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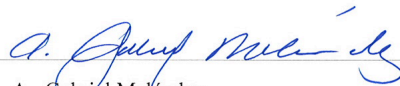
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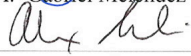
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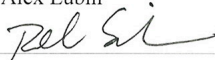


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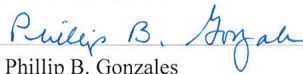
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**TRIPTYCH CULTURAL CRITIQUE:  
FRAY ANGELICO CHAVEZ AND SOUTHWESTERN  
CRITICAL REGIONALISM, 1939-2004**

**BY**

**MELINA VIZCAINO-ALEMAN**

**B.A., American Studies, University of New Mexico, 2001  
M.A., American Studies, University of New Mexico, 2003**

**DISSERTATION**

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy  
American Studies**

The University of New Mexico  
Albuquerque, New Mexico

**May, 2010**

## **DEDICATION**

To the memory of Dr. Hector Torres, whose undying spirit and critical insight inform the pages of this dissertation and inhabit the heart of my scholarship.

For my family, whose love and devotion sustain me in my darkest hours.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have many people to thank for the completion of this dissertation, for one's scholarship is never entirely her own. First and foremost, I thank Fray Angélico Chávez for the seven decades of research, writing, and service that made this dissertation possible.

Secondly, I thank my committee members. Professor Gabriel Meléndez, my committee chair, has provided me with an immeasurable amount of support over the past ten years, and he has seen me grow from an undergraduate student to the scholar I am today. Thank you also to Professor Felipe Gonzales, whose close readings kept me sharp and attentive to the social histories that inform New Mexican writing. Professor Alex Lubin furnished me with the discourses of critical race studies and helped me expand my sense of the Southwest. Many thanks also to Professor Rebecca Schreiber, whose seminars in visual culture informed my readings of art and literature, and whose office door was always open when I needed to talk through my ideas.

Special thanks also to Tomas Jaehn at the Fray Angélico Chávez History Library; Brother Allan Schmitz, O.F.M., and Ron Cooper at the Franciscan Archives in Cincinnati, Ohio; and Geoffrey Starks in Special Collections at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville. I am especially thankful for the two-year fellowship Dr. Tobías Durán at the Center for Southwest Research granted me in support of the completion of my writing.

Finally, thank you to my partner in life, literature, and love, and to our kids.

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**ABSTRACT**

Fray Angélico Chávez was a Franciscan priest and man of letters whose published writings span most of the twentieth century. He was born in Wagon Mound, New Mexico on April 10, 1910, and he entered the Saint Francis Franciscan seminary in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1924. In 1937, he returned to Santa Fe and was ordained a Franciscan priest in the St. Francis Cathedral. By this time, he was a well-known Catholic poet, and in 1939 the Writer's Edition, a local publishing venue, published his first book of poetry, *Clothed With the Sun*. Fray Angélico passed away in 1996, the same year in which the Palace of the Governors opened its doors to the Fray Angélico Chávez History Library in Santa Fe. In 2001, the Recovering the US Hispanic Literary Heritage Project published his *Cantáres: Canticles and Songs of Youth, 1929-1935*, a posthumous collection of poetry that Fray Angélico wrote as a seminarian in the Midwest. Three years later and eight years after his death, his nephew Thomas Chávez completed and published *Wake for a Fat Vicar*, a biography of the nineteenth-century New Mexican priest Father Juan Felipe Ortiz of Santa Fe.

As the history of his published writings and the library dedicated to his name demonstrate, Fray Angélico Chávez is a well-known New Mexican writer. Yet, this dissertation argues that his Franciscanism widens the regional scope of his writing. Indeed, the Franciscans are tied to the Southwest historically and religiously, but the Franciscan Order is an American institution centered in Ohio, and Fray Angélico became a Franciscan outside of his regional homeland. He was a Catholic poet before he was a Southwestern writer, and his poetry was an extension of his religious personality. Thus, I argue Fray Angélico's Franciscanism fosters a mode of Southwestern critical regionalism in his writing.

The dissertation is a critical biography of Fray Angélico's writing, and it uses religion as a critical lens for understanding his work in relation to a host of other Southwestern regional writers, both Anglo and Mexican American. The main objective of this dissertation is to build and apply a comparative methodology that I call "trptych cultural critique" to understand better the different modes of regional writing about the Southwest. Fray Angélico utilized the triptych in his artwork and creative writings, so it is an aesthetic that is particular to his Franciscan personality. However, triptych cultural critique is a useful tool for anyone interested in New Mexican history, Southwestern or U.S. Hispanic literature, and Chicana/o cultural production. Fray Angélico's work dialogues with Anglo Southwestern and Chicana/o literary canons in ways that redefine them, and so he is central to this dissertation and its focus on comparative regionalisms.



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## Introduction: Fray Angélico Chávez as a Central Category of Study

Introducing Fray Angélico Chávez, New Mexico's prolific poet-priest and "Renaissance Man," is a difficult task because his published work spans most of the twentieth century. His first published book, *Clothed With the Sun* (1939), is a collection of poetry, and his last book, *Wake for a Fat Vicar* (2004), is a biography of Father Juan Felipe Ortiz of Santa Fe published posthumously and co-authored with his nephew, Thomas Chávez. Coinciding with the year of Fray Angélico's passing in 1996, the state of New Mexico opened the Fray Angélico Chávez History Library, a building connected to the Palace of the Governors in what used to be Santa Fe's first library built in 1851 in a quaint but Romanesque Style.<sup>1</sup> In the 1930s, John Gaw Meem remodeled the building in the Territorial Revival Style, and in the mid-1980s the building became vacant after the Santa Fe Public Library moved to a new location across the street.<sup>2</sup> A bronze statue of Fray Angélico sculpted by Donna Quatshoff stands in front of the library, and there are sketches of the statue from the hand of the friar himself in the library's Fray Angélico Manuscript Collection. The statue commemorates Fray Angélico in his brown robe and sandals, and he holds a book in one hand and a single rose in the other in homage to his third book of poetry, *The Single Rose: Poems of Divine Love* (1948). All these testaments demonstrate that Fray Angélico Chávez does not need to be recovered. Instead, this dissertation intends to *uncover* the significance of the Franciscan friar's body of writing.

Roughly spanning Fray Angélico's first and last published books is a story of religious transformation that is the subject of this dissertation. This means that while the

dissertation considers the importance of key moments in Fray Angélico Chávez's life, it is not his life story, for Ellen McCracken has already written his biography.<sup>3</sup> What distinguishes this study from McCracken's book is its scope and investment in critical regional studies. I argue that Fray Angélico's religion is what makes his work critically regional, and I achieve this argument byway of tripartite comparative discussions that put his work in dialogue with other regional writers. In order to achieve these comparisons, my critical methodology alters a religious art form, the triptych, and molds it into a cultural studies paradigm. I call this religious alteration "triptych cultural critique." The study's larger goal is uncover how religion informs three different modes of Southwestern regional writing: modern regionalism, critical regionalism, and regional modernism. Modern regionalism is the first panel in this study's comparative triptychs, and it is a dominant Southwestern aesthetic that appropriates the region's traditions so as to maintain its autonomy in an age of modernity. On the other end, and forming the third panel in this study is regional modernism, an alternative form of regional writing that contemplates modernity and its destruction of the Southwest in a way that breaks away from regional traditions. Fray Angélico is at the center of this study because his religion is a characteristic of Southwestern critical regionalism; how his work changes is indicative of the discursive changes that take place across seven decades of his research and writing.

Generally, the study's triptych dialogues with the Anglo and Chicana/o Southwest, but specifically in each chapter the study's triptych cultural critique engages in comparative analyses of Anglo and Mexican American literatures using modern regionalism, critical regionalism, and regional modernism as the three respective panels.

Fray Angélico is at the center of these comparative analyses because his religion fleshes out the differences among the three regional aesthetics that concern this study. Triptych cultural critique allows me to build a series of comparative discussions that I structure around genre, not chronology, and in this way my dissertation diverges from McCracken's biography. My interest is not necessarily Fray Angélico's life, but his life's works and the cultural work that his body of texts offers to my study of the Southwest, U.S. Hispanic literature, and Chicana/o cultural production. Fray Angélico utilized the triptych in his artwork and creative writings, so it is an aesthetic that is particular to his Franciscanism and religion. However, this dissertation is not a religious study. Rather, the dissertation uses religion as a theoretical lens and the triptych as a methodology of cultural study that understands Fray Angélico in relation to a host of other Southwestern writers, both Anglo and Mexican American.

