

THE OLD SPANISH DAYS FIESTA IN SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA: Cultural Hybridity, Colonial Mythologies and the Romanticization of a Latino Heritage¹

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ABSTRACT

Old Spanish Days Fiesta is a tradition that was invented in 1924 by civic leaders in Santa Barbara, California to celebrate the periods of the Spanish settlement and the Mexican rule of California and to promote local tourism. This article will trace the historical narrative of the complex cultural and ethnic composition of Santa Barbara before interrogating the colonial and post-colonial histories of the Californian past that are so often romanticized during the events of the Santa Barbara Fiesta. Subsequent to the American appropriation of California, Anglo-American ideas of race and identity were imposed upon Latino Californians. This development led many Spanish-speaking Californians to cultivate a Spanish identity and de-emphasize their Mexican, Native American, or African ancestry as they attempted to maintain their land grants and social prominence under American rule. Official versions of Santa Barbara's past promoted by Santa Barbara's civic leaders and Old Spanish Days Fiesta literature tend to privilege romanticized historical interpretations that submerge and absorb California's hybrid ethnic and cultural histories into an idealized Spanish colonial narrative. This article explores how many individual Santa Barbara Fiesteros choose to engage, negotiate, and/or subvert this simplified official civic narrative of Santa Barbara's Spanish past through their own personal performances during the Fiesta. An analysis of how local festival participants envision their performance in

the context of the festival allows outsiders to have a glimpse into how they create and embody their own personal and nuanced understandings of history during the Fiesta.

Keywords: California, anthology, folklore, performance, dance, hybridity

Over the last twenty years many scholars have investigated how individuals as well as government agencies have sought to construct particular histories that reinforce their vision of the nation in post-colonial environments (Chatterjee 1993, Hardacre 1989, Ivy 1995, Jing 1996, Nelson 2000, Pai 2000, Robertson 1998, Schein 2000, Vlastos 1998). This trend in scholarship can be traced to the contributions of Eric Hobsbawm's and Terrance Ranger's *Invented Traditions* (1983) and Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1983). These scholars were among the first to address the power of imperial governments, print capitalism, and elite nationalist intellectuals to create traditions and construct collective identities. As Stephen Vlastos explains "[t]he methodological breakthrough of Hobsbawm and his collaborators was to historicize modern British and British colonial traditions and thereby reveal the ideological and constructed nature of modern tradition - an aspect of tradition scholars had only dimly perceived" (Vlastos 1998:2). Folklorist Roger Abrahams credits social historians with designating folklore's involvement with tourist productions as a cultural invention (1993a). Due to the contributions of Hobsbawm and Ranger most folklorists now acknowledge that to some degree all traditions, not just those introduced for the purposes of conquest, governance, and surveillance, have an invented or idealized dimension to them.

Santa Barbara's Old Spanish Days Fiesta, a festival held the first week of August in Santa Barbara, California, is a tradition that was invented to highlight and celebrate the periods of Spanish settlement and the Mexican rule of California. While the early fiestas were parties thrown to celebrate religious holidays, weddings, and the completion of important buildings, after 1924 the Old Spanish Days Fiesta became an annual event. Community members who wished to increase tourism in the fledgling resort town encouraged the promotion of Santa Barbara's Old Spanish Days Fiesta as a planned public celebration. This article will briefly sketch a historical narrative of the complex cultural and ethnic composition of Santa Barbara before interrogating the colonial and post-colonial histories, romanticized images and arcadian understandings of the Californian past that are so often

celebrated, negotiated and embodied through performance during the events of the Santa Barbara Fiesta.

Santa Barbara's Cultural Hybridity

The biological root of the metaphor of hybridity has been a source of considerable ambivalence for folklorists and anthropologists who examine complex cultural phenomenon (Abrahams 1993a, Kapchan and Strong 1999, Stross 1999). The word "hybrid" originates from the Latin *hibrida*, a word used to refer to the offspring of a tame sow and wild boar (Kapchan and Strong 1999). Although the word hybrid is generally used today to refer to many types of things that are abstractly heterogeneous in origin or composition (Stross 1999), many anthropologists and folklorists troubled by the ambiguity of the term prefer to utilize terms like "syncretism," "bricolage" or "creolization" when undertaking an analysis of new cultural phenomenon that arises from the contact between two or more cultural systems (Kapchan and Strong 1999). Syncretism, a theory developed by Melville Herskovits in 1966 to analyze heterogeneous religious forms like Voudon, explains the adaptation, assimilation and reconciliation of cultures rather than their plural existence. Bricolage is a term developed by Claude Lévi-Strauss to describe how individuals composed American myth narratives from various myth motives. Lévi-Strauss examined how individual bricoleurs decontextualize cultural forms and recombine them in novel and often-playful ways (1971). The concept of creolization originated with linguistic theories that traced the emergence of new creole languages from a dominant and subdominant language brought into contact through diaspora, colonization, and trade. The polemics of power are implicit in the use of the term of creolization "[a]s a medium of exchange, then, a creole language, like a creole body or a creole culture is a locus of power relations" (Kapchan and Strong 1999:241).

Creolization may be the term most commonly utilized by linguists or folklorists when describing heterodox and heteroglossic communities, however, writings on hybridity are more cross disciplinary and span the studies of popular culture, media, immigrant populations, subaltern studies, history and expressive culture (Abrahams 1993a, Kapchan and Strong 1999). I have chosen to address the complexities of ethnic and cultural identity in Santa Barbara using the term hybridity because I am interested in examining hybridizing mechanisms: the processes of construction,

invention, borrowing, learning, cultural assimilation, and cultural resistance that shape the historical and emergent nature of ethnic identity and cultural performance during Fiestas. The ethnic and cultural identities of the members of the Santa Barbara festival community who celebrate the Fiesta are exceedingly complex and cannot be reduced to the interaction between one colonial power and one subject people; rather they are identities that continue to be consciously shaped, adapted, and reconstructed according to each new situation. Santa Barbarans with hybrid cultural and ethnic identities have historically been and continue to be aware of their heterogeneous heritage and they often choose to utilize it to their advantage, performing one or more identities when they find most advantageous.

To gain an understanding of some of the social and cultural issues that are expressed and re-interpreted during the performances that take place during Santa Barbara's Old Spanish Days Fiesta, it becomes necessary to examine how members of the festival community of Santa Barbara envision the town. While not all people who live in Santa Barbara participate in the Fiesta, all are actively encouraged to do so. Many of the people at the core of the Santa Barbara festival community are residents whose families have lived in Santa Barbara since the settlement of California by the Spanish colonial government in the eighteenth century. Although these descendants often emphasize their cultural and genealogical ties with Spanish colonial settlers during the Fiesta, the incorporation of individuals into the Santa Barbara festival community is based upon an individual's willingness to participate in Fiesta events.

