THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CHANGES IN THE
SOUTHWEST AS SEEN IN THE NOVELS OF
HARVEY FERGUSSON

by
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STATEMENT BY AUTHOR

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ABSTRACT

Harvey Fergusson's fiction works of New Mexico cover in breadth and depth a century which saw many economic and social changes wrought by the Anglos. The thesis analyzes these changes and their historic accuracy. The novels discuss the mountain man's entrance into aristocratic Mexican society, the coming of traders across the Santa Fe Trail, the railroad's impact upon the economic system, and the eventual ostracism of the Mexican. These changes, both economic and social, are covered in Mr. Fergusson's novels with particular attention to details of historic and cultural accuracy. Harvey Fergusson's maternal grandfather had come to New Mexico during the Santa Fe Trail days, and his own father had been a political figure during the formative years of the territory. From these two men Mr. Fergusson absorbed the spirit of the early days. His own boyhood was spent in Albuquerque, and he learned firsthand much about the races who inhabit the area: the Indian, the Mexican and the Anglo. His novels recreate with vividness and accuracy the heritage of the races and put the mark of New Mexico on the regional literature of America.
CHAPTER I

BOYHOOD OF A NATIVE

A regional literature traditionally springs up when a relatively isolated segment of society with distinctive features begins to receive the attention of writers. In most cases the isolation results from a language difference or a cultural background difference, and often these two differences are coexistent. The area of the Southwest was for many generations isolated by political restrictions, language barriers and differences in tradition and culture. The breaking down of the isolation of the area began in the early days of the nineteenth century, when Anglo mountaineers began using towns such as Taos and Santa Fe as headquarters for fur trading. Following the initial entrance into the society of an alien language and an alien people, the isolation was not to continue for long. For on the heels of the mountain men came traders, as the Santa Fe Trail was opened for trade. The percentage of non-Spanish speaking people in the Southwest remained relatively small, however, until the coming of the railroad into Santa Fe across the Raton Pass. There seemed to be no limit to the changes, both economic and social, following the entrance of the railroad.
Approximately one hundred years after the isolation of the Southwest began to break down, the regional literature began to appear. Writers began recreating what they knew of the area.

It was at this point, too 1924, that novelists who, though American-born, had grown up in the close proximity to one of the cultural islands began to write about their friends and neighbors. Such pictures as . . . Harvey Fergusson's of the Spaniards of the Southwest bear eloquent evidence that the regional cultures have enriched American literature.¹

Of all those writers who claim contributions to regional literature of the Southwest, Harvey Fergusson is the one whose contributions have been substantial enough to be examined as a whole. In addition, he uses his knowledge as a native to enhance his regional novels. The series of novels written about the Southwest, written between 1921 and 1954, cover an entire cycle of the economic and social changes in the New Mexico area. Besides spanning nearly a hundred years of change, Mr. Fergusson's novels recreate with historical accuracy the considerable degree of changes which have occurred in these hundred years.

*Home in the West,* an autobiography of the years of youth, is the inquiry of Harvey Fergusson into his origins. It is also the primary indication that he is a man who

surely can recreate the romance and adventure, the hardships and cruelties, of the region known as the Southwest: he is a native. Of all the people who attempt to recreate the regional nature of an area, to write with accuracy and yet with enthusiasm and life, the native ought to be the most prepared. Harvey Fergusson not only grew up among the echoes of the frontier, he also possesses a rich heritage of the early white settlers' days of life in the New Mexico area. His maternal grandfather, Franz Huning and his father, Harvey Butler Fergusson were both part of the vital beginnings of the eventual domination of the old culture and society by the white man.

This somewhat intimate account of his boyhood years reveals the beginnings of Mr. Fergusson's own desires to write and the scenes from many remembered incidents which came to find a place in his novels. More important, however, Home in the West indicates abundant sources of Mr. Fergusson's knowledge of his surroundings, its people and its ancient and rich traditions, in a tone clearly revealing his authority as a native son.

Harvey Fergusson was born in Albuquerque, New Mexico, in 1890, the year usually designated by historians as marking the end of the frontier period of American history. In New Mexico, however, if anywhere, the frontier history was still being made, or at least still being
stubbornly clung to. For this is the time when the final chapters of the Anglo-American\textsuperscript{2} domination of aristocratic Mexican society were still being enacted. Mr. Fergusson was born in Old Town, in the remnants of what had long been the typical New Mexican community of many generations. He describes the community: "Down the river was Old Town, much as it had been for most of a century, almost solid adobe in construction and almost solid Mexican in population."\textsuperscript{3} The customs and heritages were still observed, despite the increasing encroachment of the Anglo civilization. "I lived in Old Town among people who belonged to the past—surviving families of old Mexican aristocracy who still cherished their pretensions and their hand-hammered silver, and poor Mexicans of Indian blood who still believe in witchcraft and prayed for rain" (p. 8).

Aside from the apparent advantage he acquired by growing up with the living history of the area, Mr. Fergusson's greatest single advantage in acquiring the lore he has used in his Southwest novels was having parents

\textsuperscript{2} According to Ruth Laughlin Barker in Caballeros (New York, 1931), the Mexican portion of the population in New Mexico prefers to be called Spanish-American rather than either Mexican or Spanish; therefore, the un-native New Mexican is not called simply American, but Anglo-American or Anglo.

\textsuperscript{3} Harvey Fergusson, Home in the West (New York, 1944), p. 80. Subsequent references to this and other books will appear in the text.
who did not hinder his boyish curiosity and wanderlust. His mother, in fact, encouraged his desire for freedom.

I know she bestowed upon me a freedom most American mothers deny their sons. Even as a child I was aware I had more freedom than most of my contemporaries...I knew little of... restraints and never learned any cunning and deceits because I never needed either. I seldom asked permission to do anything. If I said I wanted to do anything, my mother usually replied, "Well, why don't you do it?" or "Why don't you try?"...She gave me the notion that the world and life were mine to explore, and for that I am grateful (p. 92).

His father's contribution to his early years of wandering were also important, if of a different nature. As a Southern gentleman of the post-war South his father felt that two of the essential talents of a man ought to be an ability to handle horses and to handle weapons. With these two tools of youthful freedom available at an early age, Mr. Fergusson was equipped for his journeys into the unsettled wilderness around Albuquerque.

Mr. Fergusson says, "I always wanted to go some­where and I was more than willing to go alone. Year by year I enlarged the world of my wandering" (p. 94). At first his trips led him only out across the pastures behind the house and into the heavily forested and abundantly lush game preserve created by his grandfather, Franz Huning.

I do not know how many acres the estate contained, but it was more than a mile from end to end and about half a mile wide, reaching all the way to the river. To a small boy with
a taste for solitude and adventure it was paradise. I was a hunter primarily and this place was my private preserve. Wild ducks lit in the pasture sloughs and the cottonwood groves were full of turtledoves. I would see a coyote and a flock of geese would often light on the sand bar down by the river (p. 43).

Gradually, however, he began longer journeys which gave him the initial chance to taste the thrill of the wilderness, the aloneness prized by men of the earlier era who came west purposely seeking a haven from society for one reason or another.

I would saddle up my horse early in the morning and ride up the river with my gun across the pommel, like a mountain man of old. The country was still then nearly a wilderness. I became the center and sole inhabitant of a world without authority or restraint. This is the mark of the true outdoor solitary, that he feels not little and lonely in the wild but enlarged and free (p. 98).

Fortunate in having a wilderness to explore and enjoying the explorations, he covered all the surrounding area on horseback.

I began with one-day trips, nine or ten miles from home, and slowly extended my range, reaching my peak as a wanderer at about the age of sixteen. On the way home from a vacation in the Pecos Mountains I once rode from Santa Fe to Albuquerque, seventy miles in a day, spending fourteen hours in the saddle. Such long solitary riding was an old and traditional part of western life (p. 99).

These horseback expeditions bought him into close contact with the animal life as well as the scenery of the area.
As is natural with a boy who loves the outdoors, Mr. Fergusson's acquaintances were people who also loved it, many of them years older than he but with the same inclinations about the forests and the mountains. "Most of my friends were met in the hunting field and many of them were grown men. The one I remember best was a German carpenter, known to me only as Herman. . . . I followed him eagerly because he had a genius for finding game. His hunts were in the nature of foraging expeditions" (p. 143). Another friend, whom Mr. Fergusson describes as having "no pretentions and no money" (p. 145) broke horses for a living and showed a great understanding for both animals and small boys.

Mr. Fergusson tells of his acquaintance with Thoreau's *Walden* as of a boy finding his master: "*Walden* was a book of revelation to me. At the age of fifteen I was Thoreau's ideal disciple, with all the same tastes and aversions, but especially the aversion to social pressure and social obligation. For me as for him, life was ideally one long, solitary ramble and freedom and leisure were the only luxuries worth what they cost" (p. 172).

The penchant for both curiosity and wandering was responsible for much of Mr. Fergusson's education and resulted in the abundant background upon which he relies to write his historical novels of the Southwest. His greatest happiness lay in being alone and outside.
I believe I was never more truly engaged in my own proper and peculiar business than when I was alone outdoors. Certainly there I got more of the education I afterward used than I did in the schoolrooms. So I learned, first of all, to see—a thing most persons never learn....I was alert and filled with eager curiosity which is the first condition of all learning. I made at least a start at recording what I saw, both in word and in line....Some of my books could not have been written except for this intimate knowledge of the earth (p. 152).

In the same observant, interested manner that he acquired his natural history he also embarked on mental journeys into the social and economic history of the Southwest. He says, "The country as a whole was a living museum of its own history. This, I am sure, gave me an impression of time and change I would otherwise have lacked....The history of my own region became as real to me as my own experience" (p. 12). Since he could see the Southwest still clinging to many of the old social and economic traditions, his impulse to understand the traditions and their expression in daily life led him to inquire about them.

One of Mr. Fergusson's boyhood companions was a boy from whom he learned, by accident as much as by conscious effort, many of the traditions and customs of the old Mexican aristocracy. This boy, called Lorenzo in Home in the West, was a member of an old and once wealthy Mexican family. It was from this young Mexican boy that he first learned of the promiscuous activities of young
Mexicans, for at the age of fourteen Lorenzo "claimed to have possessed no less than ten females of various kinds, including a Navajo squaw, several domestic servants, and several girls of about his own age whom he was too gallant to name" (p. 183). While Harvey Fergusson reports that at the time this sensuous activity and the conviction of the Mexican that all girls were to be taken were shocking revelations, his later writing shows clearly that this tradition was widespread and a vital part of the growing up process of the Mexican boys.

From the memoir of his maternal grandfather, Franz Huning, Mr. Fergusson was able to learn much about the days of freighting over the Santa Fe Trail and of the beginnings of the economic and social domination of the established Mexican system by white settlers. Mr. Fergusson relates that when he was a boy:

It took no great imagination ... to picture the country as it must have been when only the Indians were there. It was even easier to imagine Old Town as it was when the first gringos came driving their wagons from the East to take possession of the earth and all its fruits. My grandfather was one of these (p. 13).

Franz Huning had come to America in 1848. By the following year he arrived in St. Louis. "The town was full of German immigrants and roaring with business" (p. 17). After several months of work Huning decided to apply for a job as a bullwhacker. The train which hired him traveled the two months' trip from Leavenworth,
Kansas, to Santa Fe. Mr. Fergusson records that his grandfather's initial contact with the town of Santa Fe was on Christmas Day, 1850, "a region and a people which were to hold him the rest of his life" (p. 21).

The picture of Santa Fe in the 1850's as described by Huning in his memoir was of a complex scene. All types of people met and exchanged goods, threats and money. "It [Santa Fe] contained a wealthy aristocracy living in great adobe houses, riding fine horses on silver-mounted saddles, transporting its women in Concord coaches, despising gringos as vulgar intruders" (p. 21). During the 1850's the army officers and troops were quartered in the town; mountain men such as Kit Carson and St. Vrain were still using Albuquerque and Taos as their headquarters. And "Pueblos, Navajos, Apaches and Comanches came to town to trade—proud, unconquered Indians, looking for guns and powder" (p. 22). Mr. Fergusson suggests, "... imagine all these species of men crowded into a little flat-roofed adobe town, where liquor was cheap, women were bought and sold like horses, and almost everyone carried arms" (p. 22).

Of Franz Huning, Mr. Fergusson says:

Two things were clear about this period of his life. One is that he thoroughly enjoyed it and fell in love with the country. The other is that he went almost completely native, living among the Mexicans and shunning the gringo society of the wagon train and the military post. He learned to
speak, read, and write Spanish in less than a year and he says that often he went for months without using a word of English (p. 24).

That his grandfather became so closely involved with the native society and its customs is fortunate for Mr. Fergusson, for Mr. Huning's memoir was a prime source of the intimate knowledge of Mexican society which Mr. Fergusson calls upon to write his Southwest novels.

Yet another aspect of Franz Huning's career in New Mexico which found its way into Mr. Fergusson's memory and his novels is a largely unsuccessful trading trip into the Apache country of Arizona. "Franz had little capital and small hope of profit, but he accepted eagerly because the journey promised 'adventure and novel sights.' At least it fulfilled that promise" (p. 27), Mr. Fergusson relates. Starting too near winter, the expedition proved to be ill-fated from the beginning. After nearly starving to death the caravan reached civilization again, all the mules it had acquired from the Apaches in trade having been eaten.

Another proposed expedition proved more eventful. Beginning a journey to Chihuahua, Huning arrived in Albuquerque and decided to stay. Thus, Mr. Fergusson says, "Casually he came to the place where he was to live the rest of his life and make his fortune" (p. 34).

The rise of Huning's fortune was marked with the offer of Don Antonio Sandoval and Henry Connelly to back a wagon train caravan to the East for goods for the store
that Huning and his brother Charles had opened in Albuquerque (p. 36). After the initial trip Huning went East nearly every year, the train growing longer and the Hunings growing richer. "He crossed the plains forty times in all and knew every camping place and water hole" (p. 36). Accounts of these caravans both interested Mr. Fergusson and supplied him with more important background of the Anglo trader's domination of the economic system of the New Mexico area.

Of his grandfather's adventurous life in the early days of the Anglo invasions, Mr. Fergusson says, "I think of his life as the prologue of my own, and I have a vivid impression of it because so much of the West he knew was still alive in my youth" (p. 13). From reading the memoir of Franz Huning, Harvey Fergusson not only was able to acquire extensive knowledge of and assimilate the spirit of nineteenth century New Mexico, he was also able to find a common identity with his forebearer.

I felt as though I had made his acquaintance about twenty years after his death when I first read his memoir. I also felt as though I had then discovered the source of many of my most persistent traits and impulses ...I think of him as my spiritual ancestor and of his life as one the like of which I might have lived if I had been born in time (p. 47).

Harvey Fergusson's father was a completely different cut of man from his eventual father-in-law, Franz Huning. The senior Fergusson was born and raised an
aristocratic southern gentleman. The society of the ante-bellum South was the atmosphere which "created a kind of man who remained always a champion of lost causes and a worshiper of the past" (p. 51). Harvey Fergusson says:

This society produced a definite and somewhat rigid type of personality and my father was a perfect example of it. All his life he kept both the faults and the graces of those cotton-field autocrats. All of them had great self-assurance because they were denied the intellectual luxury of doubt. They made an art of eloquence, as do all who live by sentiment rather than fact ... They were filled with the pride of racial superiority and self-conscious power (pp. 51-52).

Harvey Butler Fergusson was born in 1848, too young to fight for the South but old enough to understand especially the economic consequences of the war. He had been a wealthy, young boy whose easy life was complete with gun, horse and loyal slaves (p. 56). After attending Washington College in Lexington, Virginia, and obtaining a degree in law, he went West, originally to examine mining claims for a client. The beginning of his western adventures began in White Oaks, New Mexico, a boom town of the late 1880's.

Soon realizing that White Oaks was past its peak, Harvey Butler Fergusson moved to Albuquerque. His two outstanding talents, "a gift for dramatizing himself and a gift of eloquent speech" (p. 68), enabled him to find both jobs and friends easily. Of his father's life in New Mexico, Harvey Fergusson relates:
My father enjoyed the West but he never became a part of it as Franz Huning had done. He never learned to speak Spanish, never took to the wilderness, never felt any curiosity about the natives. He remained always a Southern gentleman, too deeply rooted in his own tradition to lose himself in any other way of life (p. 65).