My triptych cultural critique uses religion as critical lens to analyze Fray Angélico's and other Southwestern regional writings. In Fray Angélico's case, religion is a formal institution in which he served as a Pueblo missionary father, a Hispanic village pastor, and an American military chaplain. Unlike other regional writers in the inter-war and post-WWII years who were either recreating religion (modern regionalists) or rejecting religion altogether (regional modernists), Fray Angélico revived his medieval religion in a modern setting through his poetry, art, and short fiction (critical regionalist). Fray Angélico wrote within the discourses of what Marta Weigle and Kyle Fiore (*Santa Fe and Taos* 1982) call the Writer's Era, a time frame in-between the two world wars (1916-1941) that saw a mass migration of easterners to New Mexico, many of whom Fray Angélico befriended, including Alice Corbin Henderson, Witter Bynner, Mary

Austin, and Haniel Long. Many of these writers, Austin, in particular, reformed dominant institutions of taste, culture, and the marketplace in the Southwest, creating what Molly Mullin calls a “City of Ladies” in early twentieth-century Santa Fe.<sup>4</sup> The women of Austin’s caliber transformed male-dominant cultural institutions and created an eco-friendly, female-oriented modern regionalism that focused its attention on “authentic” Southwestern art and culture, but oftentimes at the expense of modern Pueblo and Hispanic communities. As a result of these “authenticating strategies,” as Becky Jo Gesteland McShane might put it,<sup>5</sup> modern regionalist discourses isolate the Southwest—and New Mexico, in particular—from the rest of the modern world. Yet not all regional writings are the same, even within the same literary circles, for while modern regionalists focus on rural Southwestern regional and religious traditions, regional modernists break from religious traditions that seem antithetical to modernization. Fray Angélico’s work generally falls somewhere in-between, balancing the modern, regional, and religious traditions of the twentieth-century Southwest.

Triptych cultural critique reads Fray Angélico’s cultural work as forming within, against, and between the Writer’s Era, the Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage Project, and Chicana/o Studies. As a practical tool, the triptych provides this dissertation with three critical panels in which I stage comparative analyses with Fray Angélico at the center. The triptych is a religious art form that was common in medieval and folk art, and Fray Angélico adapted it to represent his regional homeland, as can be seen in *New Mexico Triptych* (1940), his first published collection of short fiction. For this study, I alter the triptych to facilitate my comparative methodology, and each chapter engages in tri-partite comparative analyses that I arrange byway of genre. In Chapter

One, I provide a critical biography of Fray Angélico in which I weave together the three fields of scholarship that inform my dissertation: Southwestern regionalism, critical regionalism, and Chicana/o Studies. Chapter Two focuses on the regional poetics of John Gould Fletcher, Fray Angélico, and Américo Paredes, while Chapter Three unpacks the ethnographic fiction of Alice Corbin Henderson, Fray Angélico, and Jovita González. I maintain a rough chronological perspective in these first two chapters, but I reverse this approach in Chapter Four in which I analyze the historical fictions of Fabiola Cabeza de Baca, Fray Angélico, and Haniel Long, all of whom penned experimental autobiographies in the mid-twentieth century, and specifically coinciding with the Trinity Site.<sup>6</sup> Finally, Chapter Five focuses on Fray Angélico's historical recoveries, and it stages an internal comparative discussion of the discursive shifts that take place as a result of his religious experiences later in his life.

Critical regionalism is a relatively new intellectual concept—barefoot, so to speak—so I make new claims that don critical regionalism with Fray Angélico's Franciscan sandals, at least figuratively, to trace the emergence of *Southwestern* critical regionalism. Literally, in order to trace this emergence, the dissertation weaves together Fray Angélico's religion, his regional placement, and the critical scholarship on his work for three interrelated reasons. First, to show that critical regionalism is a more appropriate framework for understanding Fray Angélico's literary and cultural oeuvre, and second, to use Fray Angélico's work to build a methodology that can unpack the critically regional significance of the Southwest, especially for early Mexican American writings and Chicana/o cultural production. Lastly, and most importantly, I use religion as a theoretical lens for understanding three regional responses to modernity. Fray

Angélico's Franciscan formation is a catalyst—perhaps even an allegory—for a methodology that accounts for how the regional, racial, and religious forces of the Anglo and Chicana/o Southwest dialogue in complex and contradictory ways. The triptych is a religious aesthetic, but it is a significant category of analysis for the dissertation that provides a new methodology for understanding Fray Angélico's cultural body, for reading U.S. Hispanic and Southwestern literature, and for the place of Chicana/o cultural production in a post-nationalist American era. This means that Fray Angélico is a central category of cultural analysis because his work helps to build a new way of thinking about the Southwest as a tri-cultural regional place, a third space borderlands, and, ultimately, a critical regional locale.



## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Fray Angélico Chávez History Library, [www.palaceofthegovernors.org](http://www.palaceofthegovernors.org).

<sup>2</sup> Simmons, “A New Mexico Library is Reborn,” 46.

<sup>3</sup> Ellen McCracken. *The Life and Writings of Fray Angélico Chávez*, 2009.

<sup>4</sup> Mullin, *Culture in the Marketplace*, 60.

<sup>5</sup> McShane, “In Pursuit of Regional and Cultural Identity,” 184.

<sup>6</sup> The first nuclear bomb was developed under the Manhattan Project, a top-secret government agency founded in 1942 and located in Los Alamos. On July 16, 1945, the project culminated with the testing of the A-bomb on the White Sands Proving Ground near Alamogordo, New Mexico, on what became the Trinity Site. Los Alamos became an incorporated city shortly thereafter in 1949.

## Chapter One: A Critical Biography and Triptych Cultural Critique

The barefoot boy is gone from home,  
But will come back anon,  
And though he sing of silver shoon,  
He'll come with sandals on.<sup>1</sup>

### Background: How Manuel Ezequiel Became Fray Angélico

Fray Angélico Chávez was not always Fray Angélico Chávez. He was born Manuel Ezequiel Chávez in 1910, just two years before New Mexico statehood, in Wagon Mound, New Mexico, a village northeast of Santa Fe named after a nearby hill that looks like a covered wagon. His father, Fabian Chávez, was an active Democrat and supporter of statehood, and his mother, Nicolasa Roybal, was a schoolteacher whose family colonized Wagon Mound. In October of 1960, “The Santa Fe Scene,” a weekly television and radio log, featured a tribute, “Fabián Chavez, Sr., Proud Patriarch,” in which it boasted the achievements of the then retired “but peppy octogenarian” and his progeny.<sup>2</sup> As the tribute goes, Fabián married Nicolasa at the age of nineteen, and they settled in her hometown of Wagon Mound where Manuel was born exactly nine months to the date after his parents married, the eldest of eleven children. Nineteen years later, Manuel received his Franciscan habit and married into the Church. As his story goes, he learned about the Franciscans while living in California for a brief period where his father worked as a carpenter for the San Diego World’s Fair. The Franciscan Fr. Junipero Serra began missionizing Alta California in 1769, a history that enthralled the young Manuel and fueled his aspirations to become a Franciscan. After the family returned to New Mexico, Manuel attended the Sisters of Loretto Academy in Mora, and in 1924 he headed

east to study as a Franciscan at Saint Francis Seraphic Seminary in Cincinnati, Ohio. In 1929, Manuel took the Franciscan vows and christened himself Fray Angélico after the Italian Renaissance painter Fra Angelico de Fiesole.

The name Fray Angélico reflects more than a religious personality. Allegorically, the religious name is a signature of the friar's Southwestern critical regionalism, a central category that this dissertation offers to the intellectual conversations currently taking place in American Studies. The expanse of Fray Angélico's writings and regional representations requires a critical paradigm that understands his cultural work over a seven-decade period. This chapter lays out the dissertation's interests, aims, and methodology to uncover the critical regional significance of Fray Angélico and his work. Literally, stylistically, and aesthetically, Fray Angélico's Franciscanism generates a critical regional sense of the Southwest that is local, national, and even global. The friar's religious sensibility informed his work through many voices, places, and distances, as the poem that opens this chapter demonstrates. "The Barefoot Boy" refers to abolitionist poet John Greenleaf Whittier's 1855 "Barefoot Boy," and the line "singing of silver shoon" borrows from British poet Walter de la Mare's 1913 poem "Silver." These references to British and Anglo American poetry suggest a critical self-portrait of the friar's literary influences. He returns to his homeland no longer a "barefoot" Manuel, but a "sandal-clad" Fray Angélico.

Manuel Ezequiel became Fray Angélico during a crucial time in the production of Anglo Southwestern art and literature, and his work outlasts the Writer's Era because it transforms with the times. This longevity offers a window into the formations and transformations of regional writing across seven decades. "The Barefoot Boy" illustrates

briefly and profoundly the literal and metaphysical transformations of a Mexican boy from rural New Mexico studying to become a Franciscan father in a “foreign” place. Ellen McCracken calls Fray Angélico’s time in the Midwest a “semi-exile,” and she argues that Santa Fe’s poets, writers, and artists provided a release from a repressive religious environment.<sup>3</sup> Yet, I think it is just as important to understand how Fray Angélico’s religion (not necessarily his religious environment) released him from the regional constraints of the Writer’s Era. While Fray Angélico’s religion was particular to the Southwest, his Franciscanism was more universal, thus it put the region in dialogue with a more expansive sense of the spiritual and material worlds in which he moved. In essence, I read his Franciscanism as critical to understanding Fray Angélico himself, his work, and his representations of the Southwest.