Santa Barbara is a California coastal city situated between the Pacific Ocean and the foothills of the Santa Ynez Mountains, one hundred miles north of Los Angeles. A temperate area rich in natural resources, Santa Barbara was originally the site of one of the most extensive settlements of the Chumash, a Native American society, who were able to effectively sustain large populations through the strategic use of land and marine resources. While Spanish explorers made many early expeditions to California, settlers from New Spain did not arrive in the area now known as Santa Barbara until the late eighteenth century². Many of these settlers from the northern provinces of New Spain were members of the *Castas*³, but when possible often chose to identify themselves as Spanish for Spanish colonial census records. Despite their claims to Spanish heritage they were actually quite ethnically diverse, with genealogies that included Native American, European, Southeast Asian, and African forbearers (Mason 1998).

The imposition of Spanish colonial culture upon the Chumash and the intermarriage of settlers from northern New Spain with members of the Chumash community contributed to the cultural complexity of Santa Barbara. The Spanish colonial settlement process sought to transform the traditional hunting and gathering lifestyle of the Chumash into a Spanish pastoral model using the religious institution of the Santa Barbara Mission and the military institution of the Santa Barbara Presidio. In order to facilitate this goal, members of the Chumash community were coerced by Franciscan friars and the Spanish colonial government to enter the California mission system and convert to Catholicism. Upon entering the missions the Chumash were stripped of their freedom, their rights to the land, and became legal wards of the Catholic Church.

The replacement of the Spanish colonial government by a Mexican nationalist government in 1821 eventually led to the demise of the mission system, an organized institution of Spanish colonial rule. Following the secularization of the missions by the Mexican government in 1834, all Native American converts were released from the defunct mission system. Although most Native Americans chose to return to their former villages after their release, many were subsequently bound in a system of peonage to the ranchos of Mexican and American settlers who had acquired large land grants from the Spanish and Mexican governments (Heizer and Almquist, 1971). Many of these land grants were formed subsequent to secularization when the Mexican government redistributed the extensive mission holdings to wealthy ranchers and loyal subjects. While the secularization of the California missions freed Native Americans from the oppressive mission system, Native Americans lost all claim to the lands the missions had theoretically held in trust for them to reclaim after they had been successfully acculturated to European norms (Heizer and Almquist 1971).

Exposure to foreign pathogens and centuries of colonial oppression under the Spanish, the Mexican and later the American government contributed to the physical and cultural destruction of Santa Barbara's Chumash population; yet there are many Chumash descendants that continue to live in Santa Barbara and participate in the Fiesta. Well aware of the American government's policies of submission and extermination of northern Californian Native Americans, many people belonging

to Chumash families went underground during the American period. Hiding behind Spanish surnames obtained during the Mission period and intermarrying with the descendants of the settlers from colonial New Spain, many Chumash camouflaged themselves as part of the Latino community during the American period as a means of survival. While some Chumash descendants still prefer not to self-identify as Native American, often choosing to emphasize a Spanish or Mexican identity, other Chumash descendants proudly continue to acknowledge and celebrate their Chumash heritage. Because of the complex and personal nature of ethnic identity in Santa Barbara it is not unusual for different members of the same family to emphasize either a Chumash, Mexican, or Spanish cultural identity, or even for the same individual to present a Chumash, Mexican, Spanish or Euro-American identity at different points in time.

Many of those who have chosen to re-emphasize their Chumash heritage in the last thirty years have turned back to their family histories to revitalize their understanding of what it was and is to be Chumash (Erlandson et al 1998). While there has been a revitalization of Chumash identity since the 1970's, members of Santa Barbara's contemporary Chumash community have had to continue to fight the rhetoric of certain archaeologists and anthropologists who seek to deconstruct their identities, verify their pedigrees according to flawed eighteenth-century documents, and quantify the amount of Chumash blood that runs through their veins through DNA testing (Haley and Wilcoxon 1997, Erlandson et al 1998). In 1997 two cultural resource management archaeologists, Brian D. Haley and Larry R. Wilcoxon publicly deconstructed contemporary Chumash tradition, questioned the authenticity of Point Conception, a sacred place where many Chumash believe their ancestors leave the earth for the spirit world, and attacked the most politically active Chumash leaders as Mexicans masquerading as Indians (Haley and Wilcoxon 1997). All of these were done under the banner of providing an unbiased account of the role that anthropologists had played in the revival and revitalization of Chumash culture. Despite the claims of Haley and Wilcoxon, this was not a politically unmotivated attack. Haley and Wilcoxon selectively deconstructed the ethnic and cultural heritage only of one specific segment of the Chumash community, and thereby continued to endorse the Chumash identity and assert the authenticity of less politically active members of the Chumash community that they labeled as "non-traditionalists" in their article (Haley and Wilcoxon 1997).

Unfortunately, the misinformed and generally racist perceptions about the biological and cultural authenticity of contemporary Chumash people perpetuated by a select few academics are often shared by some Anglo-Americans living in Santa Barbara who look to these sources as the authorities on Chumash identity. While some anthropologists and Anglo-Americans choose to challenge the cultural authenticity of contemporary Chumash identity, individuals who self-identify as Chumash, like many other long term residents of Santa Barbara, have little issue with their own cultural hybridity or complex colonial heritage. Tina Foss related the following story to me that details how one of these local authenticity challenges was effectively settled by a Chumash elder serving food at a Quabajai Chumash food booth during a Santa Barbara Fiesta.

[W]e had a Quabajai Chumash food booth one year. I remember distinctly the food booths because one year someone who had just a little too much, imbibed [drunk], came by and challenged an elderly Chumash woman who was making the food, as to why it said it was a Chumash food booth, and we were selling tortas [a Mexican style beef sandwich] at the time. And she looked at this belligerent face, and this challenge, and she leaned over the counter, and very clearly said to him:
"It's Indian food because I made it!"
And he backed off and sobered up and moved on. (Tina Foss, 2000)

In this exchange a Quabajai Chumash elder, comfortable in the multiplicities of her hybrid identity asserts her Chumash identity and claims a type of food usually associated with the Mexican community as a Chumash Indian product simply because she produced it. In her brief statement she resists the essentialization of her identity and enacts the role of a "post-colonial hybrid [who] does not challenge us to disentangle influences like tradition and modernity or unravel strands of difference. Rather the post-colonial hybrid stands in resistance to such disarticulations: instantiating identity at the same time that it is subverted" (Kapchan and Strong 1999: 245).

Although isolated from the metropolitan centers of New Spain, California provided an illicit port for vessels engaging in trade between Mexico and the Philippines. Some Filipinos also settled in Santa Barbara during the eighteenth century, providing one of the earliest documented migrations of Southeast Asians to North America (Mason 1976, 2004). Antonio Miranda, listed as a "chino" according to several colonial documents, was actually

of Filipino ancestry. William Mason, a California historian, explains “[o]n Mexico’s west coast *chino* was the term used to apply to natives from the Philippines, to distinguish them from Mexican Indians, since both were called *indios*. Miranda was a native of Manila, and apparently a Malayan Filipino (1976: 23).” Miranda was one of the original settlers who traveled from Loreto to found the Pueblo of Los Angeles, and he briefly served as soldier and armourer at the Santa Barbara Presidio. Antonio Miranda died in 1784 and despite his Filipino origins is listed as one of the first “Spanish” settlers buried in the Santa Barbara Presidio chapel.

