages served his needs in different ways. In the service of history this bilingualism could be a benefit, but it could also be a liability to establishing relationships with publishers. Even Read's name may have confounded those beyond New Mexico Territory who took him to be Anglo when, at heart, he was Hispanic. A devout Catholic with the intellect of a liberal humanist, Read deeply admired the ideals of American democracy but profoundly disdained the ethic of its overbearing materialism.

Benjamin Read did not fit neatly into any mold, certainly not the one Frederick Jackson Turner had in mind in 1893 when he described the dominant traits of American character that had developed during the nineteenth-century conquest of the frontier. We know that Turner showed little awareness of the experience of Hispanics who had been living on the western frontier for centuries, and many American citizens before and since Turner's time have suffered from the same historical amnesia or selective vision. As

Patricia Nelson Limerick pointed out, Anglo attitudes toward Hispanics suffer from "a peculiar split: one attitude toward Spanish borderlands history—conquistadors, missions, and rancheros viewed from a safe distance in time; and another, often very different attitude toward actual Hispanic people. . . ."[41] Connecting the experience of Hispanics in the past with Hispanics in the present was a moral imperative for Benjamin Read, whose own divided lineage made this a personal as well as public challenge.

It would be wrong to deny Turner his due in articulating a theoretical approach to the writing of American history. In a speech entitled "Social Forces in American History," delivered in 1910 to the American Historical Association meeting in Indianapolis, Turner spoke again of "the birth of a new nation in America" and of "the revolution in the social and economic structure of this country during the past two decades."[42] Concluding his remarks, he insisted that the writing of history must transcend any single disciplinary approach or perspective: "The economist, the political scientist, the psychologist, the sociologist, the geographer, the student of literature, of art, of religion—all the allied laborers in the study of society—have contributions to make to the equipment of the historian. . . [And the American historian must see in his subject] one of the richest fields ever offered for the preliminary recognition and study of the forces that operate and interplay in the making of society."[43] Turner had the right instincts, just as Bolton did, but Benjamin Read was closer to seeing the true nature of social interaction in the Southwest because of his experience and his understanding of history from a Hispanic perspective.

Notes

1. Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," in *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962), 38.
2. Turner, "The Significance," 8.
3. Doris Meyer, *Speaking for Themselves: Neomexicano Cultural Identity and the Spanish-Language Press, 1880–1920* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996). See especially chap. 10, "History and Identity: Benjamin M. Read and his Neomexicano Precursors." Read's most significant published works include: *Guerra México-Americana* (Santa Fe: Compañía Impresora del Nuevo México, 1910) and *Historia Ilustrada de Nuevo México* (Santa Fe: Compañía Impresora del Nuevo México, 1911; English translation, 1912).
4. On the discovery of the Real de Dolores gold mine, see Fayette Jones, *Old Mines and Ghost Camps of New Mexico* (Fort Davis, Tex.: Frontier Book Co., 1968), 22–23; and

Paige W. Christiansen, *The Story of Mining in New Mexico* (Socorro: New Mexico Bureau of Mines and Mineral Resources, 1974), 24–26.

5. Among Benjamin Maurice Read's papers in the New Mexico State Records Center and Archives (hereafter NMSRCA) is a collection of family letters and genealogical documents relating to the origins of the Read family line in the United States; it apparently began with Adam Redd, who came to the English colony of Pennsylvania in 1725 from Germany. His son, George Read, born in 1753, was a signer of the Declaration of Independence. The family letters were written to and from Read and his cousins in various parts of the United States between 1902 and 1926. Read died in Santa Fe in 1927.
6. On marriage in New Mexico see Darlis A. Miller, "Cross-Cultural Marriages in the Southwest: The New Mexico Experience, 1848–1900," *New Mexico Historical Review* 57 (October 1982): 335–59. Some Anglos saw marriage to a Mexican woman as a way to penetrate the Neomexicano power structure; for the Mexican woman, the alliance may have meant heightened social standing.
7. Read lists various dates for his father's death in Santa Fe, which range from 1856 to 1858. He was apparently buried in the Old Masonic Cemetery and later reinterred in Rosario Cemetery in 1902. "Necrology of Benjamin M. Read," *New Mexico Historical Review* 2 (October 1927): 394–97.
8. *El Nuevo Mexicano*, 13 March 1909.
9. Read, *Guerra México-Americana*, 6.
10. Three of Read's shorter published works for youngsters include: *A History of Education in New Mexico with Pertinent Advice to Students; Education and Its Relations to the Discovery, Conquest, Civilization and Colonization of New Mexico* (Santa Fe: The New Mexican Printing Company, 1911); *Popular Elementary History of New Mexico* (Santa Fe: B. M. Read, 1914); and *A Treatise on the Disputed Points of the History of New Mexico* (Santa Fe: B. M. Read, 1919).
11. With the exception of a few specialists whose work was canonized, American historiography paid little attention to Hispanic history. Thomas Skidmore has written, "Between Prescott's time and World War II, historical writing on Latin America was generally unexciting, conducted in an atmosphere of condescension by U.S. intellectuals toward Latin America that paralleled the relentless spread of U.S. military and economic influence in the region." See Skidmore, "Studying the History of Latin America: A Case of Hemispheric Convergence," *Latin American Research Review* 33, no. 1 (1998): 106.
12. According to Victoria H. and Light T. Cummins, Bolton himself did not create the term "borderlands." It was thought up by someone at Yale University Press, original publisher of his groundbreaking book, *The Spanish Borderlands: A Chronicle of Old Florida and the Southwest* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1921). See "Building on Bolton: *The Spanish Borderlands* Seventy-Five Years Later," *Latin American Research Review* 35, no. 2 (2000): 231.
13. David J. Langum, "Herbert Eugene Bolton," in John R. Wunder, ed., *Historians of the American Frontier: A Bio-Bibliograpahic Sourcebook* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 137.

