

California Dreams or Colonial Nightmares? St. Serra, the Missions, and the Borderlands of Memory

by Jacqueline M. Hidalgo

On a sunny Wednesday afternoon in late September 2016, Pope Francis rode past large crowds of people in order to celebrate a Spanish-language mass at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception at the Catholic University of America.¹ Earlier that same year, the California legislature voted to replace its National Statuary Hall sculpture of first California mission president and Franciscan missionary Junípero Serra with a statue of astronaut Sally Ride.² Even though many Californians now perceive Serra as a metonym for Spanish, Mexican, and US practices of cultural and physical genocide against Native Californians, the Church pressed forward with canonization.

The larger portion of the Pope's homily focused on the call of Matthew's great commission and the aspirations and trials of mission in general. Perhaps Pope Francis recognized some of the challenges of honoring Serra when he acknowledged how mission never follows "a very well structured and planned manual." Pope Francis thusly held up Serra as an example but not necessarily an exemplar of missionary drive. When the Pope finally mentioned Serra's name in the latter part of the homily, it was through the lens of memory rather than heroic tribute: "And today we remember one of those witnesses who gave testimony to the joy of the gospel in these lands, Fray Junípero Serra."³

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What if we approach the canonization of Serra, then, through this complex prism of "memory"? What if we then situate "memory" as a terrain of conflict and transformation that calls all of us to bear witness to the complexities of how the gospel has entered into and been received in the U.S. Southwest, the borderlands that has been ruled by three modern nations: Spain, Mexico,

1 This essay is based on a talk given at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago in October 2016. I would like to thank the Louis J. Luzbetak Lecture on Mission and Culture and the Hispanic Theology and Ministry Program's Día de la Raza Lecture funds and organizations for the opportunity to share this work and receive conversation. I especially want to thank Carmen Nanko-Fernández, Eddie De León, and Roger Schroeder for their organizational work, hospitality, and conversation.

2 Matthew Fleming, "Father Serra Statue a Little Closer to Leaving D.C.," *The Orange County Register*, March 31, 2015, <http://www.ocregister.com/articles/serra-656178-father-leaving.html>.

3 All quotations from the papal homily are my translations of the Spanish version because I found what were, for me, important rhetorical distinctions in the Spanish (available at https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/es/homilies/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150923_usa-omelia-washington-dc.html). An English translation of the homily is also available from the Vatican, https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150923_usa-omelia-washington-dc.html).

and the U.S.A.⁴ Especially in our present moment when missionary communities are revisiting the complex colonial histories surrounding missionary practices, memory can be one way to approach the saintly veneration of a man whose legacies remain controversial.

One cannot historically contextualize Junípero Serra and the California missions without cracking under the weight of myriad cultural memories that have been mapped onto those missions. In 2015, some Catholics, including ethnic Mexicans and Native Californians, hailed Serra's canonization as a strategic move to honor Spanish-speaking Catholics in the Capitol of a country rife with anti-Latino rhetorics, and they were touched to finally have California's history, in all its complexity, sanctified.⁵ At the same time, though, numerous ethnic Mexican and Native Californian populations, as well as their allies, protested Serra's canonization throughout the months leading up to September 2015.⁶ They pointed to the Pope's own historic apology in Bolivia where he "ask[ed] forgiveness, not only for the offense of the church itself, but also for crimes committed against the Native peoples during the so-called conquest of America."⁷ In that speech Pope Francis notably called for people to join together in opposition to the "new colonialism" found in a global neoliberal capitalism that fosters economic inequality. Protesters against Serra's canonization wondered how the pope could then turn around and celebrate such a colonial figure.

Following the cue of Pope Francis in challenging colonial violence and legacies of exploitation, I propose that we approach Serra's veneration through the lens of Chicana feminist thought, especially the work of Gloria Anzaldúa, and we cast Serra as a *frontera*/borderlands saint whose veneration bears witness to struggles over how to remember California's missions. I am not arguing that Serra is or was a hero of the borderlands struggle; I argue rather that the struggles over mission memory that culminated in Serra's canonization are borderlands struggles. Struggles over California mission memory expose the entwining of religion, race, gender, and colonialism that have critically formed Catholicism in this hemisphere. We only do justice to that memory if we do not remember Serra alone, but in remembering him, we remember the complex histories of the California missions, the Native peoples who lived there, and the struggles over mission memory that have ensued in the last two centuries.

Frontera Saints: Retrofitted Memory as Borderlands Practice

First, I would like to briefly describe for you the lens of borderlands/*frontera* sanctity. Thirty years ago, Chicana feminist scholar Gloria Anzaldúa published her mixed-genre masterpiece of prose/poetry/philosophy titled *Borderlands/La Frontera*. Anzaldúa inscribes the US-Mexico borderlands as a place where cultures have come into violent contact, often across highly uneven dynamics of power, and contacting cultures have been transformed in the process. The combination of English borderlands with Spanish *frontera* also captures something that the English word alone cannot, the sense of being at the frontiers, a fraught space of settler colonial violence. To be at the borderlands/*la frontera* is also to dwell on the margins of dominating cultural worlds, margins that border on other worlds and that make space for new possibilities that are born out of juggling multiple cultures.

4 Here, I am following Kent Brintnall's call to bear witness to the "arbitrary excess" of social violence, a witness he bases on a rereading of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis. I would suggest that in our present moment and location, we are called to bear witness to the excess of those who have claimed to be doing divine will and have wrought destruction on others, whether such destruction was intentional or not. See Brintnall's essay in *Sexual Orientations*, ed. Kent Brintnall, Joseph A. Marchal, and Stephen D. Moore (New York: Fordham University Press, forthcoming).

5 For instance, see Fernanda Santos, "Latino Catholics See Reflection in a Friar Set for Sainthood," *The New York Times*, September 19, 2015, <http://nyti.ms/1V23yLM>.

6 For instance, see Peter Montgomery's discussion of a rival Tuesday press conference in D.C. on the eve of the canonization mass, "California Tribes Denounce Catholic Church's 'Fraud' and 'Blatant Fabrication' on Serra Sainthood," *Religion Dispatches*, September 22, 2015, <http://religiondispatches.org/california-tribes-denounce-catholic-churchs-fraud-and-blatant-fabrication-on-serra-sainthood/>.