During the nineteenth century, intensification of illicit trade between Californians and American trading ships and the California Gold rush increased the number of European, Anglo-American, Latin American and Asian immigrants who settled in Santa Barbara. Largely encouraged by thoughts of fortune, the number of Anglo-American settlers continued to increase exponentially after the United States government officially acquired California from Mexico through the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848. The rapid influx of a large Anglo-American mining population and numerous subsequent migrations of Anglo-American settlers to California changed the prevailing social structure of California and had a dramatic influence on the local economic system and the cultural demographics of the region.

Like the encounters of the New Spanish settlers with the Chumash, the inter-cultural encounters between the Anglo-Americans and the existent California population were not always apolitical or benign. California had been the recipient of Anglo-American immigrants from the East since the first decades of the nineteenth century (Dana 1840). The first Anglo-American immigrants to settle in California were almost exclusively male. They tended to marry into Californian families, were required to learn Spanish, become Catholics and assimilate to California culture if they wished to own property under Mexican law (Pitt 1970). During the Spanish and Mexican periods Anglo-American and European men sought to infiltrate the established Californian elite through strategic marriages with the daughters of prominent Californian families (Dana 1840, Almaguer 1994).

The use of cultural assimilation and marriage by Anglo-Americans and Europeans as a means of gaining control of the natural resources of California became unnecessary after Anglo-Americans assumed political control of California in 1850. Subsequently, Anglo-Americans employed legal means

such as the Land Act of 1851 to appropriate the land of the Californio⁴ elite. This seizure of Californio lands took place despite the supposed protection of the property of former Mexican citizens stipulated in Article Nine of the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (Monroy 1990). Thus the Californio elite who had initially received and maintained their land grants at the expense of the Native Americans ultimately lost the majority of their holdings to the encroaching Anglo-American colonists. By the end of the nineteenth century Anglo-Americans had largely wrested political and economic control of California from the Californio elite.

Anglo-American colonists brought with them a legacy of discrimination against people that they understood to be “non-white”, and by extension not deserving of the rights and freedoms accorded to socially enfranchised “white” citizens (Almaguer 1994). The imposition of American colonial authority upon a former region of Mexico that was composed of citizens whose genealogies often contained Native American, African, and Spanish ancestors meant that the Mexican population of California was separated and reclassified according to American understandings of race, which placed a strong emphasis upon skin tone and pigmentation (Almaguer 1994). While “[t]he claimed or real European ancestry of the Californio elite provided an important basis upon which they differentiated themselves from the more declassé indigenous mestizo and Indian populations in California . . . The dark complexioned mestizo population . . . were viewed as ‘nonwhite’ and not significantly different from pure blood, Indian ‘savages’ in the state” (Almaguer 1994:54-55). This process contributed to the Californian elite seeking to create and maintain Spanish or European identities. Former Mexican citizens who lacked power and status and whose appearances belied a mestizo, African, or Native American heritage had a more difficult time establishing a convincing Spanish identity, yet in claiming to be former Mexican citizens, members of California’s working classes could in some cases claim the rights granted to Mexicans through the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. These rights included the right to vote, the right to hold public office, the right to offer testimony in U.S. courts, and the right to own homestead land (Almaguer 1994). These rights were often later denied to Mexican immigrants who came to California in increasing numbers in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

California was a colony of Spain from 1769-1821, a province of Mexico from 1821-1848, and has been a part of the United States since 1848.

Thus during different periods of time many different cultural and ethnic groups in California have claimed to be members of the Spanish colonial empire, citizens of the Mexican nation, and citizens of the United States. These national and imperial identities often form only the first layer of heterogeneous personal identities, which have been constructed and reconstructed by the residents of Santa Barbara. The social demographics of Santa Barbara have been complicated by California's complex colonial history, and this too has affected the way in which Santa Barbarans choose to construct ethnic identities. While not all of their historical contributions are officially recognized during the Santa Barbara Fiesta, individuals with Native American, African, Spanish colonial, New Spanish settler, Filipino, Chinese, Japanese, Mexican, European and Anglo-American heritage have all contributed to the formation of an ethnically diverse and culturally hybrid social environment. This section has been primarily concerned with providing some historical and contextual information about Santa Barbara's complex hybrid ethnic and colonial histories. The next section will examine how early twentieth-century civic leaders of Santa Barbara chose to promote a Spanish ethnic identity and physically construct Santa Barbara as a Spanish pastoral paradise. It will also investigate how these inventions have become entwined with the narration of a romanticized history of Santa Barbara celebrated during the Fiesta.

Historical Myth Making: Santa Barbara as a Spanish Pastoral Paradise

Romanticism was an intellectual movement that developed in late eighteenth-century Europe in reaction to the scientific rationalization of nature indicative of the Neo-Classic period. The Romantic Movement continued to gain strength throughout nineteenth-century Europe and America in part as a reaction to the mechanization of the Industrial Revolution. Romanticism places a strong value on emotion as an authentic source of aesthetic experience, and glorifies rural customs and folk art as ancient, noble, natural, spontaneous expressions linked to the landscape. Roger Abrahams notes that Romantic understandings of European peasant culture developed during a period that coincided with an official enclosure policy that allowed members of the aristocracy to seize active agricultural land and turn it into pleasure parks and pastures (1993b). "There are manifest ironies involved in this process of sentimentalizing a way of life only after those who once practiced it have been taken from the land . . . Maintaining the marginality

of the peasantry, the Romantics not only increasingly regarded the folk as old-fashioned peoples living by an earlier mode of social organization, but they also included other groups of disinherited outsider figures under the same general designation" (1993b: 4).

Perhaps it is unsurprising that a similar Romantic sentimentalizing of the Spanish colonial period took place in Santa Barbara. Just as European Romantics constructed idealized notions of the peasantry only after they had been removed from the landscape, Romantic nostalgia for the lost lifestyle of California's pre-American past only began in the late nineteenth century, shortly after the Spanish-speaking populations of California had been forced off of their land and became politically and economically disenfranchised. Romanticization of the Spanish colonial past in Santa Barbara included the complete planned reconstruction of Santa Barbara in a California Mission revival architectural style and the establishment of the Old Spanish Days Fiesta. The built environment and yearly cultural festival were created by civic leaders to celebrate Santa Barbara as a Spanish pastoral Eden. Santa Barbara is still actively envisioned by aspiring authors and community members alike as a "Tierra Adorada", a Spanish Arcadian paradise where "[w]arm hearts and love of living, high pride and noble bearing, supreme faith and unending devotion . . . were the elements of Spain's legacy . . . Other California towns similarly were started out on highroads to beauty and distinctiveness, but elsewhere this bequest has been often squandered, or ignored, in the heat of desire to grow 'big and Gringo and banal'" (Hill and Parks 1930:4).