Fray Angélico was a published writer and someone who participated in the Poets’ Roundup, a gathering of poets that included John Gould Fletcher from Arkansas, as well as Northeastern poets Witter Bynner and Haniel Long, all of whom befriended Manuel at the time he was becoming Fray Angélico. Long introduced Fletcher to Fray Angélico, and this led to a ten-year correspondence between the Southern poet and Franciscan friar, an archive of letters that connects the University of Arkansas to Santa Fe’s Palace of the Governors. T.M. Pearce explains that many Poets’ Roundups took place in Alice Corbin Henderson’s home between 1930 and 1939 to raise money in support of the Writer’s Edition, a local press co-founded by Henderson, Bynner, Long, and Fletcher. Fray Angélico’s first book of poetry (*Clothed With the Sun* 1939) was published by the Writer’s Edition, and it brought Fray Angélico into the heart of Santa Fe’s regional literature after he returned to his homeland to put his clerical promise into practice. His

first assignment in New Mexico (1937-43) was as parish priest at Peña Blanca just south of Santa Fe, and also the surrounding towns of Sile, Domingo Station, Cerrillos, and La Bajada. In addition, he served as a mission priest to the nearby pueblos of Cochiti, Santo Domingo, and San Felipe. His letters to his Franciscan Order indicate his struggle to perform his religious duties and at the same time produce his art and literary achievements. These letters rest in the Franciscan archives in Ohio, a small division of the St Anthony friary and adjacent to the St Anthony Messenger headquarters. Thus, while the history of the Franciscans in the Southwest motivated Fray Angélico to become one himself, his Midwestern education expanded his Franciscanism beyond the region.

By the time Fray Angélico returned to New Mexico in 1937 to be ordained a Franciscan priest in the Saint Francis Cathedral in Santa Fe, he was an emergent Franciscan poet in the nation's Catholic literary world. Between 1943 and 1946, Fray Angélico served as Army chaplain and made two beach landings with the WWII Pacific Theater, and between 1951 and 1953 he served in the New Mexico National Guard during the Korean War. Despite his grueling work schedule as a mission and parish priest to the Spanish-speaking Pacific Island natives and US soldiers during his WWII service, Fray Angélico wrote a collection of poetry entitled *Eleven Lady Lyrics* (1947); he then returned to New Mexico in 1948 where he published a third book of poetry, *The Single Rose*, and his first work of historical recovery, *Our Lady of the Conquest*, a history of the statue La Conquistadora. *Our Lady of the Conquest* was the first of the friar's many historical projects, and the statuette's history began Fray Angélico's tireless task of cataloging the archives of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, which culminated in his two-volume genealogical study, *Origins of New Mexico Families* (1954); his co-edited

translation with Eleanor B. Adams *Missions of New Mexico, 1776* (1956); and his historical collection *Archives of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, 1678-1900* (1957).

During his second military stint, Fray Angélico visited the Our Lady of Guadalupe shrine in Extremadura, Spain, and afterward he wrote the autobiography *La Conquistadora* in which the statuette tells “her” own story and ties New Mexico religious history to the Spanish Guadalupe. In 1954, alongside the publication of *New Mexico Origins* and *La Conquistadora*, Fray Angélico went on a pilgrimage with La Conquistadora. The pilgrimage served as a sort of *ex voto* to the virgin statue upon Fray Angélico’s return from his National Guard service, and he had a dress and mantle hand-made for the statuette out of his military vestments. As he explained to his Minister Provincial in a letter dated February 14, 1952, “My direct ancestors are recorded as having donated precious dresses to the image in times of trouble since 1625, and so I want to top them all and offer this *ex voto* in these days of greater danger.”<sup>4</sup> The autobiography connects the ancient statue to New Mexico’s modernity and post-nuclear landscape, and shortly thereafter, in *The Virgin of Port Lligat* (1959), Fray Angélico connects Salvador Dali’s 1950 Madonna painting to religion, science, Catholic dogma, and nuclear physics. In this meditative poem, the Virgin represents the miracle of life and the threat of mass destruction, metaphysical religions and physical sciences, in a way that comes to bear on Fray Angélico’s Southwestern landscape.

Fray Angélico is a central figure in the state’s regional discourses, but his life experiences and body of writings, particularly as they relate to his religious vocation, extend beyond the regional Southwest. The early publication of Fray Angélico, a real Franciscan, must have lent special credence to the Writer’s Edition vision of

Southwestern literature, and to the state's Spanish Revival, which witnessed the renaissance of Spanish colonial folk art and culture alongside the revival of New Mexico's Franciscan missions after US statehood.<sup>5</sup> Marta Weigle and Kyle Fiore credit WWII for the demise of the Writer's Era (1982), and the Writer's Edition became a casualty of the war and its post-war boom. Not so with Fray Angélico's work, whose critical regionalism came to fruition in the post-war era and culminated with the Civil Rights era. By 1969, when Fray Angélico published his last book of poetry, he had already penned the historical novel *The Lady From Toledo* (1960) and the Franciscan history *Coronado's Friars* (1968). The Writer's Era was long passé, and the poet-priest turned to historical writing. In 1972, the Academy of Franciscan History published *The Oroz Codex*, which Fray Angélico discovered in the archives of Tulane University in New Orleans, an unpublished sixteenth-century manuscript documenting the history of the Franciscan missions in Mexico and the primary source for *Coronado's Friars*.

The Franciscan histories Fray Angélico wrote symbolically transformed the quaint Writer's Edition logo of a Franciscan *santo* (carved statue), but his early histories focused on the same themes and images as his poetry. After his "retirement" from the Franciscan Order, his historical work shifted focus altogether. Fray Angélico's historical biographies of three Mexican priests (published respectively in 1983, 1985, and 2004) signal his struggle with religious authority and ethnic bigotry. His writings reversed the order of his previous work and expressed instead a regional sensibility that was quite different from the critical regionalism of his earlier writings. In fact, his separation from the Franciscan Order in 1971 brought his religious personality into question, particularly for his religious superiors who found it near scandalous that he continued to address

himself as “Fray Angélico,” even after he left the Order. His later writings thus reflect a split religious personality that the friar projected onto his biographical subjects. Religion no longer resolved the spirituality and materiality of Fray Angélico’s life and life’s work; instead it split his sense of identity and the Southwest. This chapter thus focuses on his early work, not only to sustain a chronological perspective, but also because his early work offers a foundation for the dissertation’s critical paradigm.

### Fray Angélico’s Triptychs: From Religious Art to Critical Paradigm

The triptych is as an artistic and literary device in Fray Angélico’s work, a way to express in aesthetic form his philosophy of religious art and Franciscan personality. He wrote his M.A. Thesis from Duns Scotus College in 1933, “Painting, Personality, and Franciscan Ideals,” a critical discussion of how a “Franciscan clerical student would profit considerably by becoming acquainted, even if it must be by informal study, with the spirit of Religious Painting.”<sup>6</sup> The thesis concludes that medieval religious painting is “an easy form of Aesthetics, it completes, as it were, the formation of a priestly and Franciscan personality, by helping to add to the Solidity in God and to Charity that third ingredient of personality—a harmonious balance of the whole man” (22). Fray Angélico’s triptychs perform a similar balance, a “third ingredient” that emerges from his philosophy of art and religion, but also a way for this study to understand how he dialogued with regionalisms and modernisms. The best example of his triptych is the murals he painted on the walls of Peña Blanca’s Our Lady of Guadalupe Church. As a young mission friar, he took on the daunting task of restoring the exterior façade of the church, and he also began painting life-size frescos of the Stations of the Cross. In a



1939 note to John Gould Fletcher, Fray Angélico told his Pulitzer-prize poet-friend, “I started yesterday on those murals of the Via Crucis in this church. God knows if they’ll be finished—and when.”<sup>7</sup> Less than a year later, the murals were solemnly blessed in a ceremony, around the same time as the publication of Fray Angélico’s three fictional stories and sketches entitled *New Mexico Triptych* (1940).<sup>8</sup> In sum, the triptych was a key aesthetic device in Fray Angélico’s religious life, letters, and literature.

The destruction of the Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in 1986, ironically by the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, requires restoring Fray Angélico’s murals to historical memory. Doing this means reading across archives in Arkansas, New Mexico, and Ohio. Documents from the Fray Angélico Chávez Collection in Santa Fe; his letters to Fletcher at the University of Arkansas; and his letters to the Franciscan Order at the Franciscan Archives in Ohio reconstruct the murals. With these three locales, I create an archival triptych, of sorts, that connects the Southwest, the South, and the Midwest. Letters, photographs, and articles from the three archives document the frescoes and the friar’s restoration of the church façade. Fray Angélico restored the original 1869 Our Lady of Guadalupe Church façade in the Territorial Revival Style, an interesting diversion from the Pueblo Spanish Revival Style, the modern offspring of Santa Fe Style and New Mexico’s signature Southwestern architecture. At the level of aesthetics, Fray Angélico staged an architectural diversion that on the outside redefined modern Southwestern architecture and the region’s built environment. I see this as an intervention in Southwestern regional architecture, and representative of how Fray Angélico’s religion provided an alternative model for his own regional writing and representations.