14. "It is doubtful that any American historian has ever had an equal impact on the teaching of history at the university, college, or high school levels. Several generations of Boltonians and their students continue to spread his influence." See Donald E. Worcester, "Herbert Eugene Bolton: The Making of a Western Historian," in *Writing Western History: Essays on Major Western Historians*, ed. Richard W. Etulain (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991): 210.
15. See "Guerra México-Americana," *El Nuevo Mexicano*, 30 July 1910. Also, a month later, Eusebio Chacón, a well-known Neomexicano journalist and author, wrote a lengthy review (unpublished) of Read's book. Read evidently translated Chacón's piece into English. A typescript copy is in the Read Collection at the NMSRCA. Chacón writes: "[This work] comes from the first native New Mexican who has taken the trouble and time to delve into that most unpleasant subject, the period of disaster when our forefathers received such terrible chastisement from American arms. His work is in Spanish, and yet it is good enough to be translated and placed before the English-speaking world. Its style is the sober, calm and unimpassioned style of true history."
16. Read was familiar with Bolton's published work. In 1919, he directly contested Bolton's location of Juan de Oñate's early headquarters in the vicinity of San Juan pueblo in Bolton, ed., *Spanish Exploration in the Southwest, 1542–1706* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1916). See Benjamin M. Read, *A Treatise*. Read had a copy of Bolton's work in his private collection, which was purchased by the Historical Society of New Mexico in 1936.
17. "Nuevo México en las guerras de la Unión Americana" was originally written in English, then translated into Spanish by Felipe Maximiliano Chacón (see Meyer, *Speaking for Themselves*, for the relationship between Chacón and Read). The manuscript carried a laudatory introduction by the governor of New Mexico at the time, Octaviano A. Larrazolo. No copy in English survives, to my knowledge.
18. Read, "Nuevo México en las guerras," chap. 2, Read Collection, NMSRCA.
19. See Hubert Howe Bancroft, "The Confederate Invasion of New Mexico," in *History of Arizona and New Mexico, 1530–1888* (San Francisco: The History Company, 1889), 680–700.
20. Read, "Nuevo México en las guerras," chap. 2. Further evidence of the Hispano response to this war can be found in the newspapers of the day. See Meyer, *Speaking for Themselves*.
21. Read, "Nuevo México en las guerras," chap. 15, Read Collection, NMSRCA.
22. On the subject of "Memory and Forgetting" as it pertains to national identity, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London and New York: Verso, 1995), chap. 11.
23. Read, "Resiente los dichos de detractores" [letter to the Editor], *El Nuevo Mexicano*, 13 March 1909.
24. Read, "Spanish Americans and New Mexicans Slandered Anew," *Southwestern Catholic*, 7 April 1922, n.p. [typescript copy]; Josiah Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies: or, the Journal of a Santa Fé Trader* (New York: J. and H. G. Langley, 1845); W. W. H. Davis, *El Gringo, or, New Mexico and Her People* (New York: Harper, 1857); Harvey J. Ferguson, *The Blood of the Conquerors* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1921).