In 1925 an earthquake registering 6.3 on the Richter scale devastated Santa Barbara and provided an opportunity for the reconstruction of the entire town in the Spanish colonial and Mission Revival style (Sunset January 1975). An Architectural Board of Review was subsequently established. In eight months, over 2,000 plans for new buildings were approved, the majority of which were in a Mediterranean style due to the insistence of the Architectural Board and the Plans and Planning Committee (Sunset January 1975). Prominent members of the city traveled to Spain in the 1920's in order to research Spanish culture and architecture, and several wealthy members of the community made personal trips to the Iberian Peninsula with the intention of bringing back Spanish architectural ideas, costumes, music, dances, foods and other cultural influences (Vandervoort 1998). After the initial period of rebuilding that followed the earthquake,

the city government of Santa Barbara continued to require that all new buildings would conform to a Mediterranean theme. The result is that “the style of Santa Barbara is almost its own, a potpourri of architecture from similar climates around the world: Mediterranean, Spanish Colonial Revival, Mexican (Early Californian), Monterey, Moorish, Islamic” (*Sunset* January 1975).



The Santa Barbara County Courthouse.
Photo: Michael R. Hardwick, 2000.



The Santa Barbara County Courthouse.
Photo: Michael R. Hardwick, 2000.

While the active construction of a romanticized Spanish colonial past is made concrete throughout Santa Barbara through building codes that require all structures to be built in a Spanish colonial or Mediterranean style, Fiesta publications are blatant in their romantic invocations of the California past. A 1963 Fiesta brochure claims that “[w]ith her magic the Spirit of La Fiesta turns the pages of history back to the days when Spanish dons and doñas lived in this Tierra Adorada, which is now modern Santa Barbara. On dancing feet the Spirit of La Fiesta hastens from casa to casa flinging wide the doors, for hospitality reigns in Santa Barbara’s Old Spanish Days” (Peck 1963:1).

The following excerpt, taken from another Fiesta brochure is just one of many examples from the Fiesta literature that demonstrate how current images of Santa Barbara’s imagined Spanish heritage are projected through official reports of Fiesta performances. Attempts to legitimize these images, and reinforce them as authentic representations, are made through the

strategic narrative linkage of the actions of current Fiesteros to the actions of the Californio celebrants of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the text, Santa Barbarans are portrayed as busily donning their traditional sartorial emblems of Spanish identity in the form of shining boots, silver sombreros, mantillas, combs and embroidered shawls. Meanwhile, the Spanish dances of California are referenced aurally in the form of clicking castanets, and visually invoked through the description of the movement of elaborately costumed swirling señoritas.

As clicking castanets echo in courtyards and plazas, los caballeros don their bright broadcloths and velvets, their shining boots and silver trimmed sombreros. Before their mirrors stately doñas drape tall Spanish combs with mantillas of rarest laces and wrap their shoulders in embroidered shawls, which came in sailing ships from China more than a century ago. Thousands of señoritas swirl their beruffled gowns of rainbow hues... It is thus that modern Santa Barbarans prepare a welcome for Fiesta guests as did the Spanish Barbareños long ago. They bequeathed us their pattern for Fiestas: music and laughter, dancing and song. (Peck 1963:1)

Romantic constructions of California's pre-American past are not a new phenomenon, nor are they necessarily isolated to Santa Barbara. Romantic portrayals of the Latino-Californian past appear in historical works such as Herbert Howe Bancroft's *California Pastoral* and Nellie Van De Grift Sanchez's *Spanish Arcadia* (Bancroft 1888, Sanchez 1929). These works merge with Helen Hunt Jackson's *Romona* and Cora Miranda Baggerly Older's *Love Stories of Old California* to create an idyllic image of Latino California (Bancroft 1888, Sanchez 1929, Jackson 1884, Older 1940). During the early twentieth century even the Southern Pacific railroad supported the publication of many tourist materials that romanticized California's Latino past and offered tours of Spanish colonial mission sites (Rawls and Bean 1998, Weber 1992).

Arcadian California soon became a commodity in the early twentieth century and Charles Lummis, a Republican editor of the early twentieth century development oriented magazine, *Land of Sunshine*, once commented that "the old missions are worth more money. . . than our oil, our oranges, or even our climate" (quoted in Weber 1992:345). Books published in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and Southern Pacific tourist propaganda were joined by local newspaper articles, Hollywood films,

and other popular materials in collective imaginings of California's idyllic Latino history. In these materials Santa Barbara of the Spanish and Mexican periods is portrayed as a quiet pastoral town where wealthy Spanish Dons were able to spend their incredible largess on expensive costumes and elaborate celebrations under the full August moon.

Many Santa Barbarans that participate in Fiesta celebrations actively acknowledge that Fiesta promotes problematic romantic constructions of California's Latino past. Local Fiesteros sometimes jokingly refer to Santa Barbara's Old Spanish Days Fiesta as "Old Spanish Daze", a tacit recognition that the festival allows room for the creative realities of its participants. Other local critics speak of the "delusions of grandeur" in which some of the festival participants engage during the Fiesta. Historians such as Bill Mason, Kevin Starr, Carey McWilliams, and Leonard Pitt, desiring to look beyond the current romantic constructions of California's Latino past, rightfully take issue with "the idea that California was settled by people from Spain in contradistinction to Mexico" (Mason 1998:5).

I believe that many of these scholars are hasty in their outright dismissal of Santa Barbara's imagined past as a "schizoid heritage" and the Santa Barbara Fiesta as a "bastion of pseudo-Spanish myth mongering, 'Old Spanish Days' and all" (Mason 1998:4, Starr 1990, McWilliams 1971, Pitt 1972). Perhaps we should take historian Bill Mason's lead and look at Santa Barbara's constructed past as a form of myth. While Mason was most likely using the word myth to describe what he felt to be a mistaken and fallacious view of history, folkloristic definitions of myth offer another understanding of the concept. The Greek word *mythos* means word or story and Folklorist William Bascom defines myth as "prose narrative[s] which, in the society in which they are told are considered to be truthful accounts of what happened in the remote past. They are accepted on faith, they are taught to be believed, and they can be cited as authority in answer to ignorance, doubt, or disbelief" (Bascom 1984:9).

The following excerpt, which appeared in a 1927 Fiesta brochure describing *El Desfile Historico*, the historical parade, reads like an origin myth for the city of Santa Barbara. Although it can be argued that this material is dated, it provides a critical insight into how members of the festival community have actively envisioned, re-envisioned and performed their interpretations of the historical past:

Just for a while, return with me to the year 1542. See native Indians just as they looked in those days. See Cabrillo with his soldiers and sailors as they set foot on the shores of California. Then come down to 1579 when Sir Francis Drake arrived in his good ship "Golden Hind", with the first Anglican minister reading the first religious service in English on the Pacific Coast. Then in 1602 see Vizcaíno, with his three vessels and a large force of men, including three Carmelite Friars, land, and on December third name the settlement Saint Barbara (Santa Barbara) in honor of the patron saint of the day. Watch the coming of Gov. Gaspar de Portolá in 1769, as he makes his camp by the Indian village which he named "Laguna de la Concepción", a location near the present Santa Barbara County Courthouse. Next you will see Father Junípero Serra and his followers, performing the simple ceremony of raising the cross, and with him Captain José Grancisco Ortega discoverer of San Francisco Bay and the first Comandante of the Santa Barbara Presidio. Gaze upon the founding of the Santa Barbara Mission by Padre Fermín de Lasuén in December 1786. (Pressley 1927:1)

The parade procession described above can be viewed as an embodied colonial myth of the creation of California. In this myth European colonizers are portrayed as active agents who imbue the landscape California with name and religion. Spanish explorers such as Cabrillo, Vizcaíno, Portolá, and Ortega are described as culture bearers who give form and meaning to California through their "discovery" of the town and naming of the features of the land. Father Junípero Serra and Father Fermín de Lasuén, Spanish colonial missionaries, are portrayed as physically installing the theological and institutional importance of the Catholic Church through the planting of a cross and the founding of the Santa Barbara Mission.