7 As quoted in Jim Yardley and Williams Neuman, "In Bolivia, Pope Francis Apologizes for Church's 'Grave Sins,'" *The New York Times*, July 9, 2015, <http://nyti.ms/1fsAY9h>.

Thus, to dwell in the borderlands is to live in the space of ambivalence and to cultivate “a tolerance for ambiguity”; those who dwell in the borderlands must take that ambivalence and craft a “new mythos--that is, a change in the way we perceive reality, the way we see ourselves, and the ways we behave.”⁸ Likewise, Chicana feminist historian Maylei Blackwell’s concept of “retrofitted memory” imagines cultural memory as borderlands terrain; for her, memory is a process that recognizes the tensions and the limits of the past and the need to constantly rework past memory to suit present and future needs.⁹ Borderlands memory then holds onto a non-innocent past even while revisiting the past to imagine another future.¹⁰

Media studies scholar Desirée Martín has built off the work of Anzaldúa and others on the borderlands in cultivating a category of “borderlands saints.” She argues that “the borderlands symbolize the essence of painful yet valuable contradiction.”¹¹ Although she specifically examines devotion to figures not officially recognized as saints by the Church, figures such as Santa Muerte, she points to how borderlands saints are specifically border crossers who can provide a mirror, sometimes a harsh one, on the struggle for survival.¹² *Frontera* saints are saints who point us toward and accompany us *en la lucha*.¹³

Father Junípero Serra is not a borderlands saint the way Martín defines them, but approaching him as a *frontera* saint draws our attention to the centrality of *lucha* as sacred struggle, where cultural memory is one of those terrains of *lucha*. Pope Francis closed his homily by underscoring *¡Siempre Adelante!* as Junípero Serra’s motto, a motto that Latina feminist theologian Neomi DeAnda translates as “Always keep moving forward in the struggle.”¹⁴ Serra certainly struggled in his work as a missionary, but the California missions also forced Native Californians to struggle for survival in ways they did not have to struggle before his arrival on California’s shores.¹⁵ In asking that we approach Serra as a *frontera* saint, I am not proposing him as a hero of *lucha*. I am asking that we use him as a window onto the complexities of *lucha* in the past and the present, and that we cultivate a tolerance for ambiguities and an imaginative ambivalence in wrestling with the past. A retrofitted *frontera* mission memory can open us up to other pasts that are forgotten when one focuses only on the heroic or villainous character of one individual instead of the broader frontier context in which multiple cultures clash and transform each other across uneven dynamics of power.

8 Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute, 1987), 79-80.

9 Maylei Blackwell, *¡Chicana Power! Contested Histories of Feminism in the Chicano Movement* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011). Also see Jeanette Rodríguez and Ted Fortier, *Cultural Memory: Resistance, Faith, and Identity* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007) for a discussion of how cultural memory as a religious practice can empower oppressed communities.

10 For a discussion of Latino theologies as the products of “non-innocent histories” produced by descendants of the conqueror, conquered, enslaver, enslaved, and many in between, see Justo L. González, *Mañana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 39-40; and Jean-Pierre Ruiz, “The Bible and U.S. Hispanic American Theological Discourse: Lessons from a Non-Innocent History,” in *From the Heart of Our People: Latino/a Explorations in Catholic Systematic Theology*, ed. Orlando O. Espín and Miguel H. Díaz (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), 101-102.

11 Desirée A. Martín, *Borderlands Saints: Secular Sanctity in Chicano/a and Mexican Culture* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2014), 12.

12 Martín, *Borderlands Saints*, 3. Martín also argues that unofficial saints come to the fore because the institutional Catholic church’s attempts to control saintly devotion by focusing on the piety of *imitatio Christi* only “reinforced its top-down structure of authority, to establish distance between saints and humans” (Martín, 14). What *frontera* saints allow for is a fuller memory and mapping of the terrain of humanity’s struggle.

13 *La lucha* has long been a central category of analysis and locus for Latina feminist/*mujerista* theologizing. See the work of Ada-María Isasi-Díaz in particular but also consider Lara Medina’s outlining of the import of “transformative struggle” to the theology of Latina Catholics who were active in Las Hermanas. Lara Medina, *Las Hermanas: Chicana/Latina Religious-Political Activism in the U.S. Catholic Church* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2005), 123-46. Also see, for instance, Ada-María Isasi-Díaz, *En la lucha/In the Struggle: Elaborating a Mujerista Theology*, 10th anniversary ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004).

14 Exchange via text message between the author and Neomi DeAnda on October 7, 2016.

15 For a biographical examination that charts Serra’s zealous devotion, see Steven W. Hackel, *Junípero Serra: California’s Founding Father* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2013).

Imperial Dreams, Serra's Missions, and the Limits of Good Intentions

From the beginning, the missions in California depended upon and were necessarily entwined with the dreams of empire. Although the land of Alta California had been known since the sixteenth century, the Spanish only sought to settle it once other European imperial powers seemed interested in California. By the time Junípero Serra arrived in San Diego in 1769, Russian explorers were sixty-five miles north of San Francisco.¹⁶

Inspector General (*visitador-general*) José de Gálvez asked Serra to join forces with the military and civilian populations in settling Alta California.¹⁷ Native converts would live in a “mission compound” that was under the complete control of two missionaries.¹⁸ The missionaries were often bolstered by a small number of military residing at the mission, as well as a nearby *presidio* or military base.¹⁹ The ultimate goal was to place missions as staggered settlements roughly three days’ walk apart from each other, with the hope that each mission could be a “self-contained” economy that nurtured religious life while maintaining a limited exchange with the outside.²⁰ The missions were built to follow the coastline, not the settlement patterns of Native communities. Spanish military needs determined mission structure in key ways.

Serra was no simple shill of the military government. Serra conflicted quite regularly with California’s military governor Felipe de Neve.²¹ The primary critique of Serra’s canonization does not center on whether he intended to do good mission work; anyone who reads Serra’s letters can sense the sincerity of his faith and his hopes. The problem, though, lies with the actual repercussions of that mission work. As historian of Native American Religions Jace Weaver argues, good intent is often insufficient in the face of empire: the “systematic nature of racism” “organizes and structures personal intent (however good) as to make the racist ends it may serve.”²²

Pope Francis’s homily characterized Serra as someone who “sought to defend the dignity of the Native community, protecting it from those who had abused it.” Many contemporary historians would assent to this version of Serra: he was quite critical of some of the more physically abusive practices of Spanish colonial violence, especially when it came to the sexual violation of Native women and children.²³ He argued against the death penalty. In the wake of a 1775 Kumeyaay revolt at Mission San Diego, during which Father Luis Jayme was killed by Native insurgents,

16 J. Harold Ellens, “The Franciscans: A Study in Mission,” *Missiology: An International Review* 3, no. 4 (October 1975): 497. Carlos III received reports of a Russian advance in late 1767. See Donald Cutter and Iris Engstrand, *Quest for Empire: Spanish Settlement in the Southwest* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 1996), 194.