With a brilliant courtroom record, Harvey Butler Fergusson soon turned to politics, an accepted occupation for any southern gentleman. Being a gifted speaker, he was much in demand for addresses and orations for the many occasions which, in the nineteenth century, called for a speech. His political ambitions eventually sent him to Washington as a Congressman from the territory of New Mexico. Failing to achieve his greatest ambition, to represent New Mexico as a United States Senator, the senior Fergusson declined in wealth and power in his later years. In his father Harvey Fergusson saw the

... typical product of that gaudy age. He believed passionately in ambition, fortune, personal triumph, and that belief was the religion of the world in which he lived and worked. Moreover, it was a world which afforded much nourishment to dreams of triumph—a world in which chance and change worked wonders and men found themselves rich or famous without knowing exactly how it happened (p. 78).

From the spirited and exuberant lives of these two New Mexican pioneers, Franz Huning and Harvey Butler Fergusson, Harvey Fergusson was able to claim a living link with the history of the region; their adventures accorded him a native's perspective of past events which,
combined with his intimate knowledge of the geography of the region, eventually led him to recreate the life and times of the area in novels.

The end of Harvey Fergusson's physical and mental wanderings came to a halt at about age sixteen when he went away to school: New Mexico Military Institute, then a "small and primitive establishment, consisting of an old brick administration building, a mess hall, a gymnasium, and a long wooden barracks where the cadets were uncomfortably housed" (p. 188). The young men who came to the Institute were "sons of ranchmen in the half-wild country of eastern New Mexico and western Texas, . . . a tough, hearty, foul-mouthed and rebellious gang, much given to fights and riots" (p. 188). All these attributes were neither present in Harvey Fergusson's character at the time nor apparently appreciated by him in others. He reports that he was "outraged and appalled" (p. 188) by the actions of his fellow cadets. He describes life at the Institute as a routine built around setting-up exercises before daylight and taps at nine at night. "To a shy boy raised on solitude and freedom all this was just as delightful as a term in a penitentiary" (p. 189), Mr. Fergusson recalls.

The discipline enacted at the Institute had some important effects on Mr. Fergusson. He says, "It killed my budding intellectual life at once and for years. My
diary, my drawings, my study of birds and beasts all came to an end" (p. 190). The year at New Mexico Military Institute was one of the major junctures in his life, for with the stifling of his intellectual life came the end of his carefree, wanderer's boyhood. In another year he was sent to his father's Alma Mater, Washington and Lee University.

Mr. Fergusson's years at Washington and Lee ended in 1911, at which time he was awarded the Bachelor of Arts degree. These college years made several impressions on his life and future. Here in Virginia, as in New Mexico, he reports he "was better at finding escapes from . . . life than . . . at conquering it" (p. 198). There were woods and fields in which to hunt during the fall. The inclement weather brought him to the library where shelf-reading was a good way to discover books he wished to read. The most satisfactory escape, however, proved to be alcohol. "At college I learned that . . . alcohol could work wonders for the spirit of a man. If my Alma Mater taught me nothing else she taught me how to drink" (p. 199). He seems to have gained self-confidence roughly in proportion to the quantity of the beverage he consumed, eggnog in the winter and beer in the summer. From a drinking partner, one called Blake Randolph, Mr. Fergusson became increasingly aware of the traditions of the old Southern families from which both boys' parents had come.
Blake fulfilled much the same role in college that Lorenzo had filled in youth: sharing with Harvey Fergusson his supreme self-confidence, glimpses of daring and successful adventures and inklings of erotic affairs.

One of the major experiences of college was an exchange of affection with a young blonde girl from a town near the college. This brief affair, ending as he graduated and went back to New Mexico, was the peak of his emotional experiences in Virginia. Of Ellen he says:

I failed my first love completely, but she played an important part in my life and development, rendered me a great service without ever suspecting it. That bitter frustration, which I could taste for years, provided an emotional and mental stimulus I needed. It brought me out of the intellectual coma of my college days and made me think, if only to relieve my pain. . . . I ceased to be a mere refugee from society and became a rebel (p. 212).

At the graduation ceremony, a Senator Owen issued an order to the graduating class: "Get ready!" (p. 222).

Mr. Fergusson's reflections were

What in the name of God and General Lee had I been getting ready for, and how? . . . For fifteen years I had been going to school. Now I walked away from the last of them, bewildered, untrained and frustrated. Years before I had learned how to read and write . . . . That is all of my formal education I can certainly say I have used (p. 222).

For that discipline which was subsequently to become his craft, Mr. Fergusson felt he had received little assistance, if any.
I could not learn much about writing, if only because none of my mentors had ever learned to write, nor could there be much nourishment for such a personality as mine in a place where all the prizes were for conformity (p. 223).

As the feeling of his failures to become either academically educated or socially educated enveloped him, a gloom which he says hung over him at intervals for several years began its stay. Upon later reflection, however, he says, "My education had been a long series of failures, but I can see now that my failures had set me free" (p. 224). This thought, which would have early dispelled the gloom, was a long time coming.

After escaping, if not successfully at least adequately, the social challenges through his college days, Mr. Fergusson found himself back home. "Not until I came back to Albuquerque and faced the problem of making a living did I begin to feel the full force of my alienation from the society which had produced me . . . .I had no idea what I wanted to be or do but I had an intuitive conviction that I would never become a good and successful citizen of the old home town" (p. 225).

After a brief, unsuccessful encounter with the electrical contracting business, Mr. Fergusson found at least a temporary answer to his problems in the very forests he had roamed and loved as a boy. Since his father was a prominent citizen, Harvey Fergusson was able to secure a job as a timber cruiser with the United States
Forest Service. While on solitary daily journeys estimating the amount of lumber available in stands of pine, he first felt the urgings of his desire to express his feelings on paper.

I knew moments of peace but moments only. I could taste the old mood but I could no longer live on it. I was glad of the mountains but they were now neither an occupation nor an escape. Unsatisfied desire and a growing hunger for mental activity had followed me into the wilderness and they pursued me with feelings of guilt and delinquency, no less poignant because they were vague. I would prop my bedroll against a tree, sit with a blankbook on my knees and scribble for hours. This now was the only occupation in which I could lose myself. I yearned to write as a hound pup yearns to hunt, instinctively and for the sake of doing it (p. 228).

His desire was hampered by the conscious remembrance that his self-confidence and his college attempts at theme writing were both weak. His first story was about a man who killed his partner and became haunted by imaginary pursuit of his dead victim. Mr. Fergusson recalls, "Doubtless it was rank melodrama" (p. 230). In a moment of self-analysis he relates the actions of his story hero to himself: "I was trying to evade my destiny and was haunted by an obscure but painful guilt. I felt that if I could articulate this idea it would be relief and triumph" (p. 230).

Mr. Fergusson's belief that he wanted to escape from the mountains was realized as his father, serving what was to be his final term in Congress, procured a job
for his son in a folding room, one of those basement operations which mails an endless flow of words to constituents at home. At the same time Harvey Fergusson entered law school. He seemed to have a flair for law studies and for discussion. In the Library of Congress, one source of material open to him as a Congressman's son, he rediscovered a fact which he says "most of formal education tries to ignore, that all intellectual nourishment depends upon appetite" (p. 232). The realization that this theory was born out in his own youth and his agonizing attempts to learn in a classroom led him to many years of fruitful wandering and reading in that library.

The turn of Mr. Fergusson's career came on a day he can not distinctly remember: the day he went into a newspaper office. The Washington Herald began allowing him, at his own expense and without remuneration, to cover occasional small assignments which were ordinarily covered by telephone. Of this very minor share of a newspaper's coverage, Mr. Fergusson relates:

This petty drudgery held my interest and aroused my hope ...After a fashion I was exploring human society and I had a great curiosity about it. I think it was in part the curiosity of a youth who had always felt denied a full share of social life, had long peered at it with a mixture of timidity and longing. But it was also in part the scientific curiosity of a naturalist, impersonal and detached ...I was often conscious of ... interested aloofness and
of bringing to the human scene a habit and faculty of observation trained in field and forest (p. 235).

After a spirited recount of a rifle match which was printed in full, the managing editor offered him a position on the payroll. The same day, he reports that he quit law school, after the painful task of informing his father of his decision, and sold his law books, "with the feeling that . . . he had made some momentous commitment" (p. 237). So ended Harvey Fergusson's formal schooling.

Mr. Fergusson's journalistic career implemented his desire to be creative. At the age of twenty-three, a year after he began working for the Herald, he published his first short stories and sketches. Following two years of journalism experience which included travel to several southern cities, he worked for the Frederick J. Haskin Syndicate, a position which took him to several Latin American countries and to Cuba.

In 1921 his first novel, The Blood of the Conquerors, was published by Alfred A. Knopf. Mr. Fergusson quit the newspaper business and began freelancing. This first short novel and two others, Wolf Song (1927) and In Those Days (1929) were reprinted in 1936 as a trilogy of the Santa Fe Trail, Followers of the Sun. Embodied in this trilogy is nearly the entire cycle of the social and economic changes in the Southwest to be examined here.
Grant of Kingdom (1950) is a spirited novel dealing with the Maxwell grant, one of the more famous tracts of land in the West. This story begins as a mountain man marries into the aristocratic Mexican society, receiving the grant as a gift from his father-in-law. As the novel ends a capitalistic white settler buys the grant and its holdings, dominating the Mexican society which the original developer has established, thus again completing the cycle of the social and economic change.

Another novel which discusses in detail the Anglo's take-over of the economic functions of the patron in Mexican society is The Conquest of Don Pedro (1954).

The final novel to be discussed in light of the changes in the Southwest's social and economic systems is Footloose McGarnigal (1930), the story of a young man who comes west to try to find a satisfactory freedom from the restraints and conformity of society. He discovers, as Mr. Fergusson himself discovered, that it is not possible to recapture even the spirit of a day since passed away, let alone the life that engendered the spirit.

Mr. Fergusson's other novels include, Capital Hill and Women and Wives, drawn from his Washington experiences; Hot Saturday and The Life of Riley, both set in the Southwest but not regional in their themes. His non-fiction
works are *Rio Grande*, *Modern Man*, *People and Power*, and his autobiographical *Home in the West*.

He has also published short stories, essays and articles for many magazines, including *Saturday Evening Post*, *Holiday*, *The Nation*, and *American Mercury*. 
CHAPTER II

THE RICO DAUGHTERS

The regional novels of Harvey Fergusson present a unified picture of the cycle involving the changes in the social and economic structure of the Southwest. This cycle began early in the nineteenth century, when the Mexican aristocracy was still firmly in control of the New Mexico social and economic life. The social structure was all but impenetrable from outside the select circle of the ricos. The Anglo had even less chance than a poor Mexican to marry into a family of the aristocracy, for the Mexicans hated the Anglos, and class consciousness was always strong.

The first crack in the traditional social structure of the Mexican aristocracy came as a select few mountain men and traders began taking brides from among the wealthy Mexican families. Both Charles Bent, one of the two brothers who established the famous Bent's Fort, and Kit Carson took brides from the rich Jaramillo family of New Mexico. Bent's wife Maria Ignacia became particularly well known and well liked as the hostess of Bent's Fort, for many white men left their wives and children there if they were going out into the mountains.
The initial breakthrough in the custom-bound classes of the ricos is explored in the first major section of Grant of Kingdom, "The Conqueror." Wolf Song, the first short novel in Followers of the Sun, is also a picture of the marriage of a mountain man into Mexican wealth.

Grant of Kingdom, praised by several Southwest bibliographers as one of the most outstanding of Mr. Fergusson's novels about the New Mexico area, is a fictional discussion of the notable grant of land in the northeast portion of the state known as the Maxwell grant. "The Maxwell grant of 1,714,764 acres on the Cimarron River was at one time perhaps the most famous tract of land in the West." 4

Jean Ballard and Ed Hicks, two former mountain men who are independent traders, are settling in at a hot springs not far from Taos, New Mexico, for a week of soaking and relaxing before heading for Taos. Just as they get eased into the steaming water a rico family arrives: Don Tranquilino Coronel, his son, his wife, his daughters and a peon. Ballard knows the family and its reputation. He also knows the social proprieties of the situation. He offers the use of the spring to the Coronels, saying that he and his companion are camped

nearby for a week. His eye is immediately drawn to the attractive elder daughter of the family, and his mind is occupied at once with plans.

At the proper moment the Coronels are invited to eat the evening meal with Ballard and Hicks. At the apparent insistence of the elder daughter, Consuelo, the invitation is accepted. At the conclusion of the meal the Don offers the usual polite, "When you are in Taos my house is yours." This invitation, however profunctory, is the standard response of all Mexicans of any class to one who has shared food with them. While realizing that this statement is nothing but an entrance into the Coronel stronghold, Ballard nevertheless felt hope of seeing Consuelo again. "He had come back to Taos in the spring, and always he had been glad of the first glimpse of this green and singing valley. But never before had he ridden into it so joyfully as now, so filled with a hope that seemed foolish but would not down" (p. 15).

At this point Mr. Fergusson introduces the early life of Jean Ballard. As has been the case of many heroes of the mountains since the standard set in the writings of James Fenimore Cooper, Ballard is said to have a streak of gentility in his background. His mother was "Jeanette Bissot, of an old and well-educated French

family" (p. 17). Young Jean Ballard grew up in the wilderness of the Ohio Valley, at home with a Kentucky rifle and a beaver trap. He had divided his time among his father's fields, his mother's housecleaning projects and his own urge to hunt and trap in the woods.

Shortly after his mother's death Ballard built a raft and began his own journeys. His youth seemed not to hinder his rapid rise as a mountain man, for his skill in the woods served as well in the Southwest, to which he had come, as in Ohio. Even though the beaver industry was growing less lucrative, "Jean became a beaver trapper first because it was an easy thing for him to do. He had been a trapper from the age of eight" (p. 24).

Ballard joins a gang of five or six mountaineers who used either Taos, Santa Fe or Bent's Fort as their headquarters. Despite the loose organization of a group this size, one man usually was recognized as the leader.

Jean Ballard became one of those informal leaders even when most of the men he rode with were years his senior. He looked older than he was, he kept his mouth shut except when it was necessary to say something, and he was completely unflustered no matter what struck. Moreover, he was never lost (p. 25).

Following eight years of trapping Ballard decides to freight across the Santa Fe Trail, because the price of beaver pelts is so low. At first he has charge of a train for a Santa Fe merchant. Losing interest in this
venture because of the monotonous traveling across the same trail, he decides to go into trading. "He was making big money. But he grew weary of the dust and sweat of the great road. He had come to love the mountains. Knowing now much of Indians and Indian languages, he became a trader with Ed Hicks as his assistant. They traded with the Utes across the Rio Grande and came to know that tribe as well as any white man could" (p. 29).

At the time of the fateful meeting at the springs, Ballard is thirty-three and has been in the mountains for thirteen years. He has little ready cash but he has acquired an inestimable reputation and a great deal of skill and knowledge of his surroundings. He knows English and Spanish, and enough of three Indian languages—Ute, Arapaho and Apache—to trade effectively. He is also proficient in the universal Indian medium—sign language.

It was no common trapper Consuelo Coronel had flirted with . . . . She had picked a man of power, one who was born to command other men, and also one who felt deeply the need of women, not merely as a complement to his flesh but as an anchor to the earth and a center of his being. For a man alone may be a conqueror but everything that lasts is built around a woman. And Jean Ballard was destined to be a builder (p. 30).

As Jean Ballard calls on the house of Don Coronel he discovers that it is truly "a very old house, a house of immense strength and stability, which kept its life secret and secluded . . . presenting to the world a
passive, impenetrable resistance" (p. 31). For several months he courts Consuelo in the Coronel sala, always with one or more of the married women of the family in attendance. He feels that the suit is hopeless as Consuelo has been engaged to a cousin since the age of six. In addition to this obstacle, Ballard is an Anglo and an alien.