Although the narration of the parade emphasizes the cultural impact of Spanish colonizers and Catholic missionaries, representatives of English colonialism and Anglicanism also make a brief, if strained appearance. Given that the parade was constructed to appeal in part to Santa Barbara's dominant Anglo-American population, the figure of Francis Drake also appears momentarily upon California's shores with the first Anglican minister to disseminate a Protestant theology in English. The appearance of Drake within the embodied narrative of Santa Barbara's local history is a bit anachronistic. While the Spanish explorers and Catholic missionaries named

within the text have been emphasized both by academic historians and community members, as important figures in Santa Barbara's local history, Sir Francis Drake never visited the area now known as Santa Barbara. In 1579 Drake made a landing on what is thought to be Point Reyes Peninsula, a location four hundred miles north of Santa Barbara, to repair his ship the Golden Hind (Rawls and Bean 1998). During Drake's brief landing, he encountered a local Native American group, who were later identified from the historical record as the Coastal Miwok (Heizer 1974, Simmons 1998). Drake apparently misunderstood the Miwok mourning rituals that they employed when meeting Drake's English crew as rights of subjugation and subservience and claimed California for Queen Elizabeth (Rawls and Bean 1998). However, Drake's colonial claim to California held little historical weight, as there was no subsequent English presence in California during the early colonial period.

Recognizing the fact that the academic historical details of Drake's landing do not correspond to the emphasis that he is given in this embodied narration of Santa Barbara's creation is important as it allows us to note how historical figures and events can be re-contextualized and re-imagined for specific purposes. Through the Fiesta Parade, Santa Barbara's Anglo-American Protestant community desired to link themselves to California's Latino past. In order to accomplish this, they inserted the historical figure of Sir Francis Drake in a procession that claimed to narrate the origin of Santa Barbara, attempting to provide a symbolic linkage between their cultural and religious heritage and that of California's Spanish colonial past.

There is a notable dichotomy in the text describing the parade between the portrayal of the European colonists and the portrayal of Santa Barbara's Native American inhabitants. The Europeans are represented as powerful political figures full of agency who inscribe their cultural and religious meanings upon a formless landscape, while members of the Chumash community, Santa Barbara's pre-European inhabitants, are described as a marginal group and are denied any form of political power. Represented within this narration as a collective group of unnamed "Indians", the Chumash are textually relegated to providing a passive picturesque backdrop to the European colonization process.

While a Eurocentric colonial narration of the past may be dominant during Fiesta, it is not uncontested. In the 1970s the Quabajai Chumash Indian

Association decided to become involved in the creation of floats for the Historical Parade. Members of the Quabajai Chumash Indian Association viewed their choice to insert themselves within a parade narrating Santa Barbaran history as a means of raising community awareness of their histories and emphasizing their current presence in Santa Barbara. Tina Foss recounts the memories of her involvement in building the Chumash floats below.

[T]he Quabajai Chumash Indian Association that I was very active in the 1970's, in a sense, decided that wherever we went people thought that the Indian community was extinct. And that was very offensive to the Indian community. So we thought, well, we need more visibility, what better place than Fiesta, where everybody is in a good mood and having a good time, and we can say hey, here we are. Old Spanish Days contained a lot of Indian people. And the buildings of the Mission were built by Indian labor, and the things that we look at and celebrate at Fiesta time. So we used that occasion to start having Chumash Floats. And for many years we would come down to this carriage museum and build a float that had a theme that told the public each year about some aspect of the Chumash heritage in Santa Barbara. And the elders and all the little children would work on it, and go on that float down the street. And I think that it really did have an impact over the years, because in the twenty, twenty-five, thirty years since those days, we see no one saying in Santa Barbara that there are no Chumash here. That heritage I think is more and more respected and understood. (Tina Foss 2000)

The rebuilding of Santa Barbara in an imagined Spanish style that draws from multiple Mediterranean influences exemplifies the way in which civic leaders of Santa Barbara since the 1920's have chosen to imagine their community. The re-construction of Santa Barbara in a Spanish Revival architectural style reinforces local understandings of the historical importance of the Spanish settlement of Santa Barbara and projects these local understandings to visitors in a concrete form. This manufactured past privileges the Spanish colonial period, sometimes submerging and absorbing the complex ethnic and cultural histories of individual community members into an Arcadian Spanish colonial narrative.

The way that festival events are presented in official Old Spanish Days Fiesta literature also promotes constructed views of the past that may or may not reflect an academic understanding of the complex and heterogeneous historical and archaeological reality of California. However, dismissing these constructions from scholarly examination simply because they are perceived as historically “inauthentic” is problematic. As Regina Bendix notes “[r]emoving authenticity and its allied vocabulary is one useful step toward conceptualizing the study of culture in the age of transculturation. The notion of authenticity implies the existence of its opposite, the fake” (Bendix 1997:9). Choosing to recognize traditions as invented and examining a folk group as an imagined community positions folklorists to “comment on the production of the invented traditions and imagined communities by which national, regional and local identities are formed and the landscape is sacralized” (Abrahams 1993b:22). Rather than simply dismissing the sentimental Spanish colonial narrative of Santa Barbara’s past as “fake” history, interrogating how this narrative was constructed reveals more about the complexities of the current post-colonial environment in Santa Barbara. As Benedict Anderson explains: “[a]ll profound changes in consciousness, by their very nature bring with them characteristic amnesias, ... Out of such oblivion, in specific historical circumstances spring narratives” (1983:204). Perhaps it is unsurprising that the processes of historical erasure and post-colonial reconstruction of a romanticized colonized minority identity are not unique to Santa Barbara. Halfway around the world, ethnomusicologist Margaret Sarkissian describes a similar process of erasure of the complex history of the ethnically and culturally hybrid Eurasian population of post-colonial Malacca, Malaysia, as a romanticized Portuguese identity is constructed and promoted through contemporary tourist literature and cultural performance (2000). In Santa Barbara, the built environment and the narration of Old Spanish Days Fiesta events through festival brochures and leaflets create a Spanish set and official script that emphasize the importance of the Spanish settlement of the community. However, in Santa Barbara, as Sarkissian finds in Malacca, an exploration of performance has the potential to reveal a more complex and contested understanding of the ethnic identities and social histories that are constructed, negotiated, and embodied within these respective communities.