17 Carlos Leon Mujal, “Out of the Apocalypse to the Alta California: Franciscans in the New World (1524-1833)” (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2002), 108-109.

18 Alison Lake, *Colonial Rosary: The Spanish and Indian Missions of California* (Athens, OH: Swallow Press and Ohio University Press, 2006), 43.

19 George E. Tinker, *Missionary Conquest: The Gospel and Native American Cultural Genocide* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 18.

20 James A. Sandos, *Converting California: Indians and Franciscans in the Missions* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 49.

21 Francisco Palóu, *La Vida de Junípero Serra* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, Inc. of Xerox Corp., 1966 [1787]), 154-55. All translations of Palóu’s *Vida* are mine unless otherwise noted. One of the main sources of conflicts between Neve and Serra was Serra’s view of Native Californians as children as compared with Neve’s view that they should be more quickly integrated into Spanish civilian society, though his desires seemed to be rooted in a desire to hire them as laborers. Sandos, 69. In Palóu’s biography, he pays attention to one tense moment between Commandant Fages and Serra, a tension that prompts Serra to travel to Mexico City (proving his saintly endurance in Palóu’s mind) and politic with the new viceroy, Antonio María de Bucareli y Ursua. Palóu, *Vida*, 146-47.

22 Jace Weaver, “Introduction: From I-Hermeneutics to We-Hermeneutics,” in *Native American Religious Identity: Unforgotten Gods* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998), 4.

23 Serra wrote of sexual immorality (both concubinage and rape), including molestation of Native Californian boys and sexual assaults on Native men, in addition to women, and the dangers these acts posed for successful spiritual conquest. Not long after the founding of San Gabriel, for instance, some soldiers went out on a supposed cattle round-up in which they used rope to lasso women. On this particular incident, see Fray Junípero Serra to Antonio María de Bucareli y Ursua, May 21, 1773, in *Writings of Junípero Serra*, trans. and ed. Antonine Tibesar, OFM, 4 vols. (Washington, DC: Academy of American Franciscan History, 1955), 2: 360-62. Such violence was not restricted to indigenous women. In this same letter, Serra also describes a priest who discovered a soldier “committing deeds of shame with an Indian,” here specifically gendered male (Serra, 2:362).

Serra argued that Native peoples could not be faulted for these decisions, and that their lives must be spared, even if more missionaries would be martyred, to save the souls of Native Californians.²⁴ Serra argued that, under the right conditions and with the correct missionary efforts, Native peoples could one day be better Christians than the Spanish. In this regard, however, he is not so much more remarkable than many of his compatriots; other prominent figures such as the sixteenth-century Dominican friar Bartolomé de las Casas had already made bolder cases for Native humanity.

Despite Serra's good intentions, the ends of imperial domination built upon white supremacist racism impacted the missions in many ways. Before 1492, Alta California was one of the most densely populated regions north of the valley of Mexico; under Spanish and Mexican rule, from 1769-1846, California Indian populations declined as much as 90 percent.²⁵ The missions undeniably contributed to population decline, though often unintentionally. The technicalities of genocide as defined by the United Nations, which includes direct intent to eliminate an ethnic group, are more appropriately applied to U.S. rather than Spanish behavior in California;²⁶ as Osage theologian George Tinker has argued, cultural genocide is the more relevant concern in examining Spanish practices in California. For Tinker, there are four main facets of cultural genocide that attack the "self-image" of Native peoples by seeking to destroy their political, economic, social, and religious life.²⁷ According to most contemporary historians, Serra's missions were involved in targeting all four of these facets of Native Californian worlds.

Serra and his fellow missionaries generally assumed a kind of cultural conversion to be part of the spiritual conversion.²⁸ Thusly, their missionary aspirations often aligned well with Spanish colonial aspirations, and missionary assumptions were that Native peoples could be remade away from their cultures. Pope Francis's homily described Serra as someone who was interested in "learning to respect [Native] customs and characteristics." Many scholars would dispute these characterizations of Serra. He did not respect Native customs if those customs in any ways ran afoul of Serra's expectations for good Spanish Christian citizenship. His approach to Native culture would be classed instead as a form of what historian José Rabasa terms "love speech," which can be just as damaging, especially since such love speech has disruptive goals masked by a language of doing good and being helpful. Yet such love speech still presumes the inferiority of Native cultures and their need to be remade into the missionary's ideal.²⁹

Missionary love speech in the California case did not just target religious structures, but political, economic, and social structures as well. Serra and his fellow missionaries viewed Spanish economy, agricultural practices, food,

24 "Father Junípero Serra Reports the Destruction of the San Diego Mission," 1775, in *Major Problems in California History*, ed. Sucheng Chan and Spencer C. Olin (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), 61-62.

25 Norris Hundley, Jr., *The Great Thirst: Californians and Water: A History*, rev. ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 1-2.

26 Benjamin Madley, *An American Genocide: The United States and the California Indian Catastrophe, 1846-1873* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 3. As Madley convincingly argues in his work, the U.S. undertook direct killing, bodily harm, suffering, and the transfer of children to eradicate Native Californian populations (see especially his concluding discussion, 350-53). Spanish, and especially Franciscan approaches, aimed to transform—rather than directly kill—Native populations to bring them under Spanish control.

27 Tinker, *Missionary Conquests*, 6.

28 Tinker, 47. They sought to create a *novus homo*, a new human being, who would be "Christianized and civilized" and be subject to Spanish imperial power. Mujal, "Out of the Apocalypse," 235.