He felt the massive, inert resistance of old established things, of a people fortified by wealth and custom and tradition, by a way of life stronger than they were, a social pattern which has a power in itself. They did not hate him as a person but they hated anything alien. Family was everything to them. Their whole society was a great family, and it was organized to repel intrusions (p. 33).

Despite the seemingly insurmountable obstacles, Ballard's hope for Consuelo's hand is kept alive by two facts. The Doña Anastasia, her mother, has seemed at least not unfriendly to Ballard. She appears to be the moving force in the family, despite the tradition of the invincibility of the Don, and Ballard grasps at this possible opening into the good graces of the family.

In addition, Consuelo herself seems to be a woman of great individuality. "She was a creature watched and guarded like a thousand-dollar horse, yet she never gave the impression of being helpless. She had a most unmistakable feeling of power about her—in the sweep of her walk, the tone of her voice, the toss of her head" (p. 33).
As Ballard tells Consuelo that he must go back to the mountains she begs him to wait for two more weeks to meet her cousin. He does so. After chatting uneasily with the plump, giggling cousin, Ballard remains for the usual afternoon serving of frothy chocolate, which is presented to all the family and the guests.

Ballard returns for one final afternoon with Consuelo before going back to his trade route. Consuelo manages to get the timid cousin who is acting as chaperon out of the room. Consuelo and Jean Ballard are finally, incredibly alone, and in a brief, frenzied moment they consummate their pent-up emotions. She makes Ballard promise that he will return, in three months, making it well known that he is in Taos, but not coming to the Coronels. He replies, "I will always come back, as long as you are here. You know that" (p. 40).

Jean Ballard returns to Taos as the first powdery snow is falling in the mountains. He sets up his camp in an old adobe house near town. He dresses himself in the new clothing he has purchased in Santa Fe,

... a suit of buckskin, died black, well-cut by a Mexican tailor and trimmed with silver buttons ... He had paid forty dollars for a pair of boots that came from St. Louis and half as much for a wide black felt hat with a flat crown. He was no dandy but right now he was more acutely conscious of how he looked than ever before (p. 43).
He has acquired, at a considerable cost, a handsome, single-footing chestnut gelding. Finely garbed and finely mounted he rides slowly through the streets of Taos, waving to friends and making certain he is widely recognized. Then he waits. After nearly a week, a small boy comes to his adobe shack and shyly presents him with a message. The note requests Ballard to meet with an abogado, Don Solomon Sandoval. Ballard knows the Abogado's reputation and feels that he is about to learn his fate, for Sandoval could easily represent the Coronels as well as the priest who took care of the spiritual affairs of the family. Sandoval, called El Coyote by his enemies, is one of those men who arranges affairs, for a consideration, between people of importance. Ballard has had experience with lesser coyotes, but none with the "mighty and subtle . . . Sandoval" (p. 48).

After a good deal of forced politeness and intense cunning on the part of both men, Sandoval brings up the subject of the meeting. "'For the service I am about to render you,' the abogado spoke gravely, 'money is no recompense. It is a mere token—the souvenir of a great occasion. What I count upon is your enduring friendship'" (p. 51). Ballard assures his host that both the gold and the friendship shall be available. Following another extensive exchange of subtly phrased questions and answers, El Coyote tells Jean Ballard what he hoped so desperately
to hear: "... if you should renew your suit, it might be more favorably considered, both by the Señorita and by her parents..." (p. 54).

Ballard goes to the house of Don Tranquilino Coronel, where he has met hostility so many times, and the situation is as the abogado had said. "The lovers were left alone for only a few minutes. This was now a family occasion, a ceremonial one, with exact and invariable requirements" (p. 55). Each member of the family enters the sala, the men kissing Ballard lightly on each cheek and the women each receiving a light kiss from him on the brow. As the formal exchange is completed, a stiff silence falls upon the group. Ballard spies the small dog, Choppo, and laughs, "Choppo, I almost forgot you!" (p. 56).

He lifted the dog to his face and Choppo caressed his nose with a quick pink tongue. Everyone laughed and the tension and uneasiness seemed to dissolve in their laughter... Jean Ballard sat down as a member of the house of Coronel (p. 56).

As a gift to his new son-in-law the Don presents the deed to the grant of land given to the Coronel family by the king of Spain in the late eighteenth century. Ballard realizes that the Don had thought he was presenting him with a useless piece of property. Ballard, however, had seen the land of the grant years before in his trading expeditions—the Dark River valley.
He had camped there once before, nearly ten years before, in the lower valley, and had seen those great rich meadows along the stream and the stands of virgin pine...It was truly a royal gift if a man could use it...And Jean felt...he was that man. For he not only knew the country but he knew as much as any white man did about the Ute Indians, who claimed the valley as their hunting grounds (p. 66).

Jean Ballard decides upon a startling move. "He proposed to do what the Spanish government had intended when it made those royal grants. He proposed to carry civilization across the mountains and plant it on the edge of the great plains" (p. 67). He knows that he will face great opposition from the Coronel family. Like all Mexicans the Coronels are afraid of the mountains and especially afraid of change. However, in the family conference Consuelo stands behind her husband. "The land is ours...You gave it to us" (p. 71).

Ballard goes alone to the Dark River area, carrying only his rifle and a pack of presents for the Ute Indians. He believes that if he can see his old friend Kenyatch, he will be able to convince Kenyatch that the Utes' only hope of living out their lives undisturbed by the rush of civilization is by staying in the forests while Ballard farms the lands below. Being one of the leaders of the tribe Kenyatch would be listened to by the elders of the tribe, Ballard reasons. After Ballard has spent several days in the Dark River valley, three young
bucks come out from where they have been watching him and lead him to the Ute camp, hidden away in the mountains.

Kenyatch greets him as an old friend and asks if Ballard has come to trade. Ballard's reply is "No, I have come bringing gifts and I have come to talk. I have much to tell you" (p. 82). Ballard's proposal is simple and direct.

I do not want to take the mountains away from you. I want only to build a home in the valley, to pasture cattle on the plains. Because I claim all of this land I can keep other white men out. I can stand between you and them . . . When the Arapahoe come up from the plains, we will fight them together. When the deep snow falls, my beef will be yours. I offer you my friendship and I ask for yours. This is my word and you know my word is good (p. 84).

The decision of the elders is to agree to the plan, not because they want any white men in the valley, but because they can see no other way to keep whites out. Their only wishes are that Ballard allow no other white men to come into the valley and that he sell no whiskey to the young Ute men.

Ballard takes one last look at the land that will be his domain.

This bit of earth would become whatever he could make it . . . For what had fallen into his hand was not merely a place to live and cultivate. It was the vital heart of a whole region, a place where men would gather as surely as he made it safe, a place to be ruled as well as owned . . . By chance beyond belief a king in Spain had granted him a kingdom (p. 87).
Wolf Song, the other novel which recreates the Anglo's marrying into the rico society of the Mexicans, is a more romantic account of approximately the same situation. Mr. Fergusson says, "Wolf Song was the high point of that romantic impulse in my effort as a writer. This short and simple story is in outline a typical western romance." Despite its obvious romanticism, Wolf Song too captures the spirit of the mountain man and his seeming ability to do anything he wishes, even marry into a wealthy Mexican society. The novel begins a few days' ride outside of Taos.

Up from the edge of the prairie and over the range rode three. Their buckskin was black with blood and shiny from much wiping of greasy knives and nearly all the fringes had been cut off their pants for thongs. Hair hung thick and dirty to their shoulders. Six pack mules bulged with square bales of beaver.

The three are Rube Thatcher, an old mountain man; Gullion, assumed by his companions to be an ex-convict from Delaware because his ears are cut across the top; and blond Sam Lash, a skillful young mountaineer who comes from half-genteel folk in the East. They are on their way to Taos to sell their peltries and raise the mountain

6. Harvey Fergusson, Followers of the Sun (New York, 1936), p. ix. This volume contains Wolf Song (1927), In Those Days (1929), and The Blood of the Conquerors (1921). Each novel is separately paginated and will hereafter be referred to individually.

man's brand of hell for a few days in the company of other mountaineers.

As the men ride through town they start the Indian chant which is a common cry among high-spirited mountain men, "Hai, yai, hai, yai, hai, hai" (p. 13). The noise of the chant draws the family of Don Solomon Salazar, calmly enjoying the traditional afternoon serving of beaten chocolate in the sala, to the door. Lola Salazar, the elegant daughter of the family, is attracted to the blond mountain man; she has once before had a blond lover.

The mountain men are giving a baile for all the town. Lash and Gullion go up to the nearby springs to bathe and soak. Sam Lash dresses himself in a new purple shirt and red handkerchief and goes to call upon the local padre, a young man who had given Lash a job when he first came to Taos, alone and broke. This time Lash is coming with money in his pockets and with gifts for his friend.

The baile is announced by an old man who rides around the town on a white mule, ringing a bell. Many Mexicans scoffingly say they wouldn't go to a mountain man's doings, but when the music starts and the liquor begins to flow the mountaineers know everyone will come. Lash and Gullion have a few drinks in the cantina nearby and then Gullion is ready to dance. Lash downs another drink or two and then he too goes to the baile. He breaks
into a wild dance and requests a girl. The girl who comes forward to meet him is Lola Salazar. He is momentarily stunned by her beauty and by the realization that she is a rico. After this dance is over she returns to her chair, to the accompaniment of scowls from her family. Lash is taken with her immediately. "He knew she had gone against her family to dance with him, knew she had picked him out of the crowd and it made him feel taller to know it" (p. 84). He manages to dance with Lola several more times during the evening, much to the disgust of her family. "The way she came up smiling to his arms made him warm and swell inside. They hadn't turned her against him—that was sure" (p. 86).

Gullion finally starts the fight that everyone present knows must eventually come at any baile. He gets into an argument with a Mexican over the señorita both have been dancing with. As the mountain men and Mexicans quickly form into two groups the ruction is on. Knife blades shine in the hands of the Mexicans and table legs are wrenched off old pine tables by the mountaineers. The unity of the eleven mountain men is too great an obstacle for the fifty Mexicans, who are unable to organize.

Women went screaming out the door. Somebody began knocking candles out and the forces collided in a dim light that presently became solid darkness filled with curses in two languages, grunts, yells and the scrape and thud of fighting feet . . . Clubs won the battle. Not a Mexican could get a foothold on the platform (p. 89).
Sam Lash leaves the deserted hall with an ache in his heart and a realization that his desire is probably beyond him.

What he wanted was somewhere behind thick walls and barred windows, protected from him by an ancient hatred... But he could see her in the dark and touch her through the darkness though she wasn't there. The ghost of her hand was in his hand and he still burned from the sudden willing pressure of her flesh (p. 91).

After making contact with Lola through the bars of her window he is overcome with his desire for her. Gullion and Thatcher are ready to leave Taos and Sam doesn't want to leave. Gullion feels that Sam ought to kidnap Lola, provided she is willing, and take her to Bent's Fort. The mountain men agree to cover their retreat. Lola admits to Sam that she wants to go with him and promises to meet him in the plaza early in the morning. Yet she is plagued and tormented.

She could not go. She would not go. Her whole life crowded around her and pulled her back... She was afraid to go but more than she was afraid she was held back by every familiar thing (p. 107).

Thoughts of her happy childhood give way to the feeling that she belongs within the sheltered walls of her family home. "It was right that she should stay—but her feet carried her softly out of the room and her eyes were alert for any that might stop her" (p. 111).

The escape is covered by the other mountain men with their long rifles ready for any opposition. Sam and
Lola head for Bent's Fort with the others. The young couple plan to spend a few days in the fort and then Lash is to join the others at a prearranged meeting place. Lash feels that Lola will be safe while he is gone.

From Taos north to the British territories there was one place where a man could . . . leave horse, beaver, woman or money and hope to find it there when he got back. That place was Bent's Fort (p. 125).

After a few days of bliss Lash resolutely gets his saddle horse and pack mule ready for the trip into the mountains. Lola has been tearful and pleading. When he finally is ready to leave, however, "he knew she wasn't going to put up another fight. Her eyes were wide with the weariness of spent emotion and her mouth was soft and bowed, craving pity . . . 'Don't go, querido,' she begged in her soft Spanish. 'I am nothing without you now'" (p. 133). Lash firmly disengages himself from her and, he assumes, from her influence upon him. He leaves the fort to the accompanying curses of the fabled witch woman who has been taking care of the pampered Lola.

Lash's first day back in the mountains is as he remembers the carefree life to be. "He spurred up through low hills and came out on the mesa. Cool wind whipped at his face and rich purple-tinged country rolled away forty miles to blue mountains. A real world began to claim him. He lived again in his eyes" (p. 139). The sound of Lola's pleadings and of the curses cast upon him grows fainter as
he gets deeper into the mountains and into his former existence. "Once more he was whole and alone . . . He who had been caught and torn apart once more felt whole and free" (p. 145).

But this feeling of freedom and wholeness is not to last. As he gets further away from Lola and the fort each day, his sense of discomfort grows more acute. Scenes and memories rush upon him.

Each night she was with him a little more than the night before. Asleep he dreamed about her and lying awake he remembered the feel of her arms and threw out his own to clutch a ghost . . . "I went away too soon, that's all," he decided (p. 151).

As he arrives at the meeting place, the others have gone on. This awareness that he will have to continue alone nearly breaks his spirit. He has been counting on their companionship to help him regain his old feelings. "Riding with the bunch would have been different. Singing and chanting they rode and he would have been swept along with them. He couldn't have gone back then" (p. 156).

As he sits dejectedly in the lush valley, he is suddenly struck with a thought that has never occurred to him before, all the times he had been in the valley.

The little valley would have made a farm . . . . Here was timber and stone to build and land that would show black and rich under plow and water that would turn a mill and grass for a thousand cattle (p. 160).
Watching a pair of jays at their mating he is overpowered with his desire. "Energy flowed into him as though it had come up from the earth—as though he had been a sprout of desire on the brown body of the urgent earth . . . He jumped to his feet. 'This outfit's going back!'" (p. 160).

In haste to return to Bent's Fort now that he has made his decision he is careless about watching signs around him. His trail is easily picked up by a young Cheyenne buck named Black Wolf who is out on a horse-stealing raid to acquire enough animals to win the maiden of his choice. As Black Wolf spots Lash's good roan horse and sleek mule he resolves to have them. He cuts the animals loose successfully but not without Lash's hearing his mule snicker.

Lash trails the Indian and his horses for several days. Just as he is about to surprise the Indian, Lash's mule smells his old master and snorts. Lash then has no choice but to shoot the roan that Black Wolf has been riding. Sam and Black Wolf face each other armed only with knives.

The Indian sprang hard and sudden. They both missed with their knives and rolled down the hill . . . Sam came to his knees and the Indian rose above him with blood on his knife and blood in his eye. Sam saw an opening and took a long chance, throwing his heavy knife with an overhand jerk (p. 189).
The Indian signals in sign language he is dying and begins to chant his death song.

Lash suffers through a storm and reaches Bent's Fort to find that Lola's father had taken her home. Lash returns once again to his friend the padre, "sore, dirty and half-starved, his buckskin stained with blood and his shoulder swollen so that he could scarcely move his arm" (p. 191). The padre will not talk to him until he has been bathed and been fed an endless round of food. "Sam knew that at last, and for the first time in days, he was full. He sank back in his chair, flushed and covered all over with a fine dew of sweat . . . . He became aware of the padre's tolerant smile" (p. 197).

The padre informs Sam that he has convinced the Salazars that Sam is a worthy son-in-law and should be forgiven and taken into the family. The requirement which Sam must meet is being taken into the Catholic Church and being remarried to Lola in an orthodox ceremony in the Church. Lash impatiently agrees, eager to see Lola. The padre continues slowly that he has further convinced the Don that Lash is the man to take care of the grant of land to which none of Salazar's own sons will go, because Lash has lived in the mountains and can carve a home out of the wilderness.

The padre sends Sam to a special room for the night.
This is my room for honored guests . . . . Many a beautiful girl crossed in love and at war with her family has found the peace of God here and has slept in this room . . . . I hope you will sleep well (p. 205).