Ellen McCracken argues that Fray Angélico's work created a hybrid, visual-verbal portrait of New Mexico, and for this reason she calls him an important "Latino" intellectual of the twentieth century (*The Life and Writing of Fray Angélico Chávez* 2009). Yet his triptychs offer more than just hybrid portraits of the Southwest. After all, the triptych itself balances three different panels, one in the center and two adjacent to it, one to the left and one to the right. Generally, the triptych is a tri-partite painting that means "threefold" and comes from the Greek "triptukhos," but the religious art form is also a useful tool of cultural study.<sup>9</sup> The triptych was popular in medieval and renaissance Europe, and especially in Italy where religious art flourished in the wake of St. Francis of Assisi and his Order. In folk art, triptychs are composed of three adjacent panels or compartments, and the first and third panels fold over the middle one, creating a kind of *nicho* (niche). During the renaissance, religious painters used the triptych to structure their massive frescoes and biblical scenes on Church walls. Fray Angélico continued this religious tradition in his own restoration of New Mexican churches and large-scale religious paintings, as McCracken has already pointed out in another context.

In a 2000 article from the *Catholic Southwest*, McCracken explains that Fray Angélico drew on the Saint Francis murals in the Auditorium of the Museum of Fine Arts in Santa Fe as inspiration for his own murals in Our Lady of Guadalupe Church. The similarities are instructive, but the differences point to how Fray Angélico's triptychs diverted from Anglo Southwesternism. While both the Auditorium murals and the Our Lady of Guadalupe murals make use of the triptych, at the level of religious aesthetics and regional history they diverge considerably. Fray Angélico, for instance, reconstructed the Our Lady of Guadalupe Church façade in the Territorial Style, imbuing

the structure with an alternative regional history than the Santa Fe Style of the museum and its auditorium. Built in 1919, the Museum became a “Temple in the Desert,” according to Robert Henri, for Anglo artists who immigrated to Santa Fe in the early twentieth century.<sup>10</sup> Carl Sheppard calls the Auditorium “the most imposing and romantic public space in the City of Santa Fe, New Mexico,” and he says that its prototype was the Pueblo-Spanish mission churches at Acoma, Pecos, and Ranchos de Taos.<sup>11</sup> Santa Fe Style architecture frames the Saint Francis murals, and the Auditorium draws on New Mexico’s sacred spaces, providing a romantic setting for the three murals and their scenes of religious conversion and New World conquest. Museum director Edgar Lee Hewett originally planned the Saint Francis murals for the Panama-California exposition (Sheppard 29). In many ways, the Auditorium triptychs balance the exposition’s global vision with New Mexico’s modern regionalism, but their institutional framework secularizes the religious aesthetic in ways that overlap but diverge from Fray Angélico’s Franciscanism.

Fray Angélico’s religious triptychs release his Franciscanism from the regional framework of the Museum’s Auditorium. Though Fray Angélico did not see himself as a professional writer, his *Clothed With the Sun* as well as his *New Mexico Triptych* established his place in the regional literary world. Likewise, he never considered himself an artist, but his Peña Blanca murals earned him a spotlight in the Santa Fe art scene. Ina Sizer Cassidy in her March 1940 column “Art and Artists of New Mexico” from *New Mexico Magazine* explained that Fray Angélico:

has recently completed the fourteen stations of the cross in the little Mission Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe. They are planned in four

triptychs, and two panels, painted in rather a high key, and in a realistic manner. Fray Angelico has not, like medieval church artists in Europe, squeezed out of his figures all human sentiments and passions to follow a conventional formula. On the contrary it is the humanness he has given his figures, which impresses me.<sup>12</sup>

“Here, art is the handmaiden of religion,” continued Cassidy, and Fray Angélico used his parishioners as models: “[t]he deaf woman and her friend, the cripple. . .the farmers and the ditch workers, too” (27). In this way, Fray Angélico’s art called on a European model, but he infused it with a sense of the local that impressed Cassidy’s regional sensibility.

At the time of Cassidy’s review, Fray Angélico had just returned to his homeland as a Franciscan missionary to work among the Hispanic and Pueblo communities of New Mexico. While studying at Duns Scotus College in Michigan, Fray Angélico collaborated with Ina Sizer’s husband Gerald Cassidy, who illustrated the novice’s serial novel *Guitars and Adobes* published in the *St Anthony Messenger* from 1931-1932. The collaboration itself exemplifies how Fray Angélico brought together his Franciscanism and Southwestern regionalism and balanced them in a way that also maintained their ideological differences. Based on the evidence of her life, Ina was not only Gerald’s wife, but she was also his manager and agent. According to biographer Benay Blend, Ina tried her hand at poetry, but she was better known as her husband’s manager. The Cassidy’s moved to Santa Fe shortly after they married, and the couple became a well-recognized duo in the artist colony. Ina’s work as director of the New Mexico Federal Writer’s Project (1935-39) reflected her investment in procuring an

identifiable Southwestern regional aesthetic. The Fray Angélico-Cassidy collaboration, as McCracken sees it, indicates the influence of Santa Fe's regional art in Fray Angélico's work, but the collaboration also no doubt influenced Ina Sizer's 1940 review of Fray Angélico's murals, giving his Franciscanism a necessary independence that scholars have so far overlooked. I think it is equally important to understand how religion provided a regional release from the Anglo Southwest at the time of Fray Angélico's "semi-exile." From this perspective, Fray Angélico's Franciscanism is not only particular to the Southwest, but a religious sensibility that extends beyond the region and its Anglo cultural traditions.

Let me demonstrate this critical regionalism with a story McCracken relates about when Fray Angélico was a high school student in Cincinnati, Ohio. As the story goes, he painted a mural of St Anthony in the seminary's study hall, but he "replaced the image of the saint's face with that of popular Mexican film star Dolores Del Río" (McCracken 2000 57). McCracken sees the Saint Anthony-Del Río mural as a sign of the friar's "proto-feminism" (85) and "gender hybridity" (2005 11). Yet, it seems that Fray Angélico's human faces created what Fredric Jameson would call the "political unconscious," a moment of contradiction that signals an ideological fissure. Although Jameson focuses on literature, his notion of narrative as a "socially symbolic act" is a useful tool for understanding Fray Angélico's faces and their uncanny transgressions. The Del Río face, for instance, crossed gender in a way that expressed the friar's own cross-regional dislocation or "semi-exile." As a Mexican film star, Del Río crossed over the Hollywood film industry in the 1930s, coincidentally at the same time Manuel Ezequiel was becoming Fray Angélico. Thus, another way to read the Del Río-St

Anthony mural is as a signature of the artist himself, but he would not experiment with this kind of gender bending in the Southwest. Ironically, the “repressive” Midwest fostered his transgressive sense of identity and religion, whether in his comical sketches for the Catholic magazine *St Anthony Messenger*, his curious St Anthony-Del Río painting, or his Peña Blanca murals. Fray Angélico’s religious art crossed spiritual and secular representations in ways that make his religion a signature of his Southwestern critical regionalism.

Fray Angélico infused the triptych, a religious art form, with a folk dimension that both modernized the art form and redefined the Southwest. What impressed Cassidy most about Fray Angélico’s Peña Blanca murals was their realism, but this also became a means by which Fray Angélico’s art expressed his Southwestern critical regionalism. By casting locals as figures in the murals, Fray Angélico positioned them within a master narrative, as McCracken points out, making the marginal folk central to their overall affect (2000 65). In the sixth station and second central panel, for instance, when Jesus meets Veronica who wipes his bloody face, Fray Angélico painted a resident’s daughter who had recently passed away “next to Veronica and her veil with Christ’s image.”<sup>13</sup> The young girl’s mother requested that Fray Angélico paint the portrait of her daughter’s face from a “snapshot” of the girl. “The response from other townspeople, when they recognized the girl, was so enthusiastic that [Fray Angélico] started the murals over, painting faces of other men and women” (3). However, others were not so pleased. One community member refused to re-enter the church because he did not want to be cast as a figure harming Christ. Perhaps the man did not appreciate Fray Angélico’s irony who, after all, casted himself as Pontius Pilate in Station I. In 1937, Fray Angélico was

ordained a priest in the Saint Francis Cathedral of Santa Fe, and by 1940 he was a member of the Santa Fe art and literary societies. In Station I, Fray Angélico-as-Pilate sits in the background surrounded by the pillars, hall, and arches of the Saint Francis Cathedral. Within the Passion paintings and against the local architectural traces of the cathedral, the Fray Angélico-Pontius Pilate casting suggested that the friar's own worldly (and regional) connections compromised his Franciscan personality; his writings would balance a similar tension. For this reason, I position him at the center of this study, for the tension in his work offers a catalyst for understanding other modes of regional writing and their responses to modernity.