29 José Rabasa, *Writing Violence on the Northern Frontier: The Historiography of Sixteenth-Century New Mexico and Florida and the Legacy of Conquest* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), 6.

and Spanish-style clothing as a draw to mission life.³⁰ At the same time, one of the main goals of the missionary project was to make Native economies dependent on European trade.³¹ Native agricultural practices were perceived as uncivilized and inadequate, and it was assumed that conversion meant Native Californians should adapt to Spanish agricultural life.³² Mission residents were expected to participate in communal labor projects, which even some eighteenth-century observers such as French naval officer François de Pérouse, writing in 1787, equated with “slavery.”³³ Mission Indians were expected to provide crops that could support the missions and the *presidios*. Mission residents ate only a minimum of the food produced so that some could be sold for profit.³⁴ Moreover California Indians were made to build much of the mission structures themselves.³⁵

Spatial organization of the missions also intended to disrupt Native social structures. The walls of the mission and its isolation from local Native communities served “to limit Indian mobility,” especially any attempts to leave the mission without missionary or military approval.³⁶ The inward focusing, square, enclosed mission layout also made missionary surveillance easier.³⁷ Yet the dense packing for surveillance also led to disease epidemics. One significant repercussion of mission life was a high mortality rate among the Native Californians who lived there.³⁸

One of the most controversial of Serra’s actions is his well-documented support for corporal punishment of Native converts. In part his support for the corporal punishment of Native converts may be contextualized within his

30 Serra, *Writings*, 2:202. Given the limits of our primary sources from California Indians, it would be hard to establish what drew them to mission life.

Virginia M. Bouvier provides an extensive list of reasons most scholars have considered. See *Women and the Conquest of California, 1542-1840: Codes of Silence* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2001), 90. Many argued, as the Spanish did, that their agricultural patterns were far superior to indigenous ones, thus explaining why the California Indians came to the missions. Perhaps California Indians ate more on the missions than they did on their own, and that is what attracted them. Harry Kelsey, “European Impact on the California Indians, 1530-1830,” *The Americas* XLI (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America, 1985): 505-6. Yet this argument seems to discount other archaeological evidence, especially the evidence that missions had cycles of surplus and famine, and in times of famine, California Indians were allowed out of the mission to return to old patterns of subsistence, presumably because they would eat more that way (Tinker, 53). Coercion and the relocation of children in large numbers seem to have been primary factors, as children were often the first converts; indeed, any claims about mission appeal based on steady food supply is overly simplistic and discounts Native Californian food skills. Robert H. Jackson and Edward D. Castillo, *Indians, Franciscans, and Spanish Colonization: The Impact of the Mission System on California Indians* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 107-108. Palóu even appears to describe San Francisco Bay Natives as well fed (Palóu, *Vida*, 209, 216-18). Some of the Native Californians may have thought they could use the Spanish against their own Native enemies, or perhaps they thought the Franciscans could mediate between the Native Californians and the Spanish soldiers. It does seem that some perceived the Franciscans as wielding a tremendous knowledge/spiritual power that some may have wished to learn more about. David J. Weber, “Blood of Martyrs, Blood of Indians: Toward a More Balanced View of Spanish Missions in Seventeenth-Century North America,” in *Columbian Consequences*, vol. 2. *Archaeological and Historical Perspectives on the Spanish Borderlands*, ed. David Hurst Thomas (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994), 433-34.

31 The Spanish regularly cited Native interest in Spanish clothing. Tinker, 51. In requesting items be sent to Alta California, Serra mentioned clothing, linking it to the need to clothe innocent Indians, for instance requesting “enough clothing of coarse cotton cloth, canvas and baize to cover in part so many poor naked [people], [who] here [are] very docile, and peaceable.” Fray Junípero Serra to Father Juan Andrés, June 12, 1770, in Serra, *Writings*, 1:170. I have on occasion wondered if Serra’s view that the Natives desired his clothing had more to do with his desire to clothe them than their interest in European clothing.

32 Tinker, 52. Serra also describes the labors of the mission populations. See Fray Junípero Serra to Don Antonio Maria de Bucareli y Ursúa, August 24, 1774, in Serra, *Writings*, 2:142-44.

33 Catherine R. Ettinger, “Spaces of Change: Architecture and the Creation of a New Society in the California Missions,” *Boletín: The Journal of the California Mission Studies Association* 21, no. 1 (2004): 26.

34 Tinker, 49.

35 Jackson and Castillo, *Indians, Franciscans*, 3. Palóu describes how some California Indians immediately went to work in building a house for the priests and a chapel for Mission San Buenaventura. Palóu, *Vida*, 247.

36 Jackson and Castillo, *Indians, Franciscans*, 80-81.

37 Ettinger, “Spaces of Change,” 36.

38 Jackson and Castillo, *Indians, Franciscans*, 109.

own broader devotion to self-flagellation as a means of religious discipline.³⁹ However, in the context of California, it also can be understood as a method of racializing Native peoples as inferior because Spanish and mixed-race subjects who colonized California were not flogged as a form of criminal punishment.⁴⁰ Flogging was a regular sentence for captured runaways; once a Californian accepted baptism, they were forbidden from leaving the mission compound without express missionary permission. In this way again, missionary labor was entwined with the repressive state apparatus of the imperial regime. The missionaries depended on the military to enforce an imprisonment of Native converts.⁴¹

Pope Francis claims that Serra “made [Native peoples] his siblings.” Contemporary historians would dispute whether “sibling” accurately describes Serra’s perceived relationship with Native converts. He quite clearly viewed himself as their father, and he imagined Native converts as children, in need of his protection but never his equal. Serra may have partially wanted Native peoples legally classified as missionary children to ensure missionary protection of Native converts, so that he could prevent Spanish soldiers and civilians from abusing them.⁴² However, legal classification of Native converts as children had significant repercussions. Serra specifically connected corporal punishment to his sense of being a spiritual father teaching lessons to his spiritual children. He also did not doubt that such punishment was normal: “That spiritual fathers should punish their sons, the Indians, with blows appears to be as old as the conquest of these kingdoms [the Americas].”⁴³ Weaver would likely read this statement and see racist structures shaping good intentions to racist ends.

Retrofitted Memory and Rethinking the Lines Between Religion and Culture

Remembering the missions should then challenge us to rethink our assumptions about the lines between religion and culture; it should make us wonder how “religious truths” are culturally conditioned. In our contemporary moment, such memory can help us see how gender and sexuality are especially culturally conditioned social relations that are too often portrayed as religious truths. Historian Clare Sears has used an interpretive method called “trans-ing” in understanding gender during the Gold Rush. Her approach does not posit either “gender” or “sexuality” as unitary or stable identities. Gender and sexuality are social codes of human relationality; gender and sexuality, in many different human societies, have been ways of representing, imagining, negotiating, and contesting relations of power. Yet the gendering and sexualization of power dynamics does not look universally the same across cultures.