Not catching the padre's meaning Sam goes slowly to the room. As he opens the door, the candle reflects the glow of Lola's eyes. "Her face was a record of all she had felt. He was not the only one who had lived through storms and battles . . . . Tenderly triumphant she smiled, looking down, but did not move. He must come to her—he who had run away" (p. 206).

These novels indicate the two logical ways the mountain man secured a bride from the Mexican aristocracy: he worked himself into the graces of the family, the acceptance by them coming often as a necessity to save their honor or he captured his bride and took her away. Both these methods found their impetus in daughters who began to rebel against the traditionally accepted ideas about marriage. In each case the daughter showed her sense of individuality. Both Jean Ballard and Sam Lash's success lay in capitalizing upon the independent spirit of their sweethearts. Added to this spirit was each man's determination to have what he wanted.

If any novels are to be fairly called historical fiction they must be accurate in their detail of the people and the land. There are five important areas of detail which should be treated accurately if the novelist
is creating historical fiction: geographic description and place names, customs and habits, dress, language, and historic events. Each of these areas has received vivid and faithful recreation in Mr. Fergusson's Southwest novels.

Since Harvey Fergusson grew up in Albuquerque and had ridden horseback himself through the areas about which he writes, his geographic descriptions of the land and the scenery during each season of the year have the same perspective that his mythical mountain men and Mexicans have as they ride into the valleys and up in the mountains. The opening paragraph of Grant of Kingdom speaks eloquently for the descriptive power of the novel.

The hot spring lay in a little glade at the head of a shallow canyon where the scattering piñon of the lower slopes gave way to the tall timber. In this month of May the glade was green with new grass and sprinkled with bright small flowers, white and red. East of it the forest was dark and tall but fringed with slim white aspens bearing pale new leaves. The Truchas peaks, still covered with snow, rose sharp and white above the trees. To the west the country tumbled steeply to purple depths where the Rio Grande crawled through lava gorges, then rose again to a pale blue horizon of distant ranges (p. 3).

Mr. Fergusson sticks closely to the limits of geography when his mountaineers travel from place to place. When Sam Lash and his companions come down from the mountains on the way to Taos, the trip takes them the several days that a rider would need to cover the distance.
Mr. Fergusson also makes full use of the actual place names of the area: not only Taos, Santa Fe and Albuquerque, but Bent's Fort, the Cimarron River, the Rio Grande, the Sangre de Cristos mountains, the Green River, the Gila River. His mountain men recall events and names of actual men such as Kit Carson and Jim Bridger.

The time spent by the mountain men and the Mexicans, both rich and poor, at the hot springs out of Taos is in accord with actual happenings. Southwest of Taos is a town called Ojo Caliente, near which are hot springs which have been used by Mexicans, Spaniards, Indians and Anglos for many generations. The people who go to the springs, both in Grant of Kingdom and Wolf Song, go there for several reasons, the first of which is a chance to soak and rest. The women wash their hair with the root of the amole. Many legends are told around the fires of mountain camps about the grizzly bear which comes to the spring each year. "Every April a great grizzly came down from the peaks to scratch his mark as high as he could reach in a near-by tree and soak his bulk in the spring" (Grant of Kingdom, p. 4).

The Mexican society in all its classes is entrenched in customs and traditions that Mr. Fergusson knew about as a boy. He is careful to describe all these customs in the most accurate manner. One of the most pronounced features of the wealthy Mexican society is the
marriage arrangements for young couples by their parents. "Marriages were arranged by parents. If the future husband was not the choice of her heart, the mother might know it by the tears and pale cheeks of her daughter, but there was seldom spoken rebellion against the father's decision" (Caballeros, p. 286). At no time could a single Mexican girl be alone with a member of the opposite sex, even her fiance. There must be an older married woman present at any meeting. This custom is carefully explained and observed in Grant of Kingdom; Ballard's brief union with Consuelo in the Coronel sala indicates the consequences of the violation of this old custom.

The serving of whipped or beaten chocolate was also a traditional part of the rico's afternoon. Anyone who was accorded admittance to a rico house could come in the afternoon, be admitted to the sala and be served steaming chocolate. Sooner or later, some members of the family would come down to visit. It was at this time that young men came to court their senoritas. "The special chocolate cook brought in the spicy, frothing chocolate and sweets at four" (Caballeros, p. 53).

The dress of the Mexicans is also carefully and accurately recreated in the novels. The shawl or rebozo was an essential part of the Mexican lady's costume, and all classes of women had them. "The dark cotton rebozo provided concealment as desired, as well as shade, some
warmth, and coquetry ad lib." The rico women's rebozos were usually of silk and richly ornamented.

No Mexican woman was ever without a shawl, and her shawl revealed both her wealth and her taste. It was also the most expressive part of her costume. She could draw it about her in a way that expressed aversion or coquetry or dissent, and she could fling it off in a gesture of challenge or invitation. A Mexican girl was always doing something with her shawl and one of a wealthy family would have a shawl for every kind of occasion . . . All of them were silk, in bright colors; some . . . were worth a hundred dollars or more (Grant of Kingdom, p. 39).

Another habit of Mexican women which Mr. Fergusson notes is smoking tiny cigarettes. "Having finished her chocolate she [Lola] poured tobacco from a little silver box set with a turquois [sic] upon a bit of corn husk and with dexterous fingers rolled a cigarette" (Wolf Song, p. 51). Erna Fergusson, in her account of the New Mexico area, relates, "Smoking was another feminine grace. Ladies carried their tobacco, punche and corn-husk wrappings in tiny silver bottles and boxes, and rolled their own" (New Mexico, p. 206).

The traditional dress costume for both the rich and the poor Mexican male was basic: a serape and pantaloons, with the sides split to show the white drawers underneath. The fabrics used and the expense of the costume indicated the class of the man. Miss Fergusson

reports that the poor men's "serapes and trousers were homemade, as were the white drawers emerging from the pantaloons' side split" (New Mexico, p. 206). The ricos, however, used more elaborate materials. "The silver buttons of their tight leather trousers were unfastened to the knee to show the full white drawers. Short braided leather jackets swung out beneath the sarape" (Caballeros, p. 53). When Sam Lash is given clean clothes in the padre's house, he dons "first a linen undershirt and a pair of long linen drawers . . . then a blue shirt and a pair of black leather pants split and laced Mexican fashion from the knee down" (Wolf Song, p. 195).

The mountain men's shouted greeting to the Mexican peasant women working in the sun is to get ready for the baile: "Wash off the red stain of alegria that saves your face from the sun" (Wolf Song, p. 14). The general habit was to protect the complexion "by smearing it with red clay. But before the baile the red was washed off and replaced by a heavy white powder made of ground bones" (New Mexico, p. 206).

The habits and language of the men are recorded so well that a bibliographer said, "Wolf Song and Grant of Kingdom are of the Sangre de Cristos around Taos; they are the classic novels of the southern-most mountain man."9

From the mouths of Mr. Fergusson's mountain men, particularly in the opening chapter of *Wolf Song*, come these typical speeches and thoughts: "You never quit the mountains till you get rubbed out," or "Hump yourself, you goddam mule! Beaver buys liquor and this chile's got a dry," or "this nigger's half froze for liquor" (pp. 3-10). Sam Lash takes his first scalp, and his thought is, "He was a mountain man—wagh!" (p. 32). Ray Allen Billington states that many of these speech terms came from the Indians with whom the mountaineers associated. "A man was a *child* or a *hoss* or a *coon* or a *nigger*. . . . One who had been killed had been *rubbed out* or had *gone under* . . . . Nor could the Mountain Man utter more than a few words without injecting the 'Wah' or 'Ugh' . . . of the red men."10

The costume of the mountain man as described in the opening paragraph of *Wolf Song*: grease- and blood-stained, with fringes, mostly gone, down the side of the pants, is the typical costume of the Southwest mountain man. David Lavender, in his factual account of Bent's Fort, reports that the mountain man "then clad himself in leather, burdensomely heavy to wear, fringed on the seams with the familiar thongs which were partly decorative but mostly utilitarian, to let rain drip off the

garment . . . and to furnish material for mending. Further waterproofing was added by wiping butcher and eating knives on the garments until they were black and shiny with grease."  

The use of liquor, poor Mexican women and Indian squaws to occupy the mountain men during their stay in Taos is the somewhat more civilized version of the rendezvous to which the mountaineers formerly went. At these rendezvous, usually held at some remote fort in the mountains, the scene was the same each year. 

The mountain man used only a portion of his year's catch to buy what he needed; the merchants secured the rest after they opened the flat casks of raw alcohol that were universally used in the trade . . . . The rendezvous was transformed into a scene of roaring debauchery. Some staged races on foot or horseback; some wrestled and fought; some gambled recklessly at cards . . . until they had squandered away in a few hours their entire year's earnings, their rifles, their horses, their wives, and in a few cases their own scalps. Others stamped through Indian dances amidst barbaric yells of "Hi-Hi-Hi-Hi! Hi-ya-Hi-ya . . . or indulged in sexual orgies with passively indifferent Indian maidens (The Far Western Frontier, p. 47). 

By the time of the mountain men about which Mr. Fergusson writes, the rendezvous were moving into towns such as Taos. The "band of trappers came riding into the plaza with a great dust and thunder of hooves, yelling like Indians as they always did when drunk. One of them had shot his pistol into the air" (Wolf Song, p. 68). 

Rube Thatcher, in his suggestion to "move out" says, "Ain't we all been drunk and got sober again? Ain't this coon lost beaver hoss and shirt buckin' a greaser monte game?" (Wolf Song, p. 100).

The actual historic happenings are followed carefully by Mr. Fergusson in these mountain man novels. The trapping in California began in the 1820's, and the trappers took "modest fortunes in peltry as they moved. They penetrated as far as southern California" (Far Western Frontier, p. 41). The leader of the mountain men with whom Sam Lash is learning his trade as a trapper suggests a California trapping expedition. "Only two parties had ever done it before" (Wolf Song, p. 33). Lash and nine others decided to go through the unknown desert in hopes of reaching the California streams; they did so, "conquering, gathering wealth, through country soft and fat where nothing stood against their hard-bitten hazard loving strength" (p. 37).

The eating habits of the mountain men were at times barbaric, because starving to death was the only alternative. The Far Western Frontier includes a paragraph about the eating habits of the mountaineers.

When caught by a blizzard or while in unexpectedly long desert marches, many a trapper escaped starvation only by bleeding his horse, and drinking the blood, cutting off and eating the ears of his mules, or choking down the leather thongs of his moccasins after they had been boiled until soft (p. 50).
Harvey Fergusson's mountain men learned these tricks on the trek to California. "Sam Lash learned what it was . . . to drink the blood that runs thick and purple from the throat of a slaughtered horse . . . to chew moccasin leather for supper and kill a rattle-snake and eat him roasted over the coals for breakfast" (Wolf Song, p. 34).
CHAPTER III

CONQUEST BY TRADERS

For many generations the established order of life in the presidios and ranchos in the Southwest had gone on uninterruptedly, with Spanish and Mexican dons ruling great tracts of land and ruling many peons. Ray Allen Billington, in The Far Western Frontier, says "the nature of the economy dictated that most would live in poverty while a very few enjoyed great wealth" (p. 13). The patron, as a ruling don was referred to by his peons, kept stores of essential items to sell to these servants. These items had to be acquired on credit, for the peons had little cash available. The peons became more deeply in debt to their patron, making the possibility of accumulating enough cash to acquire a small plot of land of their own more remote with each year. Other peons lost through foreclosure what little land their families had owned.

This essentially feudal economic system received its initial blow as the Mexican government revised its traditional policy regarding American trade. In 1822 Mexico opened the way for Americans to begin trading in
New Mexico. This act initiated a thriving commerce across the prairie.

Harvey Fergusson reports in *Rio Grande* that the first Anglos to bring goods along the Santa Fe trail did so with pack trains. These expeditions were often molested by Indians; the traders soon learned that wagons could be gotten over the trail. In 1829 the first organized caravan of wagons left Missouri, escorted by United States troops. From that day the caravan was an annual event. Beginning in 1831 the caravan left Independence each year in May. ¹²

As these caravans brought goods to the Santa Fe, Albuquerque and Taos areas the choice of trying to purchase from them rather than acquiring goods on credit from the patron presented itself to the peons. This competition with the patron's store of goods was a loosening of the economic ties which bound the peon to his rico master.

There were two methods of selling the goods brought to the area and each method is discussed in one of Mr. Fergusson's novels. *In Those Days* tells of the trader who establishes a store in the center of a populated area, commissions men to bring the goods to his store, and lets the buyers come to him. *The Conquest of Don Pedro* is

the story of a Jewish peddler who has spent several years traveling from village to village with his store upon the back of a burro. This peddler, Leo Mendes, also acquires a store, but only after his accumulated wealth makes this the next step in his own economic progress.

In Those Days is the story of Robert Jayson, a young Connecticut man who came west to make his fortune so that he might provide a good future for his sweetheart back home. He begins, as do many of the young men of the time, as a mule skinner on the Santa Fe trail. He gets a job as a clerk in a small New Mexican village store south of Santa Fe. In the process of learning the language and the customs of the New Mexicans he acquires two good friends, Tom Foote whom he will eventually go into partnership with, and Diego Aragon a rico son who loafs around the village playing cards. "Young Aragon, aristocrat, with his fifty-dollar hat and his twenty-dollar boots, with his silver spurs and Spanish profile . . . [was] heir apparent to more land than he would ever see . . . He contrived to seem superior without doing a thing to prove that he was."13

Jayson's initiation into the spirit of life in the Southwest is three-fold. His first feeling of acceptance comes as Tom Foote suggests that the two of them might one

day form a partnership and go on trading expeditions of their own. Jayson explains that he has come West to make more money, and Foote's reply is, "You can't make none settin' around here . . . The only way to make any money out here is to go tradin' on your own and if I had a pardner and a little more money that's what I'd do" (p. 44). This exchange of words leaves Robert Jayson "proud but bewildered, . . . feeling vaguely important" (p. 45).

The second incident which gives Jayson a feeling of belonging occurs as he finds himself guiding an extremely drunk Diego Aragon home. Jayson leads them both into the water of a nearby stream, and young Aragon gets out a great deal more sober and quite embarrassed. He requests of Robert, "Companero, promise me never to tell anyone . . . never tell anyone this and I am your friend for life" (p. 52). As a result of this brief swim the two become truly companeros, and Jayson is invited to the Aragon home for meals and companionship. Diego Aragon says, "You must come to my house. My house is yours" (p. 54).

Everyone has told Jayson that if he hopes to learn the Spanish language he must quit reading *Don Quixote* and find himself a sleeping dictionary. Robert, however, still relatively green and also loyal to his sweetheart back East finds this idea not to his liking. He steadfastly repels the flirtations of the attractive young
Mexican daughter of his landlady. However, as he is coming home late after an evening at the Aragons, the girl, Maria, hears him come in and deduces that he is drunk. She comforts him, mentally and physically, thus introducing him to the final important aspect of life in the Southwest and completing his sense of belonging.

Jayson and Tom Foote do form a partnership, and they go out to trade with the Apache Indians. The two men travel with a Mexican caravan which hopes to acquire in trade horses and mules which the Apaches had deviously acquired in Old Mexico. The animals would be traded willingly by the Apaches for they want goods and could not themselves get the good prices the mules and horses would bring in Santa Fe.

The trading expedition experiences much bad luck and even more bad weather, arriving back in the village with little more to its credit than experience.

As a result of having brought only half the horses and mules they had expected to return with, Robert and Tom are going to set up their Santa Fe trade on a small scale. Don Aragon, seeing in Robert a young man with a good future, advances him credit of three thousand dollars. The success of Jayson and Foote, Freighters, is practically assured.

Robert Jayson determines to bring his sweetheart Elizabeth out from Connecticut. On the last leg of the
journey from the East the freight wagons are attacked by Comanchees, and Jayson's young bride is taken captive and killed.

As the railroad comes into the town, Tom Foote and Robert Jayson are prominent citizens of the community. Each has financial interests in addition to the little store which they had established as an outlet for the goods from their freight wagons. The store had begun in the same way the little mercantile began in which Robert worked when he first came west, attempting to counter the monopoly which the patrons had. The store had grown with the times, leaving its mark on the economic system of the Southwest.