25. Literary historian Fred Erisman points to the problematic concept of the frontier hero, recognizing that, until recently, only one version of western heroism has achieved national endorsement: "Western society has been diverse from the outset, yet the conventional view of it is dominated by the young, white, Anglo-Saxon, male hero. Many have striven to modify this stereotype, but an enormous amount of work remains to be done." Erisman, "The Enduring Myth and the Modern West," in *Researching Western History: Topics in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Gerald D. Nash and Richard W. Etulain (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), 172.
26. On Santa Fe Fiesta days see Chris Wilson, *The Myth of Santa Fe: Creating a Modern Regional Tradition* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), 72–79.
27. Read did not pay significant attention to the Native American presence in his writing. This general omission can be considered a weakness in his work from our perspective today, but I believe he saw himself as a spokesperson only for his own cultural group, Hispanics.
28. Richard White, *"It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own": A History of the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 616.
29. On the subject of Santa Fe as a frontier long before the Anglo Americans arrived, see Patricia Nelson Limerick, "The Trail to Santa Fe: The Unleashing of the Western Public Intellectual," in *Trails: Toward a New Western History*, ed. Limerick, Clyde A. Milner II, and Charles E. Rankin (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1991), 59–77.
30. Why he was unsuccessful in publishing his work can only be speculated. At one point, Read had some sort of contract with a Boston publishing house, but this agreement was broken for unexplained reasons (*El Palacio* 11, no. 2: 164). It might have been that the United States entry into the war in Europe created economic hardships for publishers, or perhaps there were already too many books on the market devoted to Cortés's life, most notably William Prescott's well-known biography from the mid-nineteenth century. Read must have expected a national readership, for this manuscript is in English, unlike the one discussed earlier in this paper. Curiously, that work was in Spanish, as if Read did not expect it would be read outside the Hispanic community.
31. Genaro García, ed., Introducción a Bernal Díaz del Castillo, *Historia Verdadera de la Conquista de México*, 2 vols. (Mexico City, 1904), xiv. I was not surprised to discover that Benjamin Read's copy of García's work is now in the History Library (now the fray Angélico Chávez Library) of the Museum of New Mexico in Santa Fe, complete with Read's name inside and his pencil markings on various pages. The same library also holds an original copy of fray Remón's 1632 edition of the *Historia Verdadera*, which I was able to compare to García's.
32. Read, "Hernán Cortés and His Conquest of Mexico" (typescript copy in Read Collection, NMSRCA). We know from Read's correspondence with fray Zepheryin Engelhardt in 1915 that L. Bradford Prince, Ralph Twitchell and Lansing Bloom—all writing histories in New Mexico at the same time as Read—were among the historians he criticized for the "fiction for facts" tendency.
33. Read, "Hernán Cortés," Read Collection, NMSRCA.
34. William Prescott, *History of the Conquest of Mexico* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1873).

35. "Biografía de Rv. José Antonio Martínez, Cura—Párroco de Taos NM." A more complete set of papers related to the Cortés biography, including a copy of Benjamin Read's translation and the Spanish transcription from the original Valdez version, can be found in the William Ritch Collection at the Huntington Library in San Marino, California. I have seen a microfilm copy of these papers and compared them to those in the NMSRCA. Further research remains to be done to trace the background and significance of these documents, which should be published as part of the padre Martínez story. Fray Angélico Chávez quotes extensively from the Santiago Valdez biography in *But Time and Chance: The Story of Padre Martínez of Taos, 1793–1867* (Santa Fe: Sunstone Press, 1981).
36. Santiago Valdez may have been the real son of padre Martínez, although fray Chávez makes a detailed case to the contrary. See Chávez, *But Time and Chance*, 33–34. A native of Taos and a student in the law school founded by padre Martínez, Valdez was, according to Benjamin Read, "the peer of the best lawyers of his time. As a scholar in the English, Latin and Spanish languages, he was inferior to none of those who could master these languages. His services as a public man commenced with his election as Probate Clerk of Taos county in 1863, Probate Judge of Mora County. Member of the Legislature as Senator and Representative for more than twenty years. Member of the Commission that Revised the Laws of New Mexico in 1884." Read, *Illustrated History of New Mexico*, 791. Read, also a lawyer and a legislator, must have had ample contact with Valdez in the 1880s.
37. Ralph E. Twitchell, *The Leading Facts of New Mexican History*, 5 vols. (Cedar Rapids, Iowa: The Torch Press, 1910–1917); Chávez, *But Time and Chance*, chaps. 11 and 12. Benjamin Read also collected extensive evidence—authentic letters between key figures of the time—proving that padre Martínez did not resist but rather supported the American officials who quelled the revolt. These documents are in the Read Collection in the NMSRCA.
38. Read, *Guerra México-Americana*, 212–13. Read was a great admirer of Archbishop Jean Baptiste Lamy. His respect for both figures seems to confirm fray Chávez's contention that Lamy and the padre had their differences but were never bitter enemies.
39. There is some contradiction about the date. Fray Chávez cites a date found in the Huntington Library version (1877) but he apparently did not know that a copy of Valdez's biography, dated 1867, was also in the Read papers in Santa Fe. The different handwriting of this copy suggests that this one may be the original and the Huntinton copy, a later transcription by Larkin Read.
40. See, for example, Chávez, *But Time and Chance*, 60–61.
41. Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest*, 255.
42. Turner, "Social Forces in American History," in *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Wilson, 1962), 311.
43. Turner, "Social Forces," 333–34.