Embodying Histories Through Performance

An initial examination of the costume and dance traditions exhibited during Santa Barbara’s Old Spanish Days Fiesta reveals a postmodern bricolage of

Latino/a identity. Participants in the dance performances of the Santa Barbara Fiesta fit Vanessa Agnew's criteria of engaging in historical reenactment as a "body-based discourse in which the past is reanimated through physical and psychological experience", however the majority of Santa Barbara's Fiesteros are not re-enactors whose "credibility is measured by their conversancy with period minutiae and their fidelity to the 'authentic'" (Agnew 2004:330). During the staged shows of the Fiesta, centuries of colonial, neo-colonial, and transnational histories are embodied through the dancing bodies of young men and women as they perform the dance traditions of Andalusia, *esculea bolera*⁵, Spanish folklórico, and Spanish-inspired flamenco through their skillful manipulations of capes, hats, shawls, fans, and extensive ruffled *batas de cola*.⁶ Aural joins with visual expressions of Spanish and/or Gypsy identities as complex rhythms are created through the use of castanets, finger cymbals, hand clapping, finger snapping, and elaborate footwork. Adding their voices to the embodied narrative of ethnic identities and colonized histories are dancers whose movements and attire emphasize the interrelation of the Indigenous, African, Spanish and Mestizo histories of the Mexican provinces of Jalisco, Vera Cruz, Michoacan, Zacatecas, Sinaloa, Chiapas, Oaxaca, and Tamualipas. Aztecas, attired in technicolor plumes and shiny synthetics share the stage with sequin-clad *Salseros*⁷, international ballroom style *Sambistas*⁸ and Argentinean *tangueros*⁹. Performances of Californian dances attributed to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are followed by Hip-Hop and Jazz routines. In the process of creating this complex cultural expression dance, music, and costume quotations are appropriated from both popular and elite culture: reincarnations of Hollywood-manufactured images such as Carmen Miranda and Zorro appear beside excerpts from the classical ballets of *Carmen*¹⁰ and *Esmeralda*¹¹.

Dance, movement and costume were important for the celebration of early fiestas, and they continue to be important for the current celebration of Santa Barbara's Old Spanish Days Fiesta. During the Spanish and Mexican periods, fiestas were ritual occasions for the display of wealth and hospitality as well as for the performance of costume (Editors of Time-Life Books 1976, Tirsch 1972, Dana 1840, Rouse 1974). During fiestas residents and their guests would come together for a collective celebration of important religious and social events. Festivals were a significant event for the young and unmarried, and provided an opportunity for young people to interact in a chaperoned environment. Californian women were able to demonstrate their agility and wealth through dance and costume to potential marriage partners at

fiestas, and dances such as the *fandango*, the *son*, the *jota*, the *jarabe*, and the *contradanza* were incorporated into the celebrations (Rouse 1974). Dance also provided a forum for women to display and be recognized by the community for the qualities of beauty, skill and grace. "When a lady was prominent for her skill and grace in dancing the son or the jarabe, the men placed their hats on her head, one on top of the other. After she retired, each man had to ransom his hat with money, giving the lady whatever he wished" (Lugo 1930:24).

Changing Santa Barbara fiestas from small, occasional, local festivities that took place sporadically throughout the late eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries and reifying them in 1924 into a seasonal celebration that sought to put the town's heritage on display changed the performance frame of costume and dance. A sense of continuity with the older fiestas was created through the costumed performances of early California dances; yet, during subsequent Fiestas Santa Barbarans incorporated new dance and costume styles that reflected their contemporary understandings and constructions of California and Californian history. Early California dances were performed in costumes that synthesized current fashion trends with interpretations of traditional attire and their performance space was recontextualized from the family ramada to the public stage.

During the nineteen twenties, thirties and forties, performers such as Maria de Los Angeles Ruiz, Juan Cota and his sister Anita Añuelos, Mrs. Rose Pendola Poole, and Mrs. Leontine Verhelle were instrumental in the preservation and innovation of early California dances through their public performances during Fiesta. These performers who traced their heritage to the Spanish and Mexican periods of California used costume and dance to symbolically invoke the idealized past when great ranching families governed judiciously over an arcadian landscape. They remembered many of the early California dances from previous family gatherings and community festivals, and they chose to form dance groups that would perpetuate these dances through their public performance during Fiesta. A sense of continuity with the older community fiestas of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was maintained through the costumed performances of early California dances such as *La Jota Vieja*, *La Contradanza*, *El Sombrero Blanco*, *La Cachucha* and *La Varsoviana*. As Diana Vandervoort, a dancer herself and a proud descendant of Capt. José Francisco Ortega, one of California's early New Spanish settlers, explains below:

[t]hese dances were originally maintained and supported by descendants of early California families who had learned them as children. They were social dances, some with very complicated figures. I remember the Coffee Mill, Worshiping at the Shrine, La Cadena and La Jota, which was fast and vivacious. During Fiestas our family and friends would dress up in Spanish style and perform this music and dance. (Vandervoort quoted in Smith August 6,1992).

In 1934 the Reina del Mar parlor of the Native Daughters of the Golden West formed *Las Fiesteras*, a dance group which incorporated performers from the Ruiz-Botello and the Poole-Verhelle dance groups. Like the dance groups that had come before them, *Las Fiesteras* continued to incorporate the early Californian dances into their performance repertoire, thus underscoring the importance of the Spanish and Mexican periods. The signature dance of *Las Fiesteras* was the Shawl Dance, choreographed for the group by Tersea Jansens Lane. The Shawl Dance was accompanied by the musical piece *Mantón de Manila*, or "Shawl from Manila", and was choreographed to display the embroidered shawl worn by each dancer over a blue dancing dress. Their dance dresses were blue taffeta gowns created to emphasize the dignity and grace of nineteenth-century Californian attire.

Mary Louise Days, a performer with *Las Fiesteras* during the Old Spanish Days Fiesta from 1963 to 1987, emphasized in our interview that the Shawl Dance was not a traditional dance form in the same way as *La Jota Vieja*, *La Contradanza*, *El Sombrero Blanco*, *La Cachucha* or *La Varsoviana*, in that it had been choreographed by a known individual for the express purpose of stage performance. From its creation in 1938, the Shawl Dance was performed at every Fiesta to the last performance of *Las Fiesteras* at Fiesta Pequeña in 1987. *Las Fiesteras* enjoyed their identification with the Shawl Dance and Mary Louise Days explains below her understanding of how the choreography of the dance added to its popularity.

So at the time I began dancing in late 1962, I first performed for Old Spanish Days in 1963, the Shawl Dance was a regular part of the program.

It was very popular. It still is popular.

I was with a woman a couple days ago at an event and she said "Oh, I just love your Shawl Dance, Oh I wish that you would

do it again." And this was because of the spectacular fashion in the way we displayed the shawls ... as part of the choreography we held the shawls up either in a full square, and then in another part of the choreography we folded them diagonally to form a triangle, we even held them up in a shortened square.

They were either put around shoulders or we held them up, and that was all part of the choreography.