The Conquest of Don Pedro presents Leo Mendes as a young Jew who has come to the Southwest, as did many other people, because of tuberculosis. After a few weeks he regains a little of his strength at the home of a newly acquired friend, Estubio Velardes. It is from Velardes that he begins to see the picture the New Mexico area presents just after the Civil War. He learns the customs, manners and language of the humble Mexicans. "So Leo Mendes was introduced to the society of the common Mexicans, and he found himself surprisingly at home in it. These people, like his own, had a history of oppression. They had the same quick compassion and feeling of
responsibility for each other, the same mordant humor and fatalistic outlook."^{14}

Since his purpose in coming to New Mexico is to remain outdoors, he decides to become a peddler. As soon as he is able to walk any distance he begins learning the trade. He talks to merchants in Santa Fe to discover what types of goods the people will want. He goes to Burro Alley to learn the methods of treating, packing and riding a burro. Soon he is on his way out across the desert.

Following several years of earning the confidence and friendship of the Mexicans in his trading area, Leo Mendes meets the woman who is supposed to be a witch, Dolores Pino. She tells him that he will soon begin a new line of trade. "It had never occurred to him that he might do business with thieves, at least until Dolores Pino had mentioned the matter to him" (p. 70). Yet he has always traveled and traded in the world of thieves, and has been unmolested, because he is known by everyone. "He was poor himself and lived wholly among the poor and served them as well as he could. Only the rich were proper subjects for larceny in all its branches" (p. 70).

A chance encounter with one of the ladrones in a small village gives him the opportunity which Dolores had predicted. He is introduced to a man from another "town

dedicated to the art of gathering moveable property" (p. 71). These relationships are the first which bring silver and gold to him: the pobres in the villages to which he goes trade in whatever goods they may have but the ladrones have cash to pay for their goods.

The increasing income in cash causes Leo to begin thinking of a more secure future. He has been around the sleepy little village of Don Pedro, to the south of Santa Fe near the Rio Grande, and he knows that the economy of the town is tightly controlled by the patron, Don Augustín Vierra. "Here in the green valley were houses where seven generations had lived and died, and fields fertilized by the flooding river where grain had been harvested even longer. It was a place of old walls, old trees, old songs and stories, old feuds and hatreds, a place where human relations were ruled by old forms and customs too rigid for men to break" (p. 3). Resistant to any form of change the life of the village would be difficult to enter, Leo knows, but "for the business of penetrating a human society he had certain gifts which were not common among American pioneers" (p. 3).

The set-up in the village was a feudal one, much as all the villages around. Leo quickly spots the homestead of the Vierras.

Somewhere behind those walls was a storeroom, where people got the few things they needed and could not produce themselves, such as cotton
cloth, needles and thread, knives and skillets. These goods were handed out to them on credit at whatever price the owner chose to ask. They all worked for him, more or less, but none of them ever worked themselves out of debt (p. 10).

Leo is acquainted with this storeroom set-up, and he hopes to become the competitor to it. But he is acutely aware that competition will not be welcome.

Upon casual inquiry around the area, Leo learns of a man named Beltrán, a man who is a hunter and one of the few people not in debt to the Don. Beltrán was "a proud, fierce, restless man, who cherished his freedom and independence" (p. 8). This was the sort of man Leo needed: one who would be willing to assist him in his attempt at penetration of the economic life of the village, one who would not be afraid to cross the Don. After bartering with the man and earning his grudging respect, Leo is able to rent part of the run-down Beltrán hacienda for his store.

Leo calls his store **Tienda Barata**, "cheap store," a name well known to all common people as a place where they can get what they want or need at a price cheaper than their lord would insist upon. His sign "was a defiant sign, a challenge to old and established powers and customs. It was destined to be known all over the valley, across the river in Sonora, and even in Arizona and Texas" (p. 34).
This, then, was the beginning of the end of the economic dominance of the peon by the patron: the opening of a store which would create competition within a village. In the case of Leo Mendes, the feudal structure which was changed by his Tienda Barata was not broken but only transferred to a new master. For all the peons who were in debt to the Don became slowly in the same debt to Leo; yet since he held none of their land, their debt was repayable in whatever kind they possessed: cattle, produce, hand work. Without conscious realization, Leo Mendes found himself in the same position that the Vierras had long enjoyed:

Poor men lifted their hands and bowed their heads in a greeting that was almost an obeisance. These people were the . . . same kind of people with whom he had shared beans and chili, . . . whose wives and daughters had bussed him on the cheek, who had taught him how to dance and swim. Now they addressed him as Don Leo. Quite suddenly as it seemed to him, he had become a Rico, a patron, a gentleman on horseback. Poor men now treated him with deference, and behind that deference, he knew, was fear, for many of them were at his mercy (p. 84).

As a man of wealth and influence, he was gradually accepted into the society of the ricos around the valley in the neighboring villages. One by one the patrons took him into their homes with the traditional "My house is yours." Several of the neighboring patrons had entered into partnerships with Leo to purchase various lands and properties. Only the Vierras, or Don Augustín at any rate, continued to harbor distrust and hatred for Leo.
Leo had long before become a lover of the Doña Guadalupe, Vierra's wife, and he also cherished a friendship with the padre of the village of Don Pedro, the adviser of all the village, including the Vierras, in more capacities than just the spiritual realm. Leo's final triumph as the leader of the village's economic system comes, as have most of his successes, virtually without his knowledge. Don Augustin loses all his money in a poker game at the nearby military post. This rash action on the part of the Don puts him wholly at the mercy of Leo Mendes, his former antagonist and competitor. Beltrán is delighted. "Now Augustin can learn what it is to be in debt. People around here have been owing those Vierras money for a hundred and fifty years. They never get paid up and neither will he. Now he is going to learn how a poor man feels" (p. 135). Delicately handling the situation, Leo suggests that the Vierras may have a little cash and credit at the store. When the cattle from the Vierra rancho are sold in the fall, Leo can arrange for a good price at the army post, and the Don may pay his bill from this money. The Don, reluctant to agree but knowing he has no choice, assents.

It was all quite vague and nothing was put on paper, but Leo knew it was a safe agreement. He knew that all the Vierra properties would be his security and he knew the authority of the Padre would stand behind it... He knew he was acquiring a dependent who hated his dependence, that he was humbling a proud man (p. 131).
So the feudal society which had so long kept the balance of power in the hands of the few began to crumble. In some cases, as on a land grant such as the one discussed in *Grant of Kingdom*, the feudal system was continued, essentially unchanged, for another generation or two, and then suddenly ended as a grant was disposed of in pieces or as a whole. In *Grant of Kingdom* Jean Ballard builds an empire, with the traditional store from which all purchase and trade. At the end of his reign on the grant the whole property is sold in one piece to a group of men, and the well-established system disintegrates in one signing of the pen.

In the larger towns, the railroad came through, and the economy changed in much the same manner as in any town suddenly on the railroad line. In *Those Days* concludes as the New Town section is developed to meet the railroad and the Old Town degenerates as the merchants move their establishments to the railroad side.

In these two novels, as in *Grant of Kingdom* and *Wolf Song*, Mr. Fergusson takes care to use geographic areas accurately and to use actual place names. After composing, at least mentally, *The Conquest of Don Pedro*, Mr. Fergusson described the little adobe town to his sister Erna, and asked her if there were such a little town in New Mexico. She recognized the village immediately and told him the name of it; the actual town was located
in the Las Cruces area of New Mexico. Mr. Fergusson moved the village in his novel a few miles north of this area.

In Those Days recalls the village of Socorro, the pueblos of Zuni and Acoma and the appropriate mountain ranges and river in the region. The Conquest of Don Pedro makes accurate use of Santo Domingo, Mesilla and Bernalillo.

Historical accuracy, too, is carefully preserved. The discussion of the railroad battle over the line which was to go to Santa Fe is handled in accord with actual fact. Mr. Fergusson says, "The Santa Fe and the Denver and Rio Grande fought for the . . . Raton Pass to the South. They shipped in bad men from Dodge with rifles, and rival graders slugged it out on the right of way. The Santa Fe won Raton Pass. Slow and late it crawled down the Rio Grande" (In Those Days, p. 134). The occupancy of the pass was important because it was wide enough for only one set of tracks. Ray Allen Billington reports, "While work on the Denver and Rio Grande was at a standstill, the better-financed eastern road [Santa Fe] usurped . . . the Raton Pass into Santa Fe . . . in 1789."16

The vivid details of three accounts in In Those Days Mr. Fergusson records approximately as they happened

15. This information was received in an interview with Erna Fergusson on March 22, 1964.

to his grandfather, Franz Huning. The trip that Robert Jayson and Tom Foote take into the Apache country of Arizona to trade is reminiscent of a similar trip made by Huning (Home in the West, p. 27). The expedition which Huning participated in was not quite as fortunate in its bouts with storms and hunger, for while the actual party came home having eaten all the animals it had traded for, in the fictional account by Mr. Fergusson the expedition returns with more than half its animals alive.

The extension of credit by Don Aragon which permits Jayson and Foote, Freighters, to set up their caravan in style is similar to backing received by Franz Huning and his brother Charles to start their trading expeditions. Since the trade over the Santa Fe trail was lucrative for nearly two decades, the frequency with which wealthy men advanced credit to younger, more adventurous men is understandable.

The third incident of Robert Jayson's adventures which has an approximate parallel in the life of Franz Huning involves the capture and murder of loved ones by marauding Indians. Robert Jayson's young bride is captured in In Those Days, while it is Huning's mother-in-law and her son who are so taken.

The wagons which were used in early Santa Fe trail days and the problems involved in maneuvering them are accurately described by Mr. Fergusson. "Freight moved
in great wagons with five-foot wheels and high white covers. Four thousand pounds was a wagon load and it took twelve or sixteen mules to haul one . . . Sometimes on hillsides it took twelve men with ropes to hold a great staggering wagon to the road and sometimes on steep grades the brakes burned out and mules were crushed and mangled by two-ton wagons" (In Those Days, pp. 3-4).

In The Far Western Frontier the wagons were similarly described.

Great cumbersome affairs they were, three feet wide and up to sixteen feet long, with rear wheels that stood five feet tall and were circled by iron tires four inches thick. Over the blue-colored wagon boxes were stretched canvas covers of white . . . Each wagon was pulled by ten or twelve mules, or by three or four yokes of oxen (p. 28).

Having undoubtedly seen the typical sala of the wealthy Mexicans of his own day, Mr. Fergusson's recreation of this widely used room is vivid and accurate. The Dona Lupe's sala in Don Pedro was described with its gilt-framed mirrors on bone-white walls, its couches covered with Navajo blankets and floors spread with woolen rugs of native weave in black and white checks (p. 97).

W. W. H. Davis relates the scene in the 1850's. "The common covering for the floors . . . is a coarse article of domestic woolen manufacture."17 The walls he describes as being covered by the women and girls

with white gypsum and then with brightly colored calico to a height of four feet. As for furniture, "few chairs or wooden seats of any kind are used, but in their stead mattresses are folded up and placed around the room, next to the wall, which, being covered with blankets, makes a pleasant seat" (p. 52).

The sacred images referred to by Mr. Fergusson in Rio Grande are also mentioned in each of the novels about the Southwest. Two types of images were used by both the rich and the poor, and these images may still be seen in village churches in New Mexico today. The santos de retablos are flat pieces of wood with the image of a saint carved in relief on the front. The images are carefully painted, often with actual blood on the wounds, to recreate the colors. Some of the retablos, as they are commonly called, are not carved but merely painted. The other type of santo is a bulto or vuelto, a carved saint's image (Caballeros, p. 329). In The Conquest of Don Pedro, the Doña Lupe comes to inspect Leo's meager store of goods and purchases a cheap plaster saint. "Almost every Mexican home had a niche where an image of some saint was kept, and most of them made their own santitos . . . .These were much more distinctive than the cheap plaster saints he [Leo Mendes] sold, but his images had displaced many a santito a hundred years old" (p. 33).
The hospitality of a Mexican home, be the occupants rich or poor, is legendary throughout the Southwest. In *The Conquest of Don Pedro* Leo Mendes is near exhaustion on his first day out on the scorching desert, and he stumbles upon a small adobe house. The owner calls off his dogs and invites Leo, whom he has never seen before, into "the usual white-washed room" (p. 48). The young mistress of the house comes politely out to greet him and fix him food. "It is evident that neither of these people knew what to make of this late and sudden visitor with his exotic looks and alien accent, but hospitality is almost a religion to them" (p. 49). Leo tells the couple that he has money and offers to pay, but their reply is, "It makes no difference. Sit down" (p. 49). And sit down he does, on a rolled mattress covered with a Navajo blanket. He is fed and left to sleep.

The traditional words of hospitality, especially when one has received the graciousness of another, is "My house is yours," and for the Mexicans this phrase is more than just casual conversation. Don Tobias Barreiro, who occupies in Mesilla the position that Don Augustin Vierra has occupied in Don Pedro, is introduced to Leo at the Padre's house. His parting words are, "When you are in Mesilla, my house is yours. Next Sunday we are entertaining friends . . . We will be honored if you come" (p. 99). Robert Jayson, newly arrived in the Southwest,
is soon a guest of the Aragon family for dinner, as a result of his escapade with Diego Aragon in the stream. The Don greets Robert with the traditional "My house is yours," and Robert feels that "never had he been greeted with such kindly perfect courtest" (In Those Days, p. 55). Ray Allen Billington records this same hospitality, saying that companionship and gossip from another area were all that the hosts requested in return. "They tried to provide this companionship by lavishing hospitality on all who knocked at their doors. No stranger suffered from want in that land" (Far Western Frontier, p. 11).

Along with plentiful hospitality, entertainment also abounded. In The Far Western Frontier some of the entertainment is described.

Wherever men gathered—at a rodeo, or wedding or funeral—impromptu contests were devised, usually for horsemen. Perhaps a chicken would be buried with only its head projecting while riders swept down at a full gallop and tried to snatch off the head (p. 12).

Similarly, W. W. H. Davis, in his trip to the New Mexico area, found this game called Gallo, a "primitive sport" among the people.

The fowl is buried alive in a small pit in the ground, leaving only the head above the surface. . . . The racers, passing at full speed, grapple the head of the fowl, which, usually well greased, generally slips out of their fingers. As soon as some one more dextrous than the rest has succeeded in tearing it loose, he spurs to his steed and endeavors to escape with the prize (p. 60).
The village of Don Pedro, Mr. Fergusson relates, has its annual celebration in honor of St. John the Baptist, the patron saint of horsemen. The fiesta was called Día San Juan. Included always were games of skill for horseback men, including Gallo.

What followed was a scene of innocent and customary cruelty. A live cock was buried to his neck in a pit of loose sand; the horsemen lined up at a certain distance and each in turn rode at the rooster as fast as he dared, stooped from the saddle and tried to snatch it out of the sand (p. 200).

Games were also a prominent part of a rico family's social entertainment. Robert Jayson is introduced to the merry games of drop the handkerchief and blind man's bluff which the Aragon family enjoy after a sumptuous evening meal. A new game which he has never seen involves attempting to snatch a bullet off the top of a mound of flour without mussing the face. Even the Don and Doña enter into these festivities. Leo Mendes discovers the same type of after-dinner merriment when he begins to be included in the circle of the rico families in the Rio Grande valley.

The essentially feudal set-up in the valleys which controls the economic status of all the Mexicans has its roots in many past generations. This patron-peon system is well described in both the novel of Don Pedro and In Those Days. In Rio Grande Mr. Fergusson discusses the homesteads of the rico families. "Life here was secure.
It was shut in and well nourished. Each great house reproduced the isolation which beset the colony as a whole. The men who owned these houses lived pleasant lazy lives... All the work was done by peons who were in effect serfs. They were paid in goods and were never out of debt. Sons inherited the debts of their fathers and generations lived in bondage" (Rio Grande, p. 81).