39 Serra’s devotion to imitating other saints was actually one of the problematic veins of his missionary activities. After completing the novitiate, Serra dropped his name of Miquel, choosing Junípero, which had been the name of one of Francis’s early followers, known for “simplicity and humor.” He not only imitated Francis of Assisi but also Francis Solanus through the practice of self-flagellation, which he even undertook publicly as a preaching practice. He would use a chain in the pulpit to imitate Francis Solanus. On one occasion in Mexico City, before he came to Alta California, Serra started hitting himself with the chain at the end of his sermon, and this inspired a congregant to rise up and imitate him. The man actually killed himself through the violent use of the chains. See Palóu, *Vida*, 44. Sometimes Serra combined a stone with a crucifix, violently striking his chest at the end of a sermon to demonstrate contrition. At other times, especially if sermonizing on hell, he would use candles lit up, uncover his chest, and burn himself for effect. See Palóu, *Vida*, 261-262.

40 Serra specifically called for “whippings” to be used as “a warning, and may be of spiritual benefit to all.” Fray Junípero Serra to Fernando Rivera y Moncada, July 31, 1775, Serra, *Writings*, 4:425. Such corporal punishment continued after Serra’s death. Second mission president Lasuén justifies the methods of corporal punishment used on California mission Indians by describing the California Indians as “uncivilized” and suggests that they could hardly be classed as human because they practice lewd behaviors, irrationality, and fierce ignorance (seen in a lack of agriculture, government, or religion) that could only be answered with fierce punishments one would not use on more “cultured” citizens. See *The Writings of Fermín Francisco de Lasuén*, trans. and ed. Finbar Kenneally, OFM, vol. 2 (Washington, DC: Academy of American Franciscan History, 1965), 220. Spanish settlers were never so punished, which means that floggings served to maintain a racial hierarchy in California. See Madley, *An American Genocide*, 30.

41 Tinker, 48.

42 In 1773 Serra had it decreed that “just as a father of a family has charge of his house and of the education and correction of his children” then, at least in California, “the management, control, and education of the baptized Indians pertains exclusively to the missionary fathers.” See Palóu, *Historical Memoirs of New California by Francisco Palóu, O.F.M.*, ed. and trans. Herbert Bolton, 4 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1926), 3: 50.

43 See Fray Juniper Serra to Colonel and Governor Don Felipe de Neve, January 7, 1780, in Serra, *Writings*, 3: 413.

Sears's trans-ing approach to history considers how gender normativities are approached and delineated in any given historical moment, and then it considers how these normativities were sometimes breached and broken in a particular historical setting. A trans-ing approach thus examines "not only people and practices that challenge gender normativity but also cross-gender practices that do not provoke censure, and trans-ing discourses that represent men as feminine, women as masculine, and gender difference as impossible to read."⁴⁴ Such gender crossings are often practices of power, so they cannot be understood as necessarily presenting liberative gender relations. As a practice of borderlands retrofitted memory, reinterpreting past gender norms and gender crossings as distinct from our own can open new possibilities for our present perceptions.

Pope Francis's own contemporary comments have revealed how challenging an issue gender currently is for the Church. On the one hand, he has notably argued for pastoral accompaniment of transgender individuals.⁴⁵ On the other hand, he has critiqued contemporary gender discourses as "ideological colonization," especially when the social construction of gender is taught in schools to children and promoted by wealthy and influential nations.⁴⁶ While anti-colonialists can sympathize somewhat with Pope Francis's concern that Western gender norms are often economically forced on less powerful or wealthy nations, a borderlands memory of the missions underscores how the Catholic Church has already committed an ideological colonization of gender in California. Contemporary Esselen/Chumash writer Deborah A. Miranda accuses the Franciscan missionaries of perpetrating "gendercide" among Native Californian peoples whose gender systems did not align with Spanish Catholic binaristic and heteropatriarchal gender norms. Missionary practices that sought to transform gender should make us question any assumptions that there is a "natural" gender or sexual order and organization, even within Catholicism. Why else would so much work be needed to transform distinct gender codes?

The physical layout of the missions worked to sex segregate young boys and girls and men and women, allowing only nuclear families to live together, a structure that intentionally sought to remake many Native Californian kinship structures.⁴⁷ In the missions, the daily catechetical ritual tended to emphasize a binary gender hierarchy of male dominance in part as a modification of indigenous traditions; the ways that services were ordered and organized were meant to suggest male dominance over female participants.⁴⁸ Men, defined by sex, stood on one side of the altar, looking at *santos* symbolizing the "cross," whereas women, specifically defined by and oriented toward

44 Clare Sears, "All that Glitters: Trans-ing California's Gold Rush Migrations," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 14, no. 2-3 (2008): 384.

45 See discussion in Nicole Winfield of the Associated Press, "Pope Francis Encourages Catholics to Stand with Transgender People," *The Portland Press Herald*, October 7, 2016, <http://www.pressherald.com/2016/10/07/pope-francis-encourages-catholics-to-stand-with-transgender-people/>.

46 The initial context of identifying gender as ideological colonization was in Vatican-released remarks the Pope made to Polish bishops. See the Vatican's published transcript, available in multiple languages and posted August 2, 2016, <http://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2016/08/02/0568/01265.html#es>. He reaffirmed these comments even while promoting pastoral care for transgender individuals, during a recent flight to Rome after his visits to Georgia and Azerbaijan. See John Newsome, "Pope Warns of 'Ideological Colonization' in Transgender Teachings," *CNN*, October 4, 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/2016/10/02/world/pope-transgender-comments/>. A critique of gender ideology as colonizing does not necessarily mean antagonism to lived experiences of gender, but it also does not necessarily provide a path for transformative gender relations either. For an analysis of some of Pope Francis's earlier comments that carefully distinguishes between "gender ideology" and "transgender people," see annamagda4christ's post, "What Does Pope Francis Actually Say about Transgender People?," *CatholicTrans*, July 7, 2015, <https://catholictrans.wordpress.com/2015/07/07/what-does-pope-francis-actually-say-about-transgenderism/>.