The townspeople's faces in Fray Angélico's murals balanced local folk representations and worldly religious art, and they both affirmed and troubled the ethnographic depiction of the Southwest and its folk Hispanic communities in Southwestern regionalist discourses. As Jim Newton explained in a 1969 article, "the young man who posed for the Centurion was a soldier on Bataan a couple of years later. He died from his wounds in a Japanese prison ship."<sup>14</sup> This centurion stood in-between Christ in the foreground and Pilate in the background in the first station. He is an intriguing character who became the subject of local lore, a symbol of Mexican American armed services in WWII, and an allegory for Fray Angélico's own military service. Like the centurion, Fray Angélico also served in the armed forces during World War II. In a letter dated December 15, 1942, Fray Angélico explained to his Minister Provincial that as a Spanish-American, he was a potential link between the Spanish-speaking Americas and the English-speaking United States, and his enlistment could render not only religious work, but "diplomatic or contact work with Latin-America."<sup>15</sup> Fray Angélico's

local identity served a global purpose in his military service, like many other Mexican American soldiers who served in the armed services at the time. The murals drew on modern history, especially Station I, in way that balanced the Passion's universal narrative and the local experiences of Peña Blanca's Hispanic folk.

Fray Angélico often put his theories of art and Franciscan personality into practice by illustrating his written work using religious structures and themes. In 1940, the same year his murals were solemnly blessed, he published his second book, *New Mexico Triptych*, a collection of three short stories. Originally published by St. Anthony Guild Press in 1940, *New Mexico Triptych* featured three of the author's own pencil drawings in a triptych. Along with the murals, the collection demonstrates the significance of the triptych as an art form in Fray Angélico's oeuvre. He revised the European triptych to represent New Mexico's folk heritage, and his second book was more popular with secular audiences than with religious ones. Nevertheless, this regional popularity should not diminish the importance of religion in shaping his critical regional writings. For this reason, Fray Angélico's religion is the groundwork on which this dissertation builds its "triptych cultural critique." In essence, I take his triptychs and put them to work as a critical paradigm. My larger aim is to begin a dialogue between Anglo Southwestern and Chicana/o Studies, and Fray Angélico's body of writings begins such a dialogue in the methodology that I propose and apply in this dissertation.

#### Triptych Cultural Critique: The Anglo and Chicana/o Southwest, Two Adjacent Panels

Triptych cultural critique puts Anglo Southwesternism and the Chicana/o borderlands in dialogue but not in opposition to each other. Anyone writing about the



Southwest's regional literature must reckon with the hegemony of the tri-cultural model and how it informs modern regionalisms. Many critical interventions in the Southwest, whether Anglo or Chicano, focus attention on this tri-cultural concept. For example, D.W. Meinig defines the Southwest as the New Mexico, Arizona, and El Paso area, and the tri-cultural Indian-Anglo-Hispanic paradigm, as architect and cultural critic Chris Wilson demonstrates, is a feature of the Southwestern cultural landscape in the American imaginary. New Mexico's "tri-culturalism," as Wilson describes it, offers an escape from the economic and political pressures of an industrial and capitalist-driven Northeast, creating what anthropologist Barbara Babcock calls "America's Orient."<sup>16</sup> Leah Dilworth develops this notion of Southwestern Orientalism in *Imagining Indians in the Southwest* (1996), and she asserts that the Southwest is a region "on which Americans have long focused their fantasies of renewal and authenticity. Characterized by its desert landscape and 'tri-cultural' history, the Southwest—usually meaning Arizona and New Mexico—has been for the last one hundred years variously perceived as a kind of American Orient, a place conducive to utopian communality, and the source of a 'lifestyle.'"<sup>17</sup> This Orientalization of the Southwest clearly figures into Marta Weigle's notion of "Anglo Southwesternism."<sup>18</sup> Meanwhile, Molly Mullin demonstrates that tri-culturalism was a particularly female and feminine construction of the region.

By contrast, Chicana/o scholars approach the tri-cultural Southwest from an oppositional framework that globalizes the region using the US-Mexico borderlands, a bi-national site and central motif in Chicana/o Studies. Américo Paredes' 1958 study *'With his Pistol in his Hand': A Border Ballad and its Hero* and Gloria Anzaldúa's 1987 *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* set the parameters of Chicana/o Studies and

its border discussions. South Texas is a key locale for both Paredes and Anzaldúa, and Ramón Saldivar argues that it is the center of Chicano political history and cultural production (1990). For Anzaldúa, the borderlands extend beyond the US-Mexico border region, and her mestiza consciousness engages more the psychological borderlands than the political border to stage an ideological rupture. Emma Pérez uses the US-Mexico border as a platform for third space feminism, a hybrid consciousness that emerges in-between the US and Mexico, or what Anzaldúa calls a “third country.” This “third country” is also female, but it challenges the older premise of Anglo Southwestern regionalism and its orientalizing of space. Somewhere in-between the US Southwest and Mexican America, Chicana feminists redefine the male-oriented Aztlán, the Aztec homeland and catalyst for Chicano land reclamations and ethnic revitalizations after 1965.

Fray Angélico’s work is a central panel between the Anglo Southwestern and Chicana/o discourses of our time. Ellen McCracken’s 2001 anthology of critical essays, *Fray Angélico Chavez: Poet, Priest, and Artist*, captures nicely the three schools of thought that form the scholarship on Fray Angélico Chávez: Chicano, Anglo, and Franciscan. Mario García’s lead essay in the anthology argues that Fray Angélico’s 1974 text *My Penitente Land* is an example of “oppositional historical recovery,” and that the friar is a proto-Chicano historian. Further into the anthology, Clark Colohan celebrates Fray Angélico’s “noble Spanish soul,” while Fr. Jack Clark Robinson argues that Fray Angélico was first and foremost a Franciscan disciple. García argues that religiosity forms the basis of Fray Angélico’s oppositional histories, and Robinson traces historically the development Fray Angélico as a religious person. The two come to very

different conclusions—one literal; the other conceptual—about the meaning of Fray Angélico’s religion. Meanwhile, Colohan considers the folk religious dimension of the friar’s short fiction. These three approaches differ in degree in terms of their religious dimension, and they differ in kind in terms of their ideologies, making Fray Angélico in the anthology simultaneously proto-Chicano; fundamentally Franciscan; and quaintly folkloric. For this reason, I use Fray Angélico to facilitate a comparative discussion of Anglo and Mexican American writings, and a dialogue between Southwestern and Chicana/o discourses.

While Anglo scholars celebrate Fray Angélico’s Southwestern regional heritage, Chicano scholars are more ambivalent about seeing him as a Chicano literary and historical precursor or prototype. Raymund Paredes’ 1982 essay, “The Evolution of Chicano Literature,” for instance, traces a long Chicano literary heritage that reaches back to the *corrido* (ballad) as a foundational source of resistance. In Paredes’ estimation, Fray Angélico’s writings simply did not express the hyper-masculine, oppositional consciousness of the folk *corrido*. He concludes that Fray Angélico and other (mostly female) pre-Chicano Movement writers suffered from a “hacienda syndrome.” Genaro Padilla counters Paredes’ supposition by arguing that, indeed, Fray Angélico’s work appealed to Anglo regionalism, but only on the surface. Beneath the surface was a counter-*cuento* (oral story) tradition that deployed a double-voiced strategy of resistance. Padilla’s reassessment opened up several studies and recovery efforts aimed at presenting the friar’s work, including Padilla’s own edited 1987 book *The Short Stories of Fray Angelico Chavez*; the 2000 *Recovering the US Hispanic Literary Heritage*

collection *Cantáres: Canticles and Songs of Youth*; McCracken's 2001 anthology; and the 2004 posthumous *Wake for a Fat Vicar*.

García and other critics overemphasize Fray Angélico's resistance to dominant culture, and they underemphasize how he troubled Chicana/o nationalism with his own Spanish nationalism. McCracken's own contribution to her anthology applies García's proto-national paradigm to Fray Angélico's verbal-visual work so as to make the case that his work is also proto-feminist. Through a careful collection and examination of Fray Angélico's artwork, McCracken argues that he combines the verbal and the visual to create a "harmonious imagetext," or a composite verbal-visual narrative. McCracken describes *New Mexico Triptych* (1940) as a sort of folk *retablo* (tableaux) in which "paintings and statues are homologous to the textual settings and characters" (2000 83). McCracken's reading of the final story in *New Mexico Triptych*, "The Hunchback Madonna," concludes her discussion of Fray Angélico's verbal-visual work. This story reworks the traditional Our Lady of Guadalupe apparition using a folk religious sensibility that inscribes itself on the body of a hunchback woman. The image is an example of what McCracken calls "a protofeminist reconfiguration of predominant ideals of female beauty. . . in much the same way that [Chicana artist] Yolanda López recasts herself and others as contemporary Guadalupes" (83-85). Yet, calling the friar a prototypical Chicana feminist overlooks the ideological work of his Marianismo, or veneration of the Virgin Mary, rooted in a Catholic dogma that Chicana feminists challenge in their own forms of Marian representation. Simply put, Fray Angélico's work represents a colonial imaginary that Chicana histories work to de-colonize.