This virtual bondage was clearly evident in the little village of Don Pedro when Leo Mendes set up his Tienda Barata. From Beltrán Leo learns that "most of the people were now hopelessly in debt to the Vierras. Not only had they lost their range rights, but also much of the land in the valley had gradually passed into the hands of the Vierras by a process of debt and foreclosure which is as old as the idea of owning earth" (p. 27).

The patriarchal style with which the ricos ruled their estates left them, as Mr. Fergusson reports in Rio Grande, both socially and physically isolated. To combat this isolation the families of similar status around all the villages entered into a lively exchange of social calling and festivities. "Sociability, within the class, was a necessity born of isolation. The families, large in size, ... saw much of one another."18

Added to this already formidable ruling class was the additional power wielded by the padre of the village. When Leo enters into financial agreements with Augustín Vierra he takes nothing in writing about the agreement because as he says, "the authority of the Padre would stand behind it" (Don Pedro, p. 131). Again, when Leo wishes to marry young Magdalena, the niece of the Vierras, he goes to the Padre with his problem, because he alone would be able to talk to the family and be listened to. The padre, therefore, had power over even the ricos, who exercised similar power over their peons. "The institutions of the family and the Church were, in turn, interlocked with the patron-peon relationship. Based on tradition and authority, each institution supplemented the other and made for isolation. By tradition, leadership rested in the priest, the Patron and the head of the family" (North From Mexico, p. 66).

The power of the padre extended throughout the entire area of his church. Women of the villages were proud of the numbers of their children who had been fathered by the local priest. The priests were away from direct control of the Church for many years, and many surrounded themselves with all the comforts of life. Padre Orlando, the priest of Don Pedro, "was both truly an epicure and a gourmet" (p. 88). He always served local fresh game complete with delicate wine sauces, mushrooms
and specially imported olive oils from New York. The Padre readily admits:

I felt lost and isolated, and so I set to work to create a little world of my own . . . I planted fruit trees and vines and made my own Eden . . . I came to love this little world of comfort I had made to my own taste (p. 93).

The conditions of the priests in New Mexico area had steadily grown worse until Bishop Lamy arrived in 1851 and initiated reforms among the clergy. The famous Father Martinez was suspended and later excommunicated, "all as a part of Lamy's general effort to reform the worldly, pleasure-loving curates of New Mexico" (North From Mexico, p. 119).

For all their worldliness the padres of the region had done a good deal to establish the orders of the Church. Padre Orlando goes about raising money from wealthy families so that the young Mexican couples who had been living in sin in the eyes of the Church because they were too poor to afford the marriage ceremony could have the sacred rites. It is to acquire some money for a young man who wishes to marry that Padre Orlando comes to Leo Mendes for the first time. The Padre knows of Leo's wealth, but he does not know that Leo has already lent the young man as much money as possible. Leo agrees, nevertheless, to give the money for the celebration and the rites, provided that his name is not mentioned. Thus a Jewish man is donating gifts to a Catholic service.
When the Padre first learns that Leo is Jewish he exclaims, "You remind me greatly of my friend Bernard Rosenfeld in Santa Fe. He too is a Jew and now a very rich one. When we were finishing the cathedral there, he gave us much money. He always said he did not know whether he believed in God but that he was sure he believed in the Archbishop."

Erna Fergusson relates an amusing anecdote which is probably the basis for this scene in *Don Pedro*. When Bishop Lamy was building his church in Santa Fe, he continually asked a prominent Jewish friend for money. As the building neared completion the Bishop went to his friend for one more gift. The Jewish man told the Bishop he would give the money asked with one stipulation: the Star of David must be put above the door of the church. The Bishop agreed, the money was donated and a small Jewish star was carved above the door of the church.

The Jewish contribution to the religious and cultural affairs of the Southwest was an important one and has been largely ignored in the literature. Upon being asked whether the omission of discussion in literature of the important contribution of the Jews to the social and cultural Southwest was a sign of inherent prejudices, Erna Fergusson, who grew up in New Mexico during much of the building of the area and who has nearly always lived in Albuquerque, replied that probably the omission is simply explained. The contribution of the Jews was so obvious
that most writers overlooked the necessity of such a discussion. In most Southwest towns the influence of a Jewish merchant who became prominent and remained so can still be seen today. Witness the Goldwaters, Steinfelds, Mansfelds, Drachmans, some whose families remained Jewish and some who turned to other faiths as there were not enough Jewish men to form a religious unit when they came to the region to live.
CHAPTER IV

THE NEW ALIEN

In Harvey Fergusson's novel *The Blood of the Conquerors* the cycle of social and economic changes finds its completion: the descendant of a once wealthy Mexican family finds himself unable to penetrate the social and economic barriers set up by the Anglos in New Mexico.

The demise of the aristocratic society is suggested in *In Those Days*, for Diego Aragon becomes a victim of the advancing Anglo society as surely as he has once been a proud descendant of a fine family. Fergusson reports:

And Diego was not alone in his ruin. Almost all of the old Mexican families had lost their money and land, had fallen to pieces just as their great houses had done. . . . With their wide lands about them, their great store-rooms full of meat and grain, their troops of servants and their prolific women, they had seemed as safe and permanent as anything man could build. But the railroad had wiped them out (p. 240).

What has happened to the huge homesteads of the Mexicans such as that of Diego Aragon is discussed clearly in *The Blood of the Conquerors*. In less than a century the society of the region has come from wholly Spanish and Mexican domination, with Anglos attempting to enter the circle of the elect, to Anglo domination with even a
well-educated sensitive Mexican unable to find acceptance. For Ramon Delcasar is truly well-educated, and he is sensitive to his problems as a Mexican. He has been to a St. Louis law school and as the story opens he is coming back to his hometown with the hopes of his family for continued pride and accomplishments on his shoulders.

Ramon is no stranger to prejudice, for while he is a member of a fine and respected family in New Mexico, he is just another Mexican in other areas. "His social footing was a peculiarly uncertain thing for the reason that he was a Mexican. This means that he faced in every social contact the possibility of more or less covert prejudice against his blood, and that he faced it with an unduly proud and sensitive spirit concealed beneath a manner of aristocratic indifference."\(^{19}\)

As Ramon Delcasar returns to New Mexico after years at law school he is entranced by the landscape he has loved.

Now he saw again the scorched tawny levels, the red hills dotted with little gnarled piñon trees, the purple mystery of distant mountains. A great friendly warmth filled his body, and his breath came a little quickly with eagerness (p. 12).

He is eager to return to the land that he remembers from his carefree boyhood wanderings with the sheepherders on the Delcasar rancho.

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His usual practice, when riding a great distance on a train, is to pick out the girl with whom he might enjoy a flirtation. This action is covert, because he realizes that his race may prejudice another. His eye is immediately drawn to a petite blonde girl in the secure grasp of a mother and a tall, sick-looking man. He is favored at last with one brief but friendly smile as the young blonde hurries down the aisle.

The Delcasar family was established in the area in 1790 by a member of the Spanish army. The family has maintained its dominance in the politics and social activities of the area for well over a century, and Ramon is the last member of the family who has both youth and promise of success. He stands to inherit a considerable sum of money from an uncle Diego Delcasar, provided the uncle doesn't squander the entire estate in gambling and unwise land sales. The fall of the family as a power in New Mexico was marked by the coming of the railroads, because the old town was bypassed by the railroad and life began to change.

Two parallel bars of steel reaching across the prairie brought sudden change with them, and it was great and sudden . . . . It smashed the colourful barbaric pattern of the old life (p. 20).

The Mexican Dons were not able to comprehend the business minds and methods of the Anglos who came into the town with the railroad, and the Anglos were quick to take
advantage of the situation. "Business seemed to them [Dons] a conspiracy to take their land and their goods away from them, and a remarkably successful conspiracy" (p. 21).

Don Diego had been a great figure, but had lost much of his estate in gambling and development. He was in partnership with a man named MacDougall, who was constantly lending money to him, with Delcasar land as security. Ramon, the last of the Delcasars, "had a more important heritage in the sharp intelligence, and the proud plucky and truculent spirit which had characterized the best of the Delcasars throughout the family history" (p. 24).

Ramon attends the famous Montezuma ball given in the town and sees his uncle dancing with his partner's wife. The couple signifies to Ramon, perhaps unconsciously, "the disgust with which the life of his native town inspired him. Here was the Mexican sedulously currying favour with the gringo, who robbed him for his pains. And here was the specific example of that relation which promised to rob Ramon of his heritage" (p. 32).

Ramon meets the young lady who is currently captivating the men of the town: Julia Roth, the blonde whom he had secretly admired on the train. As he dances with her he receives her permission to call. He is
immediately smitten with her and resolves to have her at any cost.

As has been his custom for years, Ramon dresses in his old hunting clothes and goes off into the mountains to see his friend Archulera. Archulera has once been a wealthy aristocrat, but was cheated out of his share of a mine by Diego, Ramon's uncle. The old man continually presses Ramon about the money—five thousand dollars—and Ramon laughingly promises to pay Archulera one day what is due him. Ramon is anxious to get to the evening, for he has been enjoying the company of Catalina, the old man's daughter, these several visits. In his youthful eagerness, Ramon does not envision what consequences this relationship may cause.

Ramon Delcasar returns to the town and calls upon Julia Roth. Her mother and her brother Gordon remain in the room during his entire visit. Julia steers the conversation around to a topic she has heard a friend mention: the penitentes. She questions Ramon about them and her brother grows interested. In answer to Gordon's inquiry about the origin of the brotherhood, Ramon relates:

My grandfather told me that they brought it over from Spain centuries ago, and the Indians had a sort of whipping fraternity, and the two got mixed up . . . . The church used to tolerate it; it was a regular religious festival. But now it's outlawed. They still have a lot of political power (p. 56).
Despite her family's objection to him because of his race, Julia continues to see Ramon. They meet one evening on her front steps, and after the other callers have gone, Ramon puts into humble words his feelings, "You know . . . I love you." As the brother is heard approaching she pushes him aside with a gentle, "I love you, Ramon" (p. 75).

Ramon resolves to acquire great land and money so that he may have Julia. He sees his uncle one evening drunk and gambling away his money. Diego laughingly says, "I have lost five hundred dollars tonight. What do I care? I am a rich man" (p. 81). Ramon cringes at the needless waste of money which he hopes to have.

One evening Ramon suggests cunningly to Archulera that the moment Diego is dead, Ramon will pay the five thousand dollars cheated away from Archulera by Diego.

Within three weeks Diego is dead, having been hit with a rifle bullet while examining his tires on a dark, lonely road. Ramon and his mother and sister go through the involved mourning and burial period, and then Ramon takes the bag of money to Archulera.

Immediately upon acquiring the estate, valued at some two hundred thousand dollars, Ramon buys a car and some expensive Eastern clothes, so that he may impress the Roths. Even though only a small amount of the estate is in cash, Ramon has enough money to outfit himself in the
manner he wishes. "He wanted to make himself as much as possible like the men of Julia's kind and class. And this desire modified his manner and speech as well as his appearance" (p. 109).

Ramon rejects an offer from his late uncle's partner to share in the wealth to be had by forcing the pelados off their land in the valley to the north through which the railroad will run. Both Ramon and MacDougall own land in the valley already. Ramon decides instead to win the pelados and ranchers to his side, as a Mexican, and acquire the great chunks of land that he desires.

In the meantime he receives a promise from Julia that she will go away with him after she has had a bit of time to prepare. He lets her go and then curses himself for doing it. "He had been a fool. She would have gone. She had begged him not to take her, but if he had insisted, she would have gone. He had been a fool!" (p. 135).

Upon the suggestion of his adviser Antonio Cortez, Ramon decides to join the penitente brotherhood in the valley to the north, because he knows that with the strength of this organization behind him he will be able to sway the common Mexicans of the San Antonio Valley. Ramon has decided to "preach the race issue" (p. 125).

At this point Catalina Archulera appears in town, obviously with child. Her father had for many years guarded her virginity from the common sheepherders, for
virginity before marriage was revered among the wealthy and once-wealthy. Now he expects money or a marriage or both. Ramon decides to take her to a ranch in the mountains and deal with Archulera later, for he is on his way to the San Antonio Valley.

In the village he first wins the approval and confidence of the hermano mayor of the local penitente brotherhood, Senor Alfego. He impressively tells Alfego:

I have come because my own lands are in danger, but also because I love the Mexican people, and hate the gringos! Some one must go among these good people and warn them not to sell their lands, and not to be cheated out of their birthrights. My friend, I have come to do that (p. 160).

With this statement and his promise to be a brother to all the Mexicans, Alfego agrees to admit him to the penitente brotherhood.

Ramon goes to the morada and receives his initiation into the secret group, taking his six slashes of the quartz piece which will scar his back and signify him a member of the penitentes. After his wounds heal, he goes among the ranchos, telling the men what the Anglos are trying to do and warning them not to lose their homes for a few hundred dollars, which will vanish in a year. One hermano mayor of another chapter of the brotherhood is not taken in by Ramon's actions. He says defiantly, "I know you are a penitente, and I know why. Do you think I am a fool like these pelados . . . . You wear the scars of the
penitente because you think it will help you to make money and do what you want" (p. 184). Ramon throws a baile in the village and wins the men to his side with a spirited race speech, and the old man is forced to come to terms with Ramon for the support of the village.

Ramon finds a note from Julia to meet in the plaza of the capital. He arrives but Julia does not. He discovers a note at his hotel which politely says that her brother had come near to death when he discovered her attempt to run away and that her courage had failed. Julia's note continues, "I do love you—terribly. But you are so strange, so different. And I don't think we would have gotten along or anything" (p. 194). Ramon is incensed with her weakness, and then comes to the conclusion he has dreaded, "Perhaps she had been playing with him all along, had never had any idea of marrying him—because he was a Mexican!" (p. 195). As his anger subsides, however, so does this feeling. He begins to realize what he had asked her to do, to give up, for him. In place of anger comes a great pity. "To have won her would have been to win a great victory over the gringos—over that civilization, alien to him in race and temper, which antagonized and yet fascinated him, with which he was forced to grapple for his life . . . But in his heart was a great bitterness. In his heart he felt that the gringos had beaten one more Delcasar" (p. 197).
To cover his lonely feeling and his bitterness, he falls into the very pattern which had spelled the downfall of his uncle. He borrows a sum of money from the bank and begins gambling and drinking heavily. His gambling techniques are a picture of the temperament of his race: "full of daring, intuition, imagination, bidding always for the favours of the fates, throwing logic to the winds" (p. 209). At the end of an evening he has lost five hundred dollars. His remarks to the winner are an echo of his uncle's earlier remarks to him, words which earlier had caused Ramon to cringe. "Hell, what's five hundred dollars to me . . . .I don't give a damn . . . .I'm rich" (p. 211).

After warnings from his adviser, Ramon settles down to the life of a lawyer. He handles a few cases, none of which bring him in any substantial amount of cash. After a few weeks of this monotonous life a letter arrives from Julia, who is married and living in New York. Her husband is away. Ramon immediately gets on a train for New York. After a brief, frenzied affair with Julia, he begs her to run away with him. Her answer is, "We couldn't have done any of those wild things you talked about. I'll always love you, honestly I will" (p. 249).

So Ramon Delcasar goes back to New Mexico, one more Mexican beaten on all sides by the gringos. He sells his lands to MacDougall and buys a small ranch in the valley.
Every detail of this home of his forefathers stirred his emotions. To trade his heritage for this was to trade hope and hazard for monotonous ease; but with the smell of the yielding earth in his nostrils, he no more thought of this than a man in love thinks of the long restraints and irks of marriage when the kiss of his woman is on his lips (p. 259).

He recalls Catalina from the ranch in the mountains and has her cook and clean. The animal pleasures become satisfied within him as he goes about his daily tasks. Yet a vague feeling of dissatisfaction gnaws at him. "This sense of dissatisfaction reached its futile crux one day... when he received a letter from Julia" (p. 264). Julia's question was one he himself had asked many times: what could I do?

His thoughts went round and round and go nowhere...His dissatisfaction simmered down to a vague ache in the background of his consciousness. Idly he tore the letter to bits (p. 265).