47 Sandos, *Converting California*, 8. As Sandos points out, this segregational practice reveals an intriguing assumption that sex only happened at night. Also see Bouvier, 82. Ettinger suggests that male dormitories were a lower priority, built in places where the risk of men running away was higher, which suggests how much such mission housing was associated with imprisonment rather than "protection." Ettinger also thinks that the comparative lack of male dormitories explains "the proliferation of arcades in the California missions, which served as sleeping quarters for men." Ettinger, 39-40. For a sense of how deeply these mission structures were embedded in Spanish logics of gender, see Antonia I. Castañeda, "Engendering the History of Alta California, 1769-1848: Gender, Sexuality, and the Family," in *Contested Eden: California Before the Gold Rush*, ed. Ramón A. Gutiérrez and Richard J. Orsi with Anthony Kirk and Marelene Smith-Baranzini (Berkeley: The California Historical Society with the University of California Press, 1998), 233-35. It is important to remember that not all indigenous systems were the same; gender systems and roles differed among Californian tribes. Bouvier's chapter on sexuality and marriage is especially instructive on this matter. See Bouvier, *Women and the Conquest*, 116ff.

48 Sandos, *Converting California*, 98.

reproduction, stood on another side of the altar looking at birth *santos* such as St. Anthony holding the Christ. The cross *santos* were supposed to teach males their proper role as head of a Christian family, and birth *santos* were supposed to teach women their role within the family as mothers and subordinates to their husbands.⁴⁹

In addition to catechetical rituals, missionaries emphasized women's need for behavior modification, and they reoriented women toward cleaning, laundering, and other labor that both fit Spanish notions of appropriate feminine roles and kept the women inside the mission where they could be more closely watched.⁵⁰ Yet, for many non-Christian Native Californians, women controlled their own sexuality and reproduction, and they appeared to exercise considerable "religious, political, economic, and sometimes, military power."⁵¹ Significantly, both baptism and marriage were "the most widely distributed" sacraments in New Spain.⁵² However, non-monogamous relationships, as well as abortion and infanticide, activities that were severely punished by the Franciscans, were all normal practices in many indigenous Californian traditions.⁵³

Insurgent leaders, such as Toypurina, suggests that the relationship between gender and power, especially spiritual power, could be quite distinct for Native populations.⁵⁴ The case of Toypurina, later baptized as Regina Josepha, opens up a space of alternative borderlands memory from which some facets of a complicated Native Californian Catholicism might be recuperated; both pragmatic politics and spiritual power meet in Toypurina's tale.⁵⁵ A counter-memory around and devotion to Toypurina/Regina Josepha lives on among local Native and ethnic Mexican populations in Los Angeles today as evidenced in her appearance on mural walls in different parts of the city.

It is not only male domination and a rescripting of gender roles that troubled mission gender systems. Francisco Palóu describes in his biography of Serra an incident that took place in what we now term Silicon Valley. During harvest time at mission Santa Clara, in a rare moment of integration, non-Christian Native Californians came together with their mission kin. The mission priest found among the women an individual the Franciscans believed to be a man. Palóu claims that when the father asked some of the Christian converts about this, they explained how the individual fit within their gender system, and then, either because they had been socialized into the Spanish system or Palóu put words in their mouth, the Native Christians claimed "it was not good."⁵⁶ The Spanish dragged

49 The Mexican Virgin of Guadalupe was also a prominent birth *santo*. Sandos, *Converting California*, 45.

50 Lake, *Colonial Rosary*, 84. At the same time, some presumed gender roles varied among missions, depending on whether women settlers were around to serve as exemplars, supervisors, and teachers in the mission. Bouvier, *Women and the Conquest*, 86.

51 Castañeda, "Engendering the History," 233-35. The absence of women among the initial Spanish settlers (until 1774) was a point of significant confusion for Native Californians. The Chumash, for instance, assumed the absence of women meant the Spanish "had been banished from their own land" (Bouvier, *Women and the Conquest*, 39).

52 Mujal, "Out of the Apocalypse," 67.

53 For some Chumash it was traditional practice to kill the firstborn. Lake, *Colonial Rosary*, 151. Women in California generally practiced abortion and infanticide in cases of rape. Jackson and Castillo, *Indians, Franciscans*, 82. Priests at Mission San Gabriel, for instance, assumed that even miscarriages were abortions, and they punished women with head shaving, flogging (for fifteen days), the wearing of iron on their feet (shackling could last up to three months), sackcloth, ashes, and having to appear in church on Sunday with a child of painted wood that represented the dead baby, an effigy that a woman was supposed to carry with her at all times (Castañeda, "Engendering the History," 234). Women who did not alter their behaviors to fit Spanish modes were frequently demonized as witches. Castañeda, "Engendering the History," 235. Ramón A. Gutiérrez argued that the persecution of witches among the Indians could be read "as a struggle over [these] competing ways of defining the body and of regulating procreation as the church endeavored to constrain the expression of desire within boundaries that clerics defined proper and acceptable." Ramón A. Gutiérrez: "Sexual Mores and Behavior: The Spanish Borderlands," *Encyclopedia of the North American Colonies*, vol. 2 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1993), 701.

54 That women could exercise political and religious power was evident in the 1785 Kumi.vit (Gabrielino) revolt, led by Toypurina, known to be a medicine woman. Men involved in the revolt were partially punished for following a woman's leadership (Castañeda, "Engendering the History," 236).

55 Toypurina was later baptized as Regina Josefa, married Spanish *presidial* soldier Manuel Montero, had four children, and died from a European disease. We cannot know Toypurina's motives for converting and marrying a Spaniard, other than knowing that she would have gained some status and some protection in such an arrangement. In the decade that followed the San Gabriel revolt, Toypurina's was one of only two marriages between a Spaniard and a California Indian recorded at Missions San Juan Bautista, Santa Clara, and San Carlos. Sandos, *Converting California*, 5-6.

56 Francisco Palóu, *La Vida de Junípero Serra* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, Inc. of Xerox Corp., 1966 [1787]), 221.

this individual to the guardhouse and stripped the person naked, pointing to their genitalia and demanding they behave as a man. Not surprisingly, the terrorized individual fled the mission and never returned.