We, usually when we posed for publicity photographs, we would partly wear the shawls to demonstrate, and to identify ourselves of course with the wonderful Shawl Dance. (Mary Louise Days, 2000)

The formations of the Shawl Dance highlighted the silk shawls of the dancers and allowed them to display the cloth in several positions that showcased the fine embroidery that covered the majority of the garment. Embroidered silk shawls were an important symbol of wealth and status in nineteenth-century California. Shawls created in Canton were acquired in trade from the vessels arriving from the Philippines that would stop in California on their way to Acapulco. The Shawl Dance provided a forum for the ritual display of these expensive and treasured status items that were historically obtained in the trans-pacific trade. While actual shawls obtained from Manila were rarely used in later performances of the Shawl Dance, the cultural memory of shawls obtained from the galleon trade as important status items and symbols of local "Spanish" identity persisted as long as the dance was performed. Although the Shawl Dance is no longer performed, elaborately embroidered shawls, many of them heritage items, continue to be worn and used during dance performances during the Santa Barbara Fiesta. It should be noted that the origin of these shawls is often currently misconstrued by many younger Fiesta participants, and that dancers and festival community members alike now often refer to their garments as "Spanish" shawls rather than shawls from Manila or Canton.

During the fifty-three years that the Shawl Dance was performed, the ritualized presentations of silk shawls by Las Fiesteras reiterated through performance a notion of connection with an idealized Latino past, and hinted at an extensive trans-pacific trade that linked Southeast Asia with the California coast. The Shawl Dance provided a forum for the display of an expensive status item, and reinforced notions outlined in the festival literature that Santa Barbara's Old Spanish days were times of leisure when excessive amounts of money were lavished upon costly wardrobes and elaborate performances.



Vivian and George Obern display their Fiesta costumes in a carriage. Vivian Obern's costume includes an elaborate "Spanish" shawl. Photo: Patricia Hardwick 1999.

After World War II, members of Santa Barbara's festival community developed a new way of reinforcing their romanticizations of Santa Barbara's Spanish past: flamenco was introduced to Santa Barbara by José Greco in the 1950s and Carmen Amaya, Lousia Trina and Juan Talavera in the 1960s (Vandervoort 1998). It became such a popular form of musical and dance expression that by the 1970s it almost completely eclipsed the early California dance styles, tangos, waltzes, and the few Mexican *ballet folklórico* dances that had formed the core of previous Fiesta performances. Flamenco has become so firmly entrenched in the imagination of Santa Barbara festival community members as an emblem of Santa Barbara's Spanish heritage that aspiring dancers are sent to Spain to study with flamenco masters and nearly every Fiesta poster and brochure for the last thirty years has reproduced the image of the female flamenco dancer.



Young children perform flamenco at Mercado Del La Guerra. Photo: Patricia Hardwick, 2000.

Although many members of the festival organization seek to maintain the dominance of Spanish forms of dance for the Spirit of Fiesta, the official dancer representative of Old Spanish Days, not every performer is willing to accept this representation. Members of the Cabrera family have formed a family-centered company, *Folklor Mexicano*, which in recent years has presented dances during Fiesta from the Mexican regions of Vera Cruz, Michoacan, Zacatecas, Jalisco, and Tamualipas. Francisco Cabrera explained to me that one of the reasons he decided to form a family-centered Mexican *ballet folklórico* dance company was to educate the youth of the community to have respect for their Mexican heritage. As he put it “Mexico is so rich in dances and music, and it is so wonderful to be able to share so much of those dances by using *Fiesta Pequeña* as a platform. And so every year we bring a new costume, so that we can share the culture with our local community members as well as the tourists that come from all over the world” (2000).

Maria Cabrera, wife of Francisco Cabrera and an accomplished dancer and seamstress, explained to me how she designs the costumes of *Folklor Mexicano*. Mrs. Cabrera has an intimate understanding of the power of

costume as a means of non-verbal symbolic communication, and she is well aware that different articles of costume can be used to send specific messages to a knowledgeable and astute viewing audience. Although there are many things that Mrs. Cabrera considers when designing a costume, she stressed that one of her main goals is to create a costume that reflects the Mexican region represented in the dance being performed, while appealing to a distinctly Santa Barbaran aesthetic. Mrs. Cabrera explained her reasons for taking local taste into consideration when creating a regional Mexican costume: "Santa Barbara is a mix of people, and it has a particular taste, it is a little more refined. And we want them to accept it, we don't want them to be shocked. Sometimes *folklórico* can be very gaudy. If I were to show you some of our Aztec costumes they have gold lame and six different satins all really bright. But that is just the way that things are over there [in Mexico], so we made it [the dance costume] a little bit more for Santa Barbara (2000)."

In the excerpt below, Mrs. Cabrera explains to me how she creates the costume for the performance of *La Negra*, a folkloric dance from the region of Jalisco. She first details her practical and aesthetic considerations before noting how she has chosen to symbolically incorporate an emblem of Spanish identity into the costume. This Mrs. Cabrera accomplishes through the use of a high Spanish comb in the hair instead of the elaborate ribbons and braids that usually typify a Jalisco woman's headdress. Mrs. Cabrera stated that her motives for combining Mexican dress and Spanish headdress are to encourage members of the Santa Barbara festival community to think of flamenco and *ballet folklórico* — and by extension Spanish and Mexican heritages — as united in one performance. Instead of favoring a romanticized Spanish or Mexican nationalist past, Mrs. Cabrera seeks to represent a Santa Barbara that is proud of both its Spanish and its Mexican heritage.

Mrs. Cabrera: Now for this year's Fiesta they requested something very lively and they actually said, How about La Negra [a popular dance from the region of Jalisco]? And we agreed to it. And instead of all the ribbons and braids in the hair we are going to show a little bit of Spanish influence. Because Mexican is mestizo, a mix of Indian and Spanish influence. Because all of these regions you can see them as Mexican, but they are all influenced by the Spanish. So instead of the big braid and the ribbons we will actually go with the hair in the bun and then we are going to use a Spanish comb.

Patricia Hardwick: And do you feel that that is because of the importance of the Spanish comb and the Spanish costume to Santa Barbara?

Mrs. Cabrera: Yes.
And people need to realize that they go together.
It isn't them and us, it is we.
So if we can show that it works together,
that I think represents the city.
And I also believe that people will accept it
[Mexican folklórico] more,
that they will feel part of it. (2000)

Marisol Cabrera, daughter of Francisco and Maria Cabrera, had the honor of being chosen to be the dancer to represent the Spirit of Fiesta for the year 2001. Marisol is an accomplished dancer who is comfortable performing a wide variety of dance genres including early Californian *contradanzas*, Spanish classical, flamenco, baroque, and Mexican *ballet folklórico*. To Marisol dancing is a means of "expressing emotions and telling stories" (quoted in Tabisola, 2001:25). Marisol's journey to become the Spirit of Fiesta was difficult, possibly because she decided to perform classical Spanish dances instead of the standard flamenco numbers during the Spirit competitions. Although Marisol is a beautiful flamenco dancer with her own company, *Bailes de España*, she chose not to dance solo flamenco numbers while she was the Spirit of Fiesta, but instead to represent the Spanish heritage of Santa Barbara through Spanish classical dances. In addition to emphasizing the preservation of Santa Barbara's dance heritage through the performance of Spanish classical and early Californian dances, Marisol Cabrera and her family also employed her position as the 2001 Spirit of Fiesta as a means to emphasize pride in Mexican forms of cultural expression. As the Spirit of Fiesta, Marisol Cabrera made a strong political statement by performing *La Negra* (a popular dance from the region of Jalisco) with her mother, father, and brother at the *El Presidente* Party, a party that marks the official introduction of the Senior and Junior Spirits and begins the Fiesta celebrations.