Many scholars have already demonstrated the inadequacy of post-Chicano definitions of resistance for understanding the complexities of pre-Chicano Movement US Hispanic literature. In the Recovering the US Hispanic Literary Heritage Project's republications of late nineteenth-century California writer María Amparo Ruiz de Burton's two novels, *The Squatter and the Don* (1992) and *Who Would Have Thought It?* (1995), as well as in *Conflicts of Interest: The Letters of María Amparo Ruiz de Burton* (2001), editors Rosaura Sánchez and Beatrice Pita argue that these writings provide "an incisive demystification of an entire set of dominant [US] national myths."<sup>19</sup> José Aranda argues that there are contradictory class impulses in Ruiz de Burton's work that disavow the kind of working-class solidarity that Chicano/a cultural production espouses. "Early attempts to identify a writer like Ruiz de Burton as 'subaltern' were premature," argues Aranda, "because Chicano/a Studies has yet to conceptualize adequately the inclusion of writers and texts that uphold racial and colonialist discourses that contradict the ethos of the Chicano Movement."<sup>20</sup> These contradictory impulses, whether in Ruiz de Burton's nineteenth-century fiction or in the body of Fray Angélico's twentieth-century writings, emanate not only from within the literature itself and the historical time in which it was written, but also from Chicana/o scholarly criticism that overlooks or downplays the contradictions of race, class, and ethnicity *within* the US Hispanic community.

Manuel Martín-Rodríguez warns against reading Ruiz de Burton's two novels as Chicana/o literary prototypes, but he seems to lose this critical edge in his discussions of Fray Angélico's poetry. In an essay from *The Recovering the US Hispanic Literary History*, Martín-Rodríguez frames Fray Angélico's poetry using the radical religious zeal that García characterizes as oppositional. His poetry resolves for Martín-Rodríguez the

ideological battle in Chicana/o Studies: in this case, the Spanish tradition *is* what makes the friar's work so oppositional. Robinson, García, and Martín-Rodríguez can all agree that Fray Angélico's Franciscan formation is critical to any discussion of his work, but the Chicano proto-paradigm interprets his Franciscan formation as radical against the dominant Anglo Southwest, an approach that overlooks his Southwestern critical regionalism. Fray Angélico's work in the end is neither quaintly Southwestern nor radically Chicano, but a central panel for this study's triptych cultural critique and its engagement in Chicana/o and Southwestern regional discourses.

Let me take a step into the first panel of this study's triptych cultural critique and introduce a 1932 article from *The English Journal* by renowned writer Mary Austin to articulate its major contributions and shortcomings. In the article "Regionalism in American Fiction," Austin calls for an "authentic" regional literature to combat the conformity of Northeastern literature and American identity. "Actually this notion, that the American people should differ from all the rest of the world in refusing to be influenced by the particular region called home," said Austin, "is a late by-product of the Civil War and goes with another ill-defined notion that there is a kind of disloyalty in such a differentiation and implied criticism in one section of all the others from which it is distinguished."<sup>21</sup> Austin addresses the hegemony of Northeastern, Puritan-flexed literature, and she suggests that there was not just one America, "but several Americas, in many subtle and significant characterizations" (98). Austin's characterization of America seems well before her time, for it echoes a hemispheric vision from our own time. But there are gaps and erasures in her vision of regional literature that characterize in general the discourses of modern regionalism.

In her catalogue of regional fiction, Austin provides many literary examples from the Mississippi Valley, the Middle Border region, and from the Plains, but of the Southwest, “unless you will accept the present writer’s [Austin’s own] *Starry Adventure*, there is yet very little genuinely representative. . . Our Southwest, though actually the longest-lived section of the country, has not yet achieved its authentic literary expression in English” (101). This conclusion, of course, overlooked the work of California writer Ruiz de Burton whose first English-language novel was published in Philadelphia for Northeastern audiences in the late nineteenth century (her second was published in California). Austin’s article, nevertheless, began a dialogue on American regionalism that continues into present, particularly the tension between regionalisms and modernisms. The Northeastern establishment Austin critiqued was, as Lynne Cline and others demonstrate, one source of disillusionment for the many “literary pilgrims” who sought refuge in the Southwest during the inter-war period, including Austin and a cadre of writers and artists who made up the Writer’s Era (1916-1941). In this sense, Austin’s sense of the region mirrors Chicana/o critiques of Northeastern hegemony, and in many ways she prefigures institutions like Recovering the US Hispanic Literary Heritage Project. Nevertheless, as Maureen Reed points out, Austin’s notion of authenticity focused on Indian and Hispanic people, but she also erased how they participated in, and even welcomed, progress and modernity. Although seven decades separate literary critics Stephanie Foote and Audrey Goodman from Austin, the two echo her in their assessments of American regionalism. All three operate under a similar framework that excludes ethnic regional writings at the same time they call for the inclusion of regional literature in the American literary canon.

This dissertation suggests another way to think about ethnic writers and regionalisms vis-à-vis Southwestern critical regionalism, an alternative literary tradition that emerged alongside of modern regionalism and regional modernism, and not simply as a hybrid or composite result that collapses the two. Triptych cultural critique is a comparative and relational framework that acknowledges the terms and conditions of regionalisms and modernisms, but connects them byway of a central, mediating panel. Fray Angélico's work dialogues with Anglo Southwestern and Chicana/o literary canons in ways that redefine them, and so he is the central panel in this dissertation. I do not collapse the differences of Anglo and Chicana/o discourses in the name of hybridity, nor do I collapse regionalisms and modernisms in the name of critical regionalism. Instead, my triptych cultural critique serves as a method and a model to rethink the Southwest and its three forms of regional writing: modern, critical, and modernist.

#### Southwestern Critical Regionalism: The Study's Central Panel

Scott Herring's introduction to a 2009 special issue of *Modern Fiction Studies* helps situate the centrality of critical regionalism in this study and in concurrent scholarship. As Herring points out, contemporary literary criticism tends to collapse metropolitanism with modernism and regionalism with ruralism. Herring argues, "Such a picture inevitably paints a highly restricted field that neglects the importance of locality to modernism's world-imaginary."<sup>22</sup> He suggests instead the notion of "regional modernism" as a new way of thinking about literary studies. In this way, regionalism and modernism are not adversarial, but "compeers in terms of spatiality and in terms of periodization" (5). Paraphrasing Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre's definition of



critical regionalism as “tightly bound to global movements that do not depend upon the destruction of local particularity,” Herring then asks, “what if the New Modernist Studies is as much the New Critical Regionalism?” (5). Citing Michael Denning’s study of the Depression-era US in *The Cultural Front* (1996), Herring observes that “radical or critical regionalism did not fade in the wake of urbanized and urbane modernist experimentations” (5). Instead, Herring maintains that modernism fueled regionalism, and he collapses them in the name of critical regionalism. Yet, this collapsing is not a solution to the dilemma of contemporary literary criticism. Instead, juxtaposing the seemingly adversarial discourses of regionalism and modernism by way of triptych cultural critique provides a way to enter into the debate without losing sight of the aesthetic differences among modern, critical, and modernist regionalisms.

The triptych as a method of cultural analysis confirms Herring’s suggestion that modernism and regionalism are “compeers,” but it also demonstrates the differences that distinguish regional modernism, modern regionalism, and critical regionalism, especially as they apply to the Southwest. Fray Angélico serves as a model for this critical distinction because his work balances modern regionalism and regional modernism through a religious sensibility that makes his work critically regional. Literally, Fray Angélico re-routed the regionalism of his modern Anglo contemporaries by reversing their westward trails in his trek east to study his Franciscan faith in the Midwest at a time when regional literature was flourishing, particularly in Santa Fe where the Writer’s Era became a powerful force in the production of Southwestern regional writing. Fray Angélico participated in the Writer’s Era, but his religion extended beyond the region,

creating a Southwestern critical regionalism, an alternative mode of modernity that formed within and alongside of modern regionalism and regional modernism.

Herring's edited issue of *MFS* and the essays in it begin to break down the twentieth-century distinction between regionalism and modernism. American regionalism formed within rural spaces, and as Mary Austin's article suggests, against the Northeastern literary establishment, which fostered modernist expression tied to the urban landscape. But Herring argues that the two, regionalism and modernism, were never so different, or at least that they emerged in connection to one another. Thus, Herring's notion of regional modernism understands how the urban and rural landscapes inform each other in the production of an American literary tradition that is part regionalist and part modernist. I agree that regional modernism is a viable mode of literary expression, but it does not account for all forms of Southwestern literary expression. In fact, the writers and artists of Austin's caliber made every effort to liberate their writings and representations of the Southwest from the rest of the urban industrialized US. In the process, they forged a modern regionalism, an alternative mode of expression that dominated the Southwestern literary tradition in the early twentieth century. Pueblo Indians embodied for Anglo America a pure American past isolated from urban industrial development and class conflict at the turn of the twentieth century, and many Northeastern artists and writers appropriated and refashioned Pueblo beliefs and lifestyle. Modern regionalists re-presented the Southwest's local religious traditions from a secular perspective, but regional modernists escaped religion altogether and tied the Southwest to a universal secularism that was oftentimes global.