According to Palóu's biography of Serra, the Franciscans sought further explanation not only from the Natives at Mission Santa Clara but also at Mission San Antonio. There the Franciscans learned of the term "*joya*" after going into a new convert's house where two non-Christian Natives had gone, one sexed⁵⁷ male dressed as a man and one sexed male dressed as a woman. The Franciscans caught them presumably in the midst of "an act of unspoken sin," and the man responded that the *joya* was his wife.⁵⁸ Neither the man nor the *joya* was ever seen at the mission again. Palóu claims there were no reports from any other missions, but that *joyas* can be found in towns throughout the Santa Barbara Channel. Palóu concludes with the prayer that missions will fill the land and that "so abominable [a vice] will be banished."⁵⁹ Tales like these⁶⁰ lead Miranda to accuse the Franciscan missionaries of gendercide, of the willful targeting and cultural and bodily destruction of individuals who did not align with Spanish binary gender roles.

Here is another layer of memory exposed for ambivalent reconsideration. In my recent book, I write more about how the Franciscans worked to build Revelation's new Jerusalem into their mission, and I raise questions about the gender codes used in that biblical imaginary.⁶¹ The medieval and early Christian utopian and spiritual imaginary that informs the Franciscans' vision for the New Jerusalem in Alta California is not one that necessarily enforces gender norms on quite the same terms the Spanish Franciscans appear to take up in their missions.

Both medieval and early Christian imaginations of spiritual power often depend upon the transgression of normative gender roles and performances. As Virginia Burrus, Caroline Walker Bynum, and Gilberto Cavazos-González have demonstrated about bishops and monastics in late antiquity and the Middle Ages, men often traded on certain performances of normative feminine gender roles to claim spiritual authority and power.⁶² These gender-bending practices are not necessarily liberative; indeed, they can be taken up precisely to assert roles of spiritual authority and domination over others. However, these medieval gender-bending practices reveal how gender is employed as a social construct, as a way of representing, negotiating, and remaking relations of social and spiritual power. Gender performances within Franciscan and broader Christian traditions are hence not neatly uniform or simply, naturally binary over time themselves.

As one example, consider the gender play in Francis of Assisi's writings. Francis claimed that true spiritual power only resides among those who can embody and manage both feminine and masculine gender aspects. He asserted that the masculine and patriarchal authority of leadership required that both paternal and maternal symbols and associations be employed.⁶³ Francis was not the only medieval mystic to suggest that spiritual paths lay in being ca-

57 In this essay, I often use "sex" to refer to the sex assigned at birth or by the Spanish based on anatomical features commonly identified as reproductive organs. While gender and sex cannot be as neatly divided as this, I use "gender" when emphasizing socially constructed identities, which are not always simplistically aligned with Spanish claims about the inherent connection between reproductive organs and gender classification.

58 "*en acto de pecado nefando* (in an act of silent/unspoken sin)," Palóu, *Vida*, 222. For my translation of *nefando* as "silent/unspoken" instead of the more conventional "unspeakable," I am using Miranda's translation. Miranda, 261.

59 Palóu, *Vida*, 221-22.

60 Palóu is far from the only Spanish colonial writer to be bothered by Native Californian gender norms. One might also consider examples found in Gerónimo Boscana, "Chinigchinich: A New Original Version of Boscana's Historical Account of the San Juan Capistrano Indians of Southern California," ed. and trans. John P. Harrington, *Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections* 92, no. 4 (June 27, 1934). 7-28. Sandos observes that the translator, Harrington, is so embarrassed by the passage that he does not translate it. See Sandos, *Converting California*, 25 and 189, note 20.

61 Jacqueline M. Hidalgo, *Revelation in Aztlán: Scriptures, Utopias, and the Chicano Movement* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 106-113; 175-180.

62 Virginia Burrus, "*Begotten Not Made*": *Conceiving Manhood in Late Antiquity* (Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 2000); Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982); Gilberto Cavazos-González, OFM, *Greater than a Mother's Love: The Spirituality of Francis and Clare of Assisi* (Scranton, PA: University of Scranton Press, 2010).

63 Cavazos-González, *Greater than a Mother's Love*, 138.

pable of enacting both masculine and feminine gender roles.⁶⁴ He also suggests that the path of spirituality requires experiencing multiple gender roles and transforming the self through those experiences. Opening up a *frontera* memory of this history might make possible a different gender politics in our present.

***Frontera* Devotion as Practice of Critical Reflection**

A *frontera* saintly devotion of borderlands memory attends not only to the historical context of the missions but also to their reception histories. How have the missions been remembered and why? To some extent, the bitter binary of California dreams or colonial nightmares that I inscribed in the title to this essay, the wondering about whether Serra is a hero or a villain, are bound up with who has fought for Serra to be canonized and why.

Serra died in 1784 at Mission San Carlos Borromeo.⁶⁵ The earliest proponent of Serra's sainthood was his student, Francisco Palóu.⁶⁶ Three years after Serra's death, Palóu published a hagiography intended to make Serra look like a saint, a hagiography that has cast a long shadow over historiographies of the Franciscan settlement. Palóu's *Vida* concludes with a long chapter that meditates on Serra's saintly virtues, even while emphasizing Palóu's awareness of papal regulations regarding canonization.⁶⁷

Palóu's is the main Spanish voice from that era clamoring for Serra's canonization, and the Mexican government, which eventually secularizes the missions and views them as patronizing to Native Californians, has no real interest in Serra's case.⁶⁸ It is not until the 1880s and among Anglos in what is now the U.S.A. state of California that we begin to see a drive for Serra's sainthood. While they borrow heavily from Palóu's hagiography, these U.S.A. portrayals render Serra as a tireless pioneer and bringer of civilization, embodying the benefits of settler colonial Christian expansion.⁶⁹

The demographic collapse of California Indian populations that started under the Spanish became intentionally pursued genocide under the United States. The California Indian population declined an additional 80 percent in just twelve years from 1848 to 1860.⁷⁰ Critics of US genocide readily found Spanish missionary activity as a preferable model. Helen Hunt Jackson's 1884 novel *Ramona*, which was quite popular for more than fifty years and was made into several films, reimagined the Franciscans' communal-based utopian missions into U.S.A.-style "enterprises."⁷¹ Jackson also wished to convert Native peoples, and certainly saw their conversion as preferable to their massacre.⁷² In an era in which Catholics were not especially loved in the United States, Jackson made the case for thinking about Franciscans as Protestant in their austerity, at least when compared to other Catholics.⁷³

64 Cavazos-González, *Greater than a Mother's Love*, 137-38. I also thank Neomi DeAnda for discussing this paper with me and reminding me of the importance of gender bending to medieval monastic spiritual authority.