Marisol Cabrera (in white) performing La Negra as the Senior Spirit of Fiesta at the El Presidente Party. Marisol's mother, Maria Cabrera (in green), her father Francisco Cabrera (in brown) and her brother (in blue) join her in her performance. Photo taken by Patricia Hardwick, 2001.

The immediate Cabrera family was joined at the party by Francisco Cabrera's extended family. Many members of Mr. Cabrera's family are modern *charros*, who continue to own and operate ranches and practice the traditional arts of horsemanship and cattle rearing. The extended Cabrera family demonstrated their support of Marisol's expression of pride in Mexican culture by appearing at the performance in full *charro* dress. Marisol's tenure as the Senior Spirit of Fiesta was particularly outstanding because she was able to use the position to represent and encourage pride in multiple aspects of Santa Barbara's history and Santa Barbaran identity. Trained in several genres of Fiesta dance, Marisol Cabrera sought to communicate through her costumes and performances the importance of bringing together old and new forms of dance and of emphasizing Santa Barbara's shared Spanish and Mexican heritage.

The performances of the Santa Barbara Fiesta are a complex collage of multiple layers of performed histories and negotiated identities. Mexican-American, Californio, Anglo-American, Japanese, Chinese, African American, and Native American dancers join through performance to present Gypsy style flamenco, Californian contradanzas, classical Spanish dance, salsas, tangos, waltzes, polkas, Northern Plains Fancy Shawl dances, Spanish inspired ballets, and Mexican folkloric dances from the regions of Jalisco, Vera Cruz, Michoacan, Zacatecas, Sinaloa, Chiapas, Oaxaca, and Tamualipas. Many of the identities expressed and negotiated through these performances were shaped by the complex colonial history of the region. At times there can be competition and even conflict between the various groups seeking to affirm their sense of place and of heritage during the festival. However, it should be noted that there is also a strong impulse among several performers to reach beyond the established ethnic boundaries and embrace that which is Spanish, Mexican and Native American; they choose to incorporate present traditions while honoring those of the past. They see themselves as ambassadors, and recognize that they carry within their bodies and create through their performances the history of the Santa Barbaran festival community. As Mr. Cabrera insightfully expresses: "Dancing preserves culture. Many of the dances are now gone, not passed on from generation to generation. A few are captured by historians and university professors" (Cabrera quoted in Tabisola *The Santa Barbara News Press* Sunday August 5, 2001: A20). The dancers of the Santa Barbara Fiesta recognize the gift that they give to their community, the gift of a complex, but living history. It is at once both a personal and communal history, carried in the body and expressed through the visual language of costume and movement.

CONCLUSION

Subsequent to the American appropriation of California, Anglo-American ideas of race and identity were historically imposed upon Latino Californians. Spanish-speaking Californians understandably claimed a Spanish as opposed to a Mexican heritage and de-emphasized their Native American and African ancestors in attempts to maintain their land grants and social prominence. "Descendants of the original colonists in California found it expedient to nurture such a myth [of Spanish origin] in the face of rank racist feelings on the part of Anglo-Americans who came during and after the Gold Rush... by becoming 'Spanish Californians' one's social position was enhanced, especially in such communities as Monterey and Santa Barbara" (Mason

1998:4). Not all of Santa Barbara's inhabitants support the Santa Barbara Fiesta or its official vision of the past. Residents like Joseph Navarro have joined historians in vocally emphasizing their protests against the Fiesta as a perversion of the heritage of Mexican-Americans in local editorials (Navarro 1971:150).

While some community members like Joseph Navarro may chose to boycott or publicly protest the sentimentalized history officially promoted during Santa Barbara's Old Spanish Days, many members of Santa Barbara's festival community have chosen to engage and negotiate their hybrid ethnic and cultural identities and California's complex colonial history during the Santa Barbara Fiesta through their personal performances. Alan Dundes argues that folklore serves as an "autobiographical ethnography, a mirror made by the people themselves, which reflects a group's identity. . . . It is actually one of the principal means by which an individual and a group discovers or establishes his or its identity" (1989 34-35). Official versions of Santa Barbara's past promoted by Santa Barbara's civic leaders and Old Spanish Days Fiesta literature may privilege romanticized historical interpretations that submerge and absorb California's hybrid ethnic and cultural histories into an arcadian Spanish colonial narrative; however, a large number of Santa Barbara Fiesteros like Tina Foss, Diana Vandervoort, Mary Louise Days, Maria Cabrera, Marisol Cabrera, and Francisco Cabrera choose to engage, negotiate and/or subvert this simplified official civic narrative of Santa Barbara's Spanish past through their own personal performances.

ENDNOTES

¹The Santa Barbara Fiesta glorifies California's pre-American history which included a period of Spanish (1769-1821) and Mexican (1821-1848) rule. In the process of romanticizing and re-constructing a historical narrative, the Santa Barbara Old Spanish Days Fiesta literature and the historical texts have often culturally represented the Mexican period while referring to it as belonging to a Spanish past. I have chosen not to refer to both the Spanish and Mexican pasts as Spanish, as I feel that this would contribute to obscuring the Mexican period behind the dominant Spanish colonial narrative. Instead, I have chosen to use the term "Latino" when referring to romantic perceptions that conflate the Spanish and Mexican periods.

²Established in 1535, the Viceroyalty of New Spain included what is now Mexico, Central America, Florida, and parts of the Southwest of the United States. New Spain was inhabited by a variety of ethnic and cultural groups including Native Americans, Spaniards, Africans, and members of the *Castas*.

³The term *Castas* was created by the Spanish colonial government to refer to the children that resulted from the intermarriage of Native Americans, Spaniards, and Africans. The *Castas* system sought to classify people according to the different admixtures of Native American, Spanish, or African heritage. For more information on the Spanish colonial *Castas* system please refer to Magali M. Carrera, *Imagining Identity in New Spain: Race, Lineage, and the Colonial Body in Portraiture and Casta Paintings* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003) and María Concepción García Sáiz, *Las Castas Mexicanas Un Género Pictórico Americano* (Mexico City: Olivetti Press, 1989).

⁴Californio/s is a term used to refer to men and women who lived in California during the Mexican period.

⁵A style of Spanish dance popular in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that was strongly influenced by Italian and French ballet. The entire repertoire of steps and combinations must be coordinated with the playing of castanets.

⁶A dress with a long ruffled train (*cola*) that is worn by female flamenco dancers when dancing flamenco.

⁷The dancers of Salsa, a popular pan-Latino musical and dance form. Salsa music and dance reflects neo-colonial transnational migrations and the ongoing syncretism of Latin American and North American dance and musical traditions. Salsa, while drawing upon Cuban as well as many other North American and Latin/o American musical traditions, was popularized in New York by predominantly Puerto Rican artists.

⁸The dancers of samba, a popular Brazilian musical and dance form.

⁹The dancers of tango, a popular Argentinean musical and dance form.

¹⁰*Carmen* was composed by Georges Bizet in 1854.

¹¹*Esmeralda* was composed by Jules Perrot and first produced in London in 1844.

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