Critical regionalism is another mode of modernity that began as an architectural movement in the 1940s. In Lefaivre and Tzonis' architectural study *Critical Regionalism: Architecture and Identity in a Globalized World* (2003), Tzonis maintains that critical regionalism is a bottom-up approach to architectural design in an age of globalization. As Tzonis puts it, "The task of critical regionalism is to rethink architecture through the concept of region."<sup>23</sup> The urgency of this task is "the unresolved conflict between globalization and diversity and the unanswered question of choosing between international intervention and identity" (20). As Tzonis explains it, this unresolved conflict is "leading to crises as vital as the threat of a nuclear catastrophe" (20). Tzonis' co-author Liane Lefaivre situates critical regionalism within and against the post-war International Style, and she argues that critical regionalism emerged in 1945. This historical legacy of critical regional architecture coincides with the detonation of the first nuclear bomb in New Mexico and its use on Japan at the end of WWII, two nuclear catastrophes that give substance to the global crisis Tzonis recalls in his introduction. Critical regionalism thus emerged within and against local and global forces, making it a lucrative term for a diverse set of academic disciplines and intellectual dialogues.

Architecture and design dominate one end of the intellectual spectrum that is critical regionalism, and cultural studies dominate the other, though the two meet in ways that make evident the new directions in regional thinking. Critical regionalism was a postmodern response to global pressures that impinged on local identities, and for architect Kenneth Frampton, it offers a practice of resistance to the universalizing and to the localizing of regional and national forces. For Frampton, critical regionalism is a gesture and not an aesthetic that offers a particular "architecture of resistance."<sup>24</sup> More

recently, critical regionalism provides a new mode of ethnographic study and regional sustainability, as the works of Rosina Miller and Keith Pezzoli demonstrate. In Miller's work, critical regionalism serves as an ethnographic framework to demonstrate how one North Central Philadelphia community responds to dominant discourses in self-affirmative ways. For Pezzoli, critical regionalism offers a paradigm for the sustainability of cross-border regional ecologies that connect the US and Mexico. Critical regionalism in these settings—ethnographic, economic, and architectural—is a practical tool for local communities to respond to global forces in recuperative and sustainable ways. Even Gayatri Spivak has invoked the term as a mode of agency for local identities in a globalized world.<sup>25</sup>

Spivak's use of critical regionalism demonstrates how regional studies have impacted postcolonial thinking, but postcolonial studies have also restructured regional thinking in radical, revolutionary, and even reactionary ways. Lefavre's historical trajectory, after all, coincides with post-colonial movements in the aftermath of WWII. In a regional setting, postcolonial studies perhaps put the critical in regionalism, or it at least created the urgency for new approaches to the field of regional literature. For instance, the anthologies *Regionalism Reconsidered* (1994) and *Postwestern Cultures* (2007) signal the postcolonial impact on regional studies. Editor Susan Kollin explains that the "post" in "postwestern studies" marks a critical intervention in dominant conceptions of the West as a region. In Francesco Loriggio's "Regionalism and Theory," he argues, "the history of regionalism culminates with postcolonialism, whose task it has been to expose in full the geographical incidence of regionalist duality."<sup>26</sup> Loriggio's regional analysis focuses on the "reconceptualizing of narration directly by way of

topology rather than chronology, in terms of space rather than time” (12). From a topological perspective, regions are not a-priori existences but cultural constructs, an idea that Douglass Reichart Powell reinforces when he posits a “model of region making as a practice of cultural politics.”<sup>27</sup>

According to Frampton, critical regionalism performs a “double mediation,” meaning it “has to ‘deconstruct’ the overall spectrum of world culture which it inevitably inherits; in the second place, it has to achieve, through synthetic contradiction, a manifest critique of universal civilization” (21). For Fredric Jameson, critical regionalism is an allegory for the postmodern world that embodies the celebrated third space of his and other poststructuralist theories. Cheryl Herr uses critical regionalism to link Ireland and Iowa, and she draws on global marketing, psychoanalytic, and poststructuralist theory to develop a critical regional model, or what she calls the political economy of “cross-regional identification.” Critical regionalism, as Herr argues, can create “a dialogue with other regions outside our own [and] thus provide a foothold for our collective entrance into the future.”<sup>28</sup> For both Jameson and Herr, Frampton’s notion of mediation is central to the understanding of critical regionalism because it suggests, not the collapse of contradictory discourses, but a dialogue between opposite modes of representation. My triptych cultural critique expands Frampton’s double mediation because the triptych consists of three panels and, by extension, a triple a mediation that is rooted in religion and cognizant of the significance of Catholic tradition in the Southwest. Triptych cultural critique brings together three forms of regional writing and presents them as three different responses to modernity that hinge on their representation of religious tradition in

the Southwest. In short, religious tradition in the Southwest is re-presented in modern regionalism; reinforced in critical regionalism; and rejected in regional modernism.

Anglo American critical regionalism emphasizes the doubling of American identity in a global world order, but this bifocal register is not particular enough to unpack the critical regional significance of the Southwest. Instead, the kind of postcolonial critical regionalism that Alberto Moreiras proposes lends itself to the trifocal lens that I am suggesting. Moreiras emphasizes the concepts of hegemony and subalternity to identify a Latin American subaltern critical regionalism. “It has been a long time since there was an outside to Western imperial reason,” says Moreiras, “and it may no longer be possible to think *without* it.”<sup>29</sup> This means that critical regionalism speaks from within “the great narrative of global modernization,” and not necessarily from an architecture, or through a language, of resistance (83). Critical regionalism becomes in Moreiras’ discussion an ambivalent precondition for postcolonial subjects who speak within, against, and between the global world order. As Moreiras explains, “‘Narrative fissure,’ ‘negative globality,’ and ‘critical regionalism’ are concepts that attempt to preserve a historical legacy, to deconstruct a historical legacy, and, immodestly enough, to open up a discursive field where the possibility of new forms of reflection can be prepared” (81). Moreiras’ critical regionalism balances the local and the transnational in a way that sustains my own sense of Southwestern critical regionalism.

Using my triptych cultural critique, I preserve the historical legacy of modern regionalism in the Southwest, but I also consider how regional modernism as a mode of writing deconstructs the cultural logic of its literary peer. José Limón argues that critical regionalism offers “a renewal of regionalist thinking, not in any isolated sense, but rather

*within* and *in tension* with globalization.”<sup>30</sup> However, I think it is best to read Southwestern critical regionalism as a central panel that opens up a discursive field of tension within and between modern regionalist and regional modernist modes of representation. In this way, regional scholarship can begin to understand the different modes of modernity that inform US Hispanic and Southwestern literature in the past, and contemporary Chicana/o cultural production in the present. In Herring’s words, we can begin to understand how the Anglo and Chicana/o Southwest are “compeers,” and not simply adversarial, and we can begin to overcome the compulsion to define our literary legacies in terms of precursors and prototypes.

#### Coda: Fray Angélico’s Southwestern Critical Regionalism

Southwestern critical regionalism offers a renewed way of thinking about regional writing, and my triptych cultural critique analyzes three modes of modernity. I use religion as a critical lens to distinguish the differences among these three modes of modernity, and I argue that Fray Angélico’s religion is what makes his regional writings critical. His religion was, no doubt, particular to the Southwest, but it also extended his writings and his influence beyond the Southwest. Regionalism becomes in Fray Angélico’s art and fictional work a vehicle for Franciscanism, and he uses his religion to reframe Franciscan history and the Southwest. For this reason, Fray Angélico is critical to the study of the Southwest not because he was a religious person, but because as a religious person his ideas restructure our understanding of the Southwest. Let me conclude with Fray Angélico’s Territorial Revival Style restoration of the Our Lady of

Guadalupe Church façade in Peña Blanca in 1940 as an instance in which this restructuring takes place.

According to Chris Wilson (1997), the Pueblo-Spanish Revival Style dominated New Mexico's post-statehood architecture, and it continues to this day to define the Southwest as a region. Wilson explains that the Territorial Style was inspired by the Greek Revival, and the Pueblo-Spanish Revival was a variant of the California Mission Style. The latter style was "based on the less formal adobe missions of New Mexico and on Pueblo villages. Pseudopueblos of lath and plaster were popular attractions at the major American world's fairs from 1893-1915" (Wilson 112). Fray Angélico was well aware of New Mexico's architectural history. Recall that his father was a carpenter and worked for the San Diego World's Fair. As Fray Angélico explained to John Pen La Farge late in his life, "When I was about eleven months old, my dad, who was a carpenter, took me, my mother, and my baby sister to San Diego to work on the Panama Pacific Exposition."<sup>31</sup> It is quite possible that Fray Angélico's dad was one of many carpenters who constructed the "pseudo-pueblo" structures of the 1915 San Diego fair. Architecture thus served as a historical catalyst, not just for the region, but for the friar himself and for the Southwestern critical regionalism that characterizes his work.

Fray Angélico demonstrated an ambivalent awareness of Southwestern architecture, for he was both "enchanted" by it and resentful of its predominance. After returning to New Mexico from California as a young boy, Fray Angélico explained to La Farge that in Mora "there were mostly French priests" and they "built *French* doors—all the way to the ground. Then the windows—at the time I didn't know, but later on, when I traveled down the Rhine [sic], in the little towns, I thought I was in Mora" (37). This



memory refers to Fray Angélico's military service, and it reveals his critical regional sense of the Southwest. As a military chaplain, Fray Angélico was a local serving the US Army in a global locale, and he recognized local Mora architecture in the French villages along the Rhine. Referring to Mora's French-inspired architecture, and perhaps informed by a sense of resentment, the friar explained, "they tore 'em all down," including the Mora courthouse, which "looked like a German castle—stone with pitched slate roof. It could have lasted forever, but while I was in the seminary, they tore it down and built Pueblo style" (37). Ironically, while Fray Angélico was receiving a German-bred education in the Midwest, New Mexico's Pueblo-Spanish Revival Style was replacing (and erasing) Mora's German Catholic architecture.