65 Steven W. Hackel, "The Competing Legacies of Junípero Serra: Pioneer, Saint, Villain," *Common-Place: The Interactive Journal of Early American Life* 5, no. 2 (January 2005). <http://www.common-place.org/vol-05/no-02/hackel/index.shtml>.

66 Tinker, *Missionary Conquests*, 43. Palóu states that he had known Serra since 1739, and he does, on occasion, worry that their close emotional relationship would be perceived as coloring his work. See Palóu, *Vida*, 287-88.

67 Palóu does, however, on more than one occasion make it clear that he is aware of the rules regarding canonization as set by Pope Urban VIII in 1631, and he is not trying to shirk those rules in any way. See for instance, Palóu, *Vida*, 282.

68 Sandos, *Converting California*, 106. The Mexicans also enacted their own brutal regime racializing Native Californians as a labor base. See discussion in Madley, 39-40.

69 Hackel, "Competing Legacies."

70 Sandos, *Converting California*, 183.

71 Sandos, *Converting California*, 183. Readings of Bryant's account of California likewise suggest this seeming confluence between the California missions and the now more expansive work of U.S.A. "enterprise" that the unworked land requires. Once that is accomplished, "The day is not distant when American enterprise and American ingenuity will furnish those adjuncts of civilization, of which California is now so destitute, and render a residence in this country one of the most luxurious upon the globe." Edwin Bryant, "What I Saw in California," in *A World Transformed: Firsthand Accounts of California Before the Gold Rush*, ed. Joshua Paddison (Berkeley, CA.: Heyday Books, 1999), 270.

72 Roberto Ramón Lint Sagarena, *Aztlán and Arcadia: Religion, Ethnicity, and the Creation of Place* (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 64.

73 See discussion in Lint Sagarena, *Aztlán and Arcadia*, 67.

This recognition of Serra and the missions, besides denigrating other Catholics, also worked as a way of criticizing Mexicans. Besides critiquing US genocide, mobilizing Spanish mission memory was a way in which Anglo settlers could denigrate Mexican rule and cast Mexicans as “foreigners” on soil that had been their home before 1848. Mission revival architecture imprints on California’s landscape the sense of connection that a dominant US culture perceived with Serra’s colonial ideals; moreover, mission revival architecture becomes most prominent especially in the era of the Mexican Revolution when many more ethnic Mexicans moved to California.⁷⁴ The sense

of mission architecture as embodying pioneering Euro-American civilization and strength is why the Reagan Library in Simi Valley chose mission revival architecture in order to communicate the “peace through strength” of Reagan’s “city on a hill.”⁷⁵

Such rhetoric is in marked contrast to Pope Francis’s portrayal of Serra as a missionary “accompanying the life of God in the faces of those he met.” Yet it is not out of step with many early twentieth-century Anglo Californians who fought for Serra’s canonization. Again, racism was a crucial facet of these calls for Serra’s canonization. Claremont Colleges President James A. Blaisdell, speaking at the 1929 dedication of the Junípero Serra Museum in San Diego, affirmed an Anglo connection with Mallorcan Serra in clear racializing tones. Blaisdell casts the Spanish conquest of California and the Anglo museumification of the missions as a racial reunification and a return to racial origins: “by the grace and chivalry of two branches of our common Aryan family which were cradled originally in a common birthplace eons ago but have been for ages diversely educated and moulded in far-separated regions under vastly varying and often distinctly contrasted influences until they are now here reunited in this new community of interest and effort.”⁷⁶ Considering how important white supremacist racism was to those who argued for Serra’s canonization in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, of course Native American and ethnic Mexican populations came to see Serra as the embodiment of racist histories that have marginalized and oppressed them.

In asking you to remember St. Serra through the lens of borderlands memory, I am asking you to hold in tension the ambivalence that surrounds Catholic entanglements in the settler colonization and conquest of California. If we follow Pope Francis’s urging to challenge practices of colonization that create and maintain exploited underclasses, then we must grapple with how Catholic missionaries in California contributed to Native genocide as well as the creation of Native American underclasses, and how Serra’s memory was mobilized in the solidification of a racialized hierarchy of white domination in California. Yet Serra points to a greater challenge of our time: the problem of recognizing good intentions and their limits. Serra wanted to do good but was structurally implicated in colonial and racist harm. Following Weaver, I do not think that colonization can yield saints as heroic figures we should wish to imitate; racist structures will always impact their intentions. But *frontera* saints can open a more complex vein of memory through which we can reflect on Catholicism’s past and present.

I want to conclude by thinking about mission memory as refracted through the performance of a Chumash woman, Ernestine de Soto, who, in the documentary film *6 Generations* (2014) recounts the memory of six generations of women in her family. She starts with her great-great-great grandmother, who was born in 1769 and baptized as María Paula, just as the Spanish first began missions in California. De Soto’s performance of memories recounts the legacies of genocide through a ritualized practice of Chumash storytelling. Problematically, she starts her story with a foremother who enters the missions; we have no access to de Soto’s Chumash ancestors who predate

74 Lint Sagarena, *Aztlán and Arcadia*, 68. Mission revival architecture came especially to dominate California in the midst of ethnic Mexican migration into California during the Mexican revolution. See discussion in Lint Sagarena, 127-128.

75 As stated in the online video, Gary Sinise, host, “Reagan Library Video Tour,” *The Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation & Library* website, <http://www.reaganfoundation.org/reagan-library-video-tour.aspx>.

76 James A. Blaisdell, “Address at the Dedication of the Junípero Serra Museum,” July 16, 1929, San Diego Historical Society pamphlet, available in the collection of the Huntington Library, San Marino, CA, 7-8.

the Spanish missions. Yet de Soto also reveals and embodies the stories of women who lived a sacred struggle for survival, who were critical of mission histories even while they were Catholics. De Soto's family stories all center around *¡Siempre Adelante!*, Junípero Serra's motto of "always keep moving forward in the struggle." De Soto offers a way beyond the binary of California dreams or colonial nightmares, between the dichotomy that structures a focus on one man as saint or villain. What would mission memory look like if, instead of focusing on Serra, we centered the women of de Soto's family, if we made their struggles the focus of our mission memory?