The place names and geographic description in The Blood of the Conquerors are so accurate that one could reconstruct the map of the section of northern New Mexico from the novel. Ramon comes home, and his home is in a divided city, New Town and Old Town: Albuquerque. His first social function is attending the annual fair. "The tourist from the East, distinguished by his camera and his unnecessary umbrella, jostled the Pueblo squaw from Isleta, with her latest-born slung over her shoulder in a fold of a red blanket" (p. 25). The pueblo of Isleta is
to the south of Albuquerque, but near enough to the city that the Indians could easily walk to the fair. Later, as Ramon decides to go reclaim the old house in the valley on the San Antonio River in Arriba County, his steps are easily traced. Arriba county is called Rio Arriba county on a map. The San Antonio River runs through the northern portion of the county. Ramon spends a night in Tusas Canyon, which is in the eastern portion of the county and then moves down to a village called Vallecitos which is south and west of the Tusas river and the village of Tusas.

The sheepherders, *pelados*, in the valley of San Antonio are small independent owners who have gotten their land from one of the grants of land which could be homesteaded. The land and the people are described in *The Blood of the Conquerors*.

Along the slopes of the mountains, where the valleys widened, were primitive little adobe towns, in which Mexicans lived, each owning a few acres of tillable land. In the summer they followed their sheep herds in the upland pastures (p. 153).

In *Rio Grande* Mr. Fergusson explains the situation.

But in addition to the individual grants of land there were community grants where the poor could take small homesteads along the arable valleys and hold the grazing lands in common so that from the first there were independent small land owners (p. 109).

The customs connected with deaths and funerals which are observed by the Mexican families are described
with care in *The Blood of the Conquerors*. When Diego Delcasar is mysteriously killed on the desert, the traditional mourning begins. All the Delcasar relatives, rich and poor, come to the home of Ramon where the body lay. After each has come into the rooms of the immediate family and said a few words of comfort, "all would gather in the room where the casket rested on two chairs. They would sit in a silent solemn circle about the room, drinking coffee and wine all night" (p. 97). As is usual in the case of a prominent Mexican's death, there are two professional mourners. From the *placita* come the sounds of:

intermittent howling and wailing . . . . This he knew was the work of two old Mexican women who made their livings by acting as professional mourners . . . . Seated on the ground with their black shawls pulled over their heads, they wailed with astonishing endurance until the coffin was carried from the house, when they were sure of receiving a substantial gift from the grateful relatives (p. 96).

Ruth Laughlin Barker calls the evening's mourning a wake.

Friends come in quietly to sit in mournful silence on stiff rows of chairs around the room and murmur words of sympathy to the relatives. Between nine o'clock and midnight a supper is served—coffee, steaming chile, frijoles and rice pudding (*Caballeros*, p. 283).

In support of this festiveness attached even to funerals, Mr. Fergusson discusses the importance of celebrations in *Río Grande*.

All Latin-Americans love ceremony and ritual and among them the established forms of human conduct never seem to go dead . . . . Weddings and baptisms were always celebrated among these people with all the ceremony they could afford
and every such evening ended in fasting and dancing. Even the funerals, with professional mourners wailing till the coyotes answered from the hills, were occasions for much feasting and drinking of red wine. All saint's days were celebrated not only with feasts and dancing but with games (p. 114).

One of the most important aspects of Mexican life in the Southwest is the brotherhood known as penitente. This strong organization has been mentioned in nearly every one of Mr. Fergusson's Southwest novels, but it receives the fullest treatment in The Blood of the Conquerors. Ramon is correct when he tells the Roth family that the organization began by combining two old concepts, with ideas from both Indians and Spanish cults. The discussion of the organization of the brotherhood in Rio Grande is complete and colorful.

By origin and profession the Penitent Brothers are members of a Christian sect, deriving from the Middle Ages, who gash and whip their flesh for the glory of their souls and enact at every Eastertide a primitive passion play ... The flagellant sect from which this one takes its name and origin came to New Mexico with the conquest and with the Third Order of St. Francis ... But in Old Mexico this sect had already absorbed an aboriginal one which practiced self-punishment. The society was from an early date as much Indian as Spanish, as much pagan as Christian (p. 117).

The purpose of the organization as it was originated in Europe was penance through self-flagellation. This version of the brotherhood was brought to New Mexico by Don Juan Oñate in 1598 (Caballeros, p. 217). The Indian form of the brotherhood involved death-worship.
These two basic beliefs joined to form one of the strongest groups of men in the Southwest. Harvey Fergusson says in *Rio Grande*, "Whatever its social standing may have been at first it speedily became an organization of the common man against his masters—a brotherhood with temporal benefits and a fierce solidarity and a secretiveness so relentless that it punished betrayal of its laws and business with burial alive (p. 118). Ramon Delcasar discovers that "if he betrayed the secrets of the order he would be buried alive with only his head sticking out of the ground so that the ants might eat his face" (p. 164).

The concept of death-worship is easily seen in the decorations of the altar of the *morada*, the building which houses the secret chamber of the chapter of the *penitente* in each village. When Ramon enters the chamber after asking the questions of the ritual which allowed him entrance, he has a brief moment to notice the room. "The altar was covered with black cloth. This was decorated with figures of the skull and cross-bones cut from white cloth. A human skull stood on either side of it, and a small wooden crucifix hung on the wall above it. The solitary candle—an ordinary tallow one in a tin holder—stood before him" (p. 166). Harvey Fergusson reports in *Rio Grande* that as a boy he was able to see one of the ceremonies in the outer chapel of the *morada*. "A smoky lantern hung from the middle of the roof and two candles
lit an altar at the far end. It was draped and curtained in black and a human skull and cross bones were embroidered or painted in white on the black altar cloth. Plainly this was a shrine of death" (p. 121).

The actual initiation of a man into the order is brief but painful.

The Hermano Mayor cuts his back at the waistline with razor-edged obsidian, three times up and three times across. As the blood streams from it the initiate begs for the "Seven times Christ spoke from the Cross," "the five wounds," . . . . Each petition calls for a like number of lashes, stinging his torn back. The mind may have reached the state of exaltation where it invites such agony, but the body is too weak to endure it . . . . The new Penitente often falls into merciful unconsciousness (Caballeros, p. 222).

Ramon himself is able to call for "the three mediations of the passion of our Lord" (p. 168), and the third lash "sent him plunging downward through a red mist into black nothingness" (p. 169).

While all the ceremonies but those for Easter are carried out in the darkest chamber of the morada, much of the passion play is enacted outdoors by the penitente brotherhood during Holy Week. It is during this re-enacting of the suffering of Christ that the order takes on the image of a death order. The flagellants scourge themselves with braided yucca or amole whips called disciplinas until they are streaming blood and crawling in anguish along the ground, dragging their crosses. All this suffering is for penance.
The practice of crucifixion, which today is accomplished with an image of Christ, reportedly was formerly carried out by one of the brothers whose lot was chosen. In *Rio Grande*, Mr. Fergusson relates:

> It is known that formerly they nailed a man to the cross. Some aliens have witnessed crucifixions with ropes, drawn tight enough to stop circulation of the blood. There are many rumors of the Penitentes who have died on the cross as of other tortures. Nowadays one may see only the whipping of bare and lacerated backs and the crucifixion of an image but what goes on in the night and in the secret chambers of the Morada none but the Penitent Brother know (p. 11?).

Erna Fergusson describes the *morada* and the pageant of the Holy Season concisely.

During Lent men go often to the *morada*, set always away from the village. This two-room adobe chapel may be recognized by its lack of windows and by the heavy crosses leaning near. Hidden ceremonies within culminate in Holy Week, when the Brothers re-enact the Passion. Accompanied by the *pito* man who plays a single flute, the flagellants move in slow procession, their heads hidden by black sacks, their bare backs bleeding under the yucca lash and redly soaking their white cotton drawers. Bare feet are tortured on stones and thorns. No man cries out. One bears that heavy cross, falling as Jesus did, and often taking lashes from his fellows (*New Mexico*, p. 214).

Ramon sees these pieces of equipment for the passion as he enters the *morada*. "All the way around the room, hanging from pegs driven into the wall, was a row of the broad braided lashes of *amole* weed, called *disciplinas*, used in Holy Week, and of the blood-stained drawers worn on
that occasion by the flagellants" (The Blood of the Conquerors, p. 167).

As is noted above, the brotherhood became an organization for the common man. Mr. Fergusson goes on to relate that the society "is of a piece with the faith of all Mexicans of mixed blood" (Rio Grande, p. 118). A group with this strength and this hold on its members is certain to be a target for political groups. Ruth Laughlin Barker says, "Its far-reaching membership . . . developed into a powerful organization. Its officers often dispensed justice in a land where judges were few" (Caballeros, p. 218). Erna Fergusson says, "It is still common claim that no Penitente can be convicted of a crime where the order is strong" (New Mexico, p. 212).

Ramon Delcasar knows of this power and resolves to gain the land and money he desires with the help the strength his membership in the society will give him among the members. Ramon thinks, "Here he could play upon the ancient hatred of the gringo; here he could use to the best advantage the prestige of his family; here, above all, if he could win over the penitentes, he could do almost anything he pleased" (p. 154). He is allowed to join the Penitente Brotherhood, and only one man openly accuses him of joining just so he may have their support for his own gain. Even this man is won over by the support of the other men in his village.
As narrator, Mr. Fergusson comes into the novel and comments on the various uses to which membership in the Brotherhood has been put.

His Ramon's plan of joining that ancient order to gain influence was not an original one. Mexican politicians and perhaps one or two gringos had done it. Some of these penitentes for a purpose had been men of great influence. Others had been Mexicans of the poorer sort, capable of sharing the half-fanatic, half sadistic spirit of the thing. Ramon came to the order as a young and almost unknown man seeking its aid (p. 154).

Ramon is also remembering the history he has learned when he tells the Roths that the order had been denounced by the Church.

The church formally pronounced against it in the eighties [1880] and it must have suffered the opposition of many of the padres long before that for its tendency was to free the common man from their exactions. It was the flower of a spiritual integrity which had its roots in an ancient sacrifice of blood, in ecstatic acceptance of pain and death (Rio Grande, p. 118).

The padres' primary objection to the brotherhood is easily seen. The members of the order felt that this penance absolved them from any and all guilt from sins of the preceding year. Yet, despite the church's objections, in some villages the order is stronger than the Church. "In Las Trampas there is no Morada, for the secret chambers of the order are building onto the rear of the old church itself. Here, it is plain, the Penitent Brothers were so strong they absorbed the church and hold it still" (Rio Grande, p. 119).
CHAPTER V

THE SPIRIT OF THE WEST

While not essential to a study of the cycle of economic and social changes in the Southwest, Footloose McGarnigal is part of Harvey Fergusson's series of novels on the Southwest and it merits a brief discussion. Published in 1930, the novel deals primarily with the Taos area during the early twentieth century. This story contains, in much greater detail than any other, Mr. Fergusson's carefully accurate knowledge of the Pueblo Indians. In addition, the life of Alec McGarnigal as portrayed by Mr. Fergusson contains interesting autobiographical elements.

Many of the personal aspects of Alec McGarnigal's story correspond to Harvey Fergusson's life. McGarnigal grows up in New York, although he was born in Texas. He finds, after his graduation from college, that he has a restless foot. He feels vaguely disturbed by his monotonous existence but unable to change his situation, mostly because of insufficient funds. A bequest of five hundred dollars from his uncle Alec sets his mind and his body free from New York: he resolves to go West. The tales
of Uncle Alec have always struck a chord of envy in young Alec.

Uncle Alec had gone West right after the Civil War. He had helped to kill the last of the buffalo in the Panhandle, hunted wild cows in the brush country west of San Antonio, followed silver strikes in New Mexico and Colorado, punched cattle on the Pecos, driven herds over the long trail to Abilene. . . . According to himself he had been a part of almost every phase of the old-time western life and out of it he had made a legend for the entertainment of his namesake.20

It was of these adventures that Alec thought as he contemplates the five hundred dollars, just as he always had.

Those brave tales of horses and battle and gallant love had filled his young spirit. They had made the world he lived in seem intolerably dull. He had long entertained a firm conviction that he had been born too late to know a life fit for a man to live (p. 14).

And so West he goes, searching for the spirit of a time past. His first job is with the Forest Service. Here is a chance to be out in the open woods, alone with himself and nature. Mr. Fergusson himself found solace in the woods, both as a boy and for a brief period as a timber cruiser, the job which Alec McGarnigal gets.

Alec soon leaves the crew to go to Taos for an entrance test for the forest rangers. "As the day came for his departure Alec felt a growing urgent need to be

on the move and at the same time a reluctance to leave the group" (p. 90). Mr. Fergusson, upon leaving his job as a cruiser, says, "I began to long for an escape from the mountains for the first time in my life . . . I went back to Albuquerque with a little money in my pocket, and took the examination to be a forest ranger . . . I felt, rather than knew, that I didn't belong in the mountains any more but I saw nothing else to do" (Home in the West, p. 230).

In the mountains around Taos where Alec works as a ranger, the natives accept him as one of them. "Bullard began to talk of horses and weather and hunting, assuming that Alec knew all about these things. He plainly took his guest for a man of his own kind and Alec was pleased by this . . . He knew that his well-worn khaki and his sunburn and above all his Texas drawl made him seem the man Bullard thought he was" (p. 166). In much the same way, Mr. Fergusson reports being accepted, in his jaunts in the West, as almost part of the landscape.

An addiction to old clothes, a Western drawl, and a considerable lore of horses, cattle and country, provide me with a kind of natural disguise . . . I have been many times taken for a rancher, a cowboy or prospector and several times for a sheriff (Home in the West, p. 145).

After a pair of somewhat disconcerting appointments with the forest rangers, McGarnigal discovers what Mr. Fergusson himself discovered: it is not possible to
recapture the past. In the introduction to the trilogy *Followers of the Sun*, Mr. Fergusson discusses his personal change of feeling about the past.

I began by worshipping the past. I thought of it as the home of my soul. It seemed to me that, like Minniver Cheevey, I had been born too late. Now the past interests me chiefly for the light it sheds on the present. I began by looking backward with longing. Now I look forward with hope (*Followers of the Sun*, p. vii).

In *Home in the West* Mr. Fergusson examines yet another aspect of the worship of days long past.

We cannot afford to worship the past for it contains nothing that can be repeated. I think we owe our forebears not reverence or a romantic admiration but an effort to understand them (p. 79).

This lesson of understanding the past and yet not allowing this understanding to cloud the present is what Footloose McGarnigal learns. He finally resolves to go back to New York, with the conviction that it holds what he needs.

He was riding toward the city—the monster he had fled—and in his vision it shone with bright colors of desire. It was everything he wanted now, everything he lacked ....He knew it held a place for him, however small and hard. It was a struggle he could share ....It was his wilderness to explore, his peril. It was the frontier of his spirit (p. 274).

Mr. Fergusson expresses his relationship to the West as compared to his grandfather's: "He [Huning] was carried West by a worldwide migration which infected a whole generation with its restless spirit. The backwash of that same great expansion took me to the cities" (*Home*
in the West, p. 16). This restless spirit was absorbed by Alec from his uncle. Yet young Alec, like Harvey Fergusson, is swept back to the city.

Harvey Fergusson describes the Taos Pueblo in *Footloose McGarnigal* from his own experience.

From the top of one of the low hills Alec saw before him two strange angular buildings of yellowish, almost golden earth, standing on either side of a bright clear stream at the mouth of a deep canyon filled with trees. They looked like nothing he had ever seen before (p. 98).

The clean exterior of the pueblos which so amazes Alec McGarnigal is still evident today. "Old it must be but it didn't look old, partly because much of it was freshly plastered and some women were plastering walls with their hands even then" (p. 99).

Alec is eager to meet some of the Indians and "get to know them." His guide, Harms, explains that meeting them will be easy because they are willing to pose, but that getting to know them is another problem. Harms tells Alec:

But as for getting acquainted with them that's another matter. It's my opinion that no white man can get acquainted with Indians, not even by sleeping with them ... You simply can't discover an Indian's personality (p. 103).

In Mr. Fergusson's own experience, as recorded in *Rio Grande*, getting to know the Indians is nearly impossible.
Even those who have lived among the Pueblos for long periods seem to have come away baffled. For my part I never achieved any conviction of insight into human personality by talking with Indians although I have seen something of them from time to time for thirty years. Neither have I learned much about Indians as human beings by joining the crowds that gather about their public dances, eager for a free show (p. 12).

The problem of tourists coming to gape at the ceremonial dances that Mr. Fergusson mentions above is also presented in *Footloose McGarnigal*. Alec and some of the artists of Taos go to Santo Domingo to see the annual corn dance. As is true at most Indian ceremonials to which the public may come, taking pictures and sketching were prohibited. The clowns who are a part of many religious ceremonial dances cavort around the edges of the crowd, between it and the dancers. While occupied with their ceremonial duties they also watch for spectators who are violating the no-pictures rule. Alec is watching the dancing.

He saw one of the clowns dart up a ladder and crouch at the elbow of a man who was evidently trying to make a sketch on a tiny pad concealed behind his knees. The Indian's face was twisted with fear and pain. He hesitated a moment, then snatched the pad, tore it up and fled, ducking a blow (p. 145).

Harms has explained to Alec earlier that many of the Indians who weren't as exposed to tourists and artists as the Taos Pueblos thought that sketches were harmful. "Places like Santo Domingo, where they haven't seen so many white, they
think you're bewitching them if you try to make a sketch" (p. 100). In addition to the clowns, several old Indian men patrol the crowds switching cameras from people's hands, when they are surreptitiously trying to snap pictures.

E. L. Hewitt, who is a noted expert on Santo Domingo and the corn dance, would take exception to this reference to the men as clowns. He describes the men in this manner: "Emerging from the kiva you see a procession of ghostly figures. These are the Koshare. It must be understood that these characters are not clowns and are not intended to amuse. They represent . . . the spirits or shades of the ancestors of the people, those who still exercise a protecting influence through their mediatory office with the gods." Mr. Fergusson, in calling these men (the koshare) clowns, is using the term by which most people refer to them.

G. Huebener, an anthropologist, says they ought not to be referred to as clowns; he adds, however, "there is no doubt that they make jokes with the women and express their youthful vitality in a more or less free manner. The contradiction cannot be very easily reconciled."


The actual ceremonies involved in preparation for the dance itself are depicted accurately by Mr. Ferguson. As Alec McGarnigal enters the plaza, this sight meets his eyes:

An image of the pueblo's patron Catholic saint was enshrined under a bower of cottonwood bows, and offerings of pumpkins, melons, corn and round Indian loaves lay before it (p. 142).

In one of the Southwest Museum Papers which is primarily a discussion of the music of the Santo Domingo Pueblo, Frances Densmore also describes the ceremonial bower.

The procession passes through all the streets of the village, ending at a little bower of cottonwood poles and boughs on the east end of the plaza where the image of the saint is deposited. Lighted candles are placed before the image, and women come bringing bread, bowls of stew, fruit, etc., which they heap up before the saint.23

In Rio Grande, Mr. Ferguson makes a comment about the nature of the dancing in the Pueblo society. "Dancing stands at the source of all the arts that express themselves first in the human person" (p. 19).

As to the mixed nature of the celebration, McGarnigal is correct when he asks himself, "Was this a church festival or a primitive ceremony?" and then deduces that the dance at least is pagan. Mr. Hewitt relates that the mass said in the church before the image of the patron

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saint is brought out to the bower is the Pueblo's concession to the Catholic church, and aside from that, "The Corn Ceremony is the most perfect survival of the ancient religious ceremonies of the Pueblos" (El Palacio, #5, p. 72).

Of the Pueblos Mr. Fergusson says, "Their dancing, like any art, became a thing that existed for its own sake as well as for religious purposes so that they had comic dances and pleasure dances and even imitated and improved upon the dances of their enemies" (Rio Grande, p. 20).
CHAPTER VI

SOUTHWEST REGIONALISM

In addition to the analysis of the economic and social changes which have occurred in the Southwest, two other dominant areas in this series of novels constitute important contributions to the literature of the region. One such area involved the complete discussion of the moral standards among all classes of Mexican society. Another essential contribution to regional literature is Mr. Fergusson's presentation of an entire era in the history of the Southwest rather than just the recreation of an isolated segment.

Of criticisms of Mr. Fergusson's portrayals of characters, two merit consideration. One question occasionally raised is whether in his depiction of Lola Salazar and Consuelo Coronel Mr. Fergusson has violated credibility by putting Anglo minds in Mexican girls. In another critical point, a reviewer has suggested that Mr. Fergusson comes short of his own definition of what a novelist ought to do, at least in his earlier novels.

Both Lola Salazar and Consuelo Coronel are wooed and won by Anglo men, Lola by a young blonde mountain man named Sam Lash and Consuelo by an ex-mountaineer who is an
Indian trader, Jean Ballard. In a discussion of the rico society in *Rio Grande*, Mr. Fergusson suggests, "For this society belonged to the vanished world in which man was supreme and woman only his pleasure and possession. Here the father was an absolute ruler by divine right and treated as a sacred being... He could chastise a grown son or give a daughter in marriage as easily as he could sell a horse or kill a slave" (p. 83).

The question may be asked how, then, can Mr. Fergusson depict these two rico daughters deviating from the established tradition of submitting without protest to a marriage pre-arranged by the father. How can these two women go against the time-honored sense of the absolute authority of the father.

In actual fact the practice of Mexican daughters' defying tradition and family to marry whom they chose, while not frequent, was nevertheless carried on. Both Charles Bent, a trader, and Kit Carson, a mountain man, took as brides the daughters of the wealthy Jaramillo family in northern New Mexico. It seems logical that in a line of strong, willful father and sons occasionally there might be a strong-minded daughter. It is known that Anglo men attracted Mexican women of all classes, for Anglos were less condescending and more courteous to their lovers than Mexican men. Mexican women could also feel more confident that an Anglo husband would be less
likely to begin, or continue, extra-marital amorous affairs than their Mexican counterparts, for the Anglo tradition generally involves more fidelity in marriage than the Mexican tradition. In the Anglo marriage tradition the woman is considered a partner, while in the Spanish tradition, as suggested above, she is considered a possession, a piece of property.

In most societies in which Anglo men are present and Anglo women are not, the eventual step is marriage with whatever women are there. This fact can be seen in the number of foreign wives who come to the United States as postwar brides. In the face of all these considerations, it seems not inconsistent for Mr. Fergusson to have depicted the inter-race marriages between Anglo men and Mexican women.

Dr. T. M. Pearce, in a 1936 review of the then newly-published *Followers of the Sun*, the trilogy which combines three earlier novels by Mr. Fergusson, suggests that Mr. Fergusson "does not always realize fully his own definition of the 'business of the novelist,' that to 'reduce themes of social significance to terms of individual destiny.'"24 Mr. Fergusson had made the quoted statements in his own introduction to the trilogy. The reviewer says, "He draws characters widely, but he chooses

24. T. M. Pearce, "Followers of the Sun," *New Mexico Quarterly*, VI (November 1936), 328.
in these three novels no character of considerable destiny" (p. 328).

Earlier in the introduction Mr. Fergusson has spoken of Time and Change being the main characters in the drama, reducing to miniature the size of the actual persons in the novel. In spite of this suggestion by Mr. Fergusson which would qualify the individuality or explain the lack of it in the characters, the reviewer feels that the elements of Time and Change are "rather as background than . . . character" (p. 328).

From the point of view in which these novels have been examined here, Time and Change do stand large as the major "characters" of the novels. It is true that the personalities of Sam Lash, Ramon Delcasar or Alec McGarnigal may not be as sharply drawn as they could have been, still maintaining Time and Change as the central figures. However, their actions, pawnlike as they may seem at times, will bear up under examination. As Sam Lash comes down from the mountains to his bride, he learns the conditions under which he may retain Lola as his wife: he must himself become a member of the Catholic Church, and he must wed Lola in the faith. Perhaps his somewhat docile acceptance of these provisions seems to show that he is not an individual; yet he had envisioned a ranch with cattle and horses somewhere in the mountains, and with the "package deal" of Lola and the Catholic
Church, it is intimated by the padre that he will also be allowed to take over the Spanish land grant which the Salazar family has done nothing with. Surely such a compromise is acceptable as a decision of even a strong character.

Throughout the remainder of the cycle of economic and social changes, these two characters—Time and Change—remain near the foreground. Yet, possibly as an indication of Mr. Fergusson's maturation as a writer, the people are more sharply drawn and they indicate what is perhaps his closer attempt to, as he says, "reduce themes of social significance to terms of individual destiny." Each of the six major sections of *Grant of Kingdom* is a complete picture of an individual who not only has this individual destiny but is sharply aware of the destiny and acts accordingly. The set-up of the novel is such that the personalities of the actors have to be carefully drawn, for each section is written from the point of view of one of the major characters. Included in the narrative of each person's views are frequent references to other characters, thus making it necessary that the supplemental information coincides with or elaborates the personalities as exhibited in the other sections. This complex type of organization calls for skill in drawing personalities, which Mr. Fergusson shows.
In *The Conquest of Don Pedro* not only are the major characters depicted with clearly individual destinies, but also the important minor ones. Dolores Pino, whose story occupies only a few chapters of the total picture, is a haunting, mysterious woman sent into Leo Mendes' life with a definite purpose. She accomplishes her purpose and moves out of his life and out of the novel, but her influence lingers.

The information in each of Mr. Fergusson's novels about the standards of morality of the Mexican society, taken together, form a relatively complete and objective discussion of the habits and beliefs of the society in all its classes. Beginning with the practices among the poorer classes, Mr. Fergusson presents the picture of how each sex in each class may be treated or may act, concluding with the duality of practice for *rico* married couples.

The mountain men in *Grant of Kingdom* and *Wolf Song* have no difficulty finding sleeping companions, for a sum. The lower class Mexicans are poor and the families realize that the Anglo will present the family with gifts in return for the favors of the daughter. The young Mexican couples of the lower ranks who find they are not able to pay the fee demanded by the Church for marriage rites often just set up housekeeping together, and the society in which they live acknowledges and accepts their "marriage" as right and proper. It is to help combat this
situation that Padre Orlando in *The Conquest of Don Pedro* first requests money from Leo Mendes.

In the *rico* classes, however, this casual attitude toward pre-marital affairs or informal living arrangements is not present, at least for the daughters of wealthy families. Both Lola Salazar and Consuelo Coronel are carefully guarded by all the members of the family, lest the family pride be damaged. Virginity before marriage for daughters in the upper brackets of Mexican society is a tradition of long standing. Mr. Fergusson says in *Rio Grande*:

The male expected chastity of his bride and considered himself cheated if he did not get it . . . Yet infidelity was all but universal for this was almost the only possible form of feminine revolt against a complete and brutal masculine domination (p. 87).

In the case of Consuelo Coronel, Mr. Fergusson says she is not the first Mexican daughter of class to "bestow herself informally" upon the man she loves. If such a situation occurs, and a child is forthcoming, several types of arrangements may be made to keep scandal away from the family. Often, the daughter is sent quietly away to a convent to have her child, who is usually brought home to join the several young children already running around the house. As is the case for Consuelo, if the marriage is suitable, the couple is united within the church. "The bride would be likely to go away for a long
visit and return with her first-born in her arms. It was never good form to inquire about the age of a baby in any case" (Grant of Kingdom, p. 48).

While the daughters are carefully guarded, the rico sons may take care of their needs however they wish to. Lola Salazar's fiance is Ambrosio Guitierrez, also of a wealthy family. He has earlier taken a trip to Sonora to fulfill his obligation to Lola for a maid.

By established custom among the ricos of New Mexico at this time, a young man engaged to be married was expected to present his fiancee with an Indian slave girl to be her personal servant.25

Now the young Indian slave, Abrana, spends her days with Lola and her nights with Ambrosio. Of Ambrosio's dual life, Mr. Fergusson relates, "He sang to Lola of his heart and his soul but he lay with Abrana on warm nights in the orchard and gave her many useful presents" (Wolf Song, p. 53). In addition to being able to take servants whenever he wishes, Ambrosio is also able to enjoy the company of his friends' wives. "The bodies of slave women were his for the taking and among the bored wives of his friends he carried on complicated and dangerous intrigues" (p. 60).

This admission of Ambrosio's affairs with married women presents the duality of sex life possible for both

members of a rico marriage. In The Conquest of Don Pedro
Leo Mendes is receiving the skilful flirtation of the
Dona Lupe, Augustín Vierra's wife. Leo reflects what he
has learned about the system of amours.

Everyone has read Josiah Gregg's book
. . . .The gringo attitude was aptly expressed
in his dry observation that marriage here
changes the status of the contracting parties,
but apparently not their moral obligation
. . . .No one pretended that monogamy was a
working institution (p. 104).

After a suitable amount of time has elapsed
following the marriage of a couple, the common unspoken
understanding is that the husband will continue his
affairs with slave girls and peons' daughters and the wife
will, discreetly, acquire lovers as she may. "It was true
that even in the smallest villages the women of the best
families apparently did not go uncomforthed" (p. 109).

So while the male of all classes was free to
pursue his pleasures where he might, the female was not
quite so free. The lower class women could also engage in
pre-marital affairs and the cautious, clever married
women, in post-marital intrigues. The single wealthy
daughters were the one class which was bound by traditions
of virginity. And even these bonds were often broken.
The major distinction between women's privileges and men's
is that the women perforce had to be clever and discreet
and the men did not.
The historic accuracy with which Harvey Fergusson recreates the Southwest of the nineteenth century has been shown. This historic accuracy and attention to detail is enhanced by the completeness of the treatment. For he records the span of years between the time the first Anglos enter the society of Mexican aristocracy, through the inception of Santa Fe trade by Americans, through the coming of the railroad, to the final domination, both social and economic, of the area by these Anglos.

These economic and social changes in the Southwest began as the mountain men started using northern New Mexico towns as fur trading spots. These mountain men began taking wives, and since the female population was Mexican, the wives were Mexican. Some of the men were able to marry daughters of the wealthy Mexican dons who ruled their estates according to old established traditions. This initial inter-marriage marks the beginning of the changes in the social picture in the Southwest. With the opening of the New Mexico area for trade, the economic scene got its first change. Anglos set up stores in the Santa Fe, Albuquerque, Taos areas to handle the goods which came across the trail. The Mexicans of all classes were eager to purchase the goods the Anglos made readily available.

The somewhat altered life in the Southwest thus continued for a few more years. Then the railroad came
into Santa Fe across the Raton Pass, and the evolution of economic life began on a full scale. As the Anglos came in ever-increasing numbers, the Mexican families were unable to understand their business methods and their social ideas. The Anglos found it relatively simple to acquire the lands of the old families through partnerships and mortgages. As these once-wealthy families lost their lands they lost also their desire for fighting and their hope.

In control of the land and the economic functions, the Anglos had no difficulty controlling the social life of the area. The cycle of changes finds its completion as the Mexican of an old family can not succeed either in business or in love against the power of the Anglos.

Several writers in the Southwest have created a regional literature which is faithful to the time and tempo of the Southwest; none have done so with the scope or depth of Harvey Fergusson. He presents the Anglos, the Mexicans, the Indians, as they live and as they die. He has personally lived among many of the people about whom he writes and his ancestors lived among the rest. He has watched life and recorded it, not without feeling but with an objectivity and an understanding necessary for historic literature. J. Frank Dobie, perhaps the most noted Southwest bibliographer, says of Harvey Fergusson's Southwest novels:
He has said something about life, not as a pleader but as an observer. In so far as I have read, no other historic novelist of the West has said as much. In addition to being competent, it [his re-creation] is faithful to life and it expresses prolonged understanding.26

The New Mexico area had existed in a relatively unchanged pattern, allowing for an occasional band of soldiers who crossed her arid deserts, for hundreds of generations. Then in less than one hundred years, the picture, at least on the surface, underwent a complete change; under the surface, life continued to go on much as it had for centuries. What Harvey Fergusson has done in his series of Southwest novels is record, completely and accurately, both the surface alterations and the unchanging foundations.

Figure 1  New Mexico
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