Fray Angélico's Territorial Style façade called on a different architectural revival than the Pueblo-Spanish one that defines the Southwest as a region. The Territorial Style was an alternative architectural tradition that both re-inscribed New Mexico's modern regionalism while it also broke away from the dominant regional past embodied by the state's Pueblo-Spanish Revival Style architecture. Fray Angélico re-inscribed modern regional architecture by returning not to New Mexico's Pueblo-Spanish past, but to the territorial period (1848-1912) and its hodgepodge, post-Mexican architecture. As Wilson explains, New Mexico's nineteenth-century Territorial Style evoked the Greek Revival in European architecture, and in New Mexico it became an architecture of simulation. "Using only molding planes and miter box saws," says Wilson, "carpenters fashioned raw lumber into door and window frames simulating columns, entablatures, and pediments" (54). By the 1930s, due mostly in part to the Federal Emergency Recovery Administration and its concomitant ideology of New Deal regionalism, the Territorial

Revival “became the unofficial style of the state of New Mexico. . .in the hands of a new Santa Fe firm, Kruger and Clark” (282). Wilson suggests that the Territorial Revival is “an architectural synthesis of triculturalism,” a hybrid form that combines European classicism with Southwestern regionalism (284). Yet in the hands of Fray Angélico, the Territorial Revival takes on a religious significance that literally restructured the Southwestern landscape at a time when the Pueblo-Spanish Revival Style dominated the built environment and secularized the religious architecture of the region. His façade put secular architecture to the service of a religious mission, and it is a concrete example of the Southwestern critical regionalism that characterizes his cultural work.

Let me reinforce Fray Angélico’s Southwestern critical regionalism with two visual stimuli that bring this chapter’s critical biography to a close. One is a 1939 photograph from the John Gould Fletcher Collection at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville, and the other is a 1939 sketch in the Fray Angélico Collection at the library dedicated to his name in Santa Fe. The photo is presumably one Fray Angélico sent to Fletcher while he was finishing the frescoes in the Our Lady of Guadalupe Church.<sup>32</sup> Fray Angélico is dressed in his brown robe and sandals, and he poses in front of the San Felipe Pueblo mission church with eight tribal people dressed in their traditional attire, four men and four women, and one woman is swaddling a baby. Fray Angélico’s 1939 sketch from the monthly *Saint Anthony Messenger* looks as though the photograph was its inspiration.<sup>33</sup> The San Felipe mission church serves as the sketch’s backdrop, and this is made evident by the signature architectural details: the twin towers, balcony façade, and rounded exterior surfaces signifying plastered adobe. In the sketch’s foreground, a Franciscan friar stands in his brown robe and sandals with his hands up in the act of

preaching to a Pueblo couple, a man and a woman dressed in Pueblo attire with a baby on the woman's back. On the other side of the padre is, as the caption reads below, "A group of famous writers [who] offered to publish a young missionary's poems—the profits for his missions!" In the column, Fray Angélico publicized *Clothed With the Sun* and encouraged *Saint Anthony* readers to purchase the book.

Like the 1939 photo in the Fletcher collection, the San Felipe Pueblo mission church serves as the architectural backdrop in the 1939 sketch, perhaps a sign of the friar-artist's self-reflexivity and critique of himself. The sketch positions the friar-artist at the crux of New Mexico's tri-cultural model, with Pueblo Indians on one side, and Anglo writers on the other, but he also redefines the tri-cultural with a religious sensibility that comes to bear on the Pueblo family. Juxtaposing the sketch and the photograph suggests that the friar recreated the mother and child from the photograph in a kind of Holy Family model in the sketch. While the friar's body faces the Pueblo family, he turns his head toward the trio of "famous writers" who interrupt him. In the process, he looks at the audience, and his expression resembles the Indian baby on its mother's back who also looks at the audience. In this way, Fray Angélico refigured himself in the likeness of the Indian Christ-child, and thus the sketch playfully fulfills his Franciscan promise to emulate Christ. Yet the sketch also puts Fray Angélico at the crossroads of modernity and tradition using a tri-cultural structure in which the Pueblo family dressed in their native attire represents tradition, and the Anglo writers dressed in suits represent urbanity. Fray Angélico's self-reflexivity inscribes a religious perspective within and against New Mexico's regional signs. In the photograph, Fray Angélico and the San Felipe people pose for an Anglo writer, but the sketch turns the dominant gaze by calling attention to

Anglo writers and making them also subject to a religious gaze. The Pueblo people in the photograph pose in their traditional attire, but the sketch turns the photo's regional gaze into a religious one. Fray Angélico refashions the traditionally attired Pueblo people from the photo to complement his triune religion, and he turns the secular logic of tri-culturalism on a Trinitarian pivot. In the process, he created what I call his Southwestern critical regionalism.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Fray Angélico, *Cantáres*, 88.

<sup>2</sup> Anonymous, “Fabián Chávez, Sr., Proud Patriarch,” 6.

<sup>3</sup> McCracken, “Semiotics, Hybridity, and Identity,” 4. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>4</sup> Fray Angélico Chávez to Fr. Vincent Kroger, February 14, 1952.

<sup>5</sup> In Montgomery’s *The Spanish Redemption*, he argues that the Spanish Revival was a cultural movement that emerged in the late nineteenth century as a vehicle for New Mexico statehood. The revival turned New Mexico from a Mexican territory to a Spanish region so as to make it more palatable for US statehood.

<sup>6</sup> Fray Angélico, “Painting, Personality, and Franciscan Ideals,” 1. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>7</sup> Fray Angélico Chávez to John Gould Fletcher, April 12, 1939.

<sup>8</sup> McCracken, “‘Cathedrals of the Desert’ and ‘Sermons in Stone,’” 87-88.

<sup>9</sup> Delahunt, “Triptych,” [www.artlex.com](http://www.artlex.com).

<sup>10</sup> Ewing, “William Penhallow Henderson,” 11.

<sup>11</sup> Sheppard, *The Saint Francis Murals of Santa Fe*, 13. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>12</sup> Cassidy, “Art and Artist’s of New Mexico,” 27. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>13</sup> Gallegos, “Fray Angélico as Muralist,” 3. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>14</sup> Newton, “Fray Angélico’s Artistic Ability Reflected in Church,” C-1. Ben Gallegos also noted that a former resident recalled “that the man who posed as the centurion in the first station joined the New Mexico National Guard and was killed in Bataan during World War II” (3).

<sup>15</sup> Fray Angélico to Fr. Adalbert Rolfes, December 15, 1942.

<sup>16</sup> Wilson, *The Myth of Santa Fe*, 72. Hereafter cited in text. Babcock, “Mudwomen and Whitemen,” 429.

<sup>17</sup> Dilworth, *Imagining Indians in the Southwest*, 2.

<sup>18</sup> Weigle, “Southwest Lures,” 535-536.

<sup>19</sup> Sánchez and Pita, introduction to *Who Would Have Thought It?*, lviii.

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<sup>20</sup> Aranda, "Contradictory Impulses," 554.

<sup>21</sup> Austin, "Regionalism in American Fiction," 98. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>22</sup> Herring, "Regional Modernism," 3. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>23</sup> Tzonis and Lefaivre, *Critical Regionalism*, 20. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>24</sup> Frampton, "Towards a Critical Regionalism," 16. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>25</sup> Spivak tangentially raises the idea of critical regionalism in a discussion she has with Judith Butler in *Who Sings the Nation-State?: Language, Politics, Belonging*. The idea of critical regionalism is for Spivak a way to combat global capitalism, and it counters the citizen/non-citizen dichotomy that Butler subscribes to by acknowledging how local communities are both subject to and subjects in global capitalism. Critical regionalism is not an analysis, says Spivak, but a critical mode of thinking about state identities. This mode of thinking is revolutionary, but only at the level of philosophy, for critical regionalism does not necessarily resist state structures: in fact, it acknowledges them. As Spivak explains, critical regionalism "goes under and over nationalisms but keeps the abstract structure of something like a state. This allows for constitutional redress against the mere vigilance and data-basing of human rights, or public interest litigation in the interest of a public that cannot speak for itself" (94). Indeed, it seems that critical regionalism offers an answer to the question Spivak poses and theorizes, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" How it offers this answer is yet to be seen, but she cites her next book, *Other Asias*, in her discussion with Butler and posits critical regionalism as her methodology.

<sup>26</sup> Lorigio, "Regionalism and Theory," 21.

<sup>27</sup> Powell, *Critical Regionalism*, 8.

<sup>28</sup> Herr, *Critical Regionalism and Cultural Studies*, 9. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>29</sup> Moreiras, "A Storm Blowing From Paradise," 83. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>30</sup> Limón, "Border Literary Histories," 166.

<sup>31</sup> Fray Angélico, "From Mora to the Mission," 34. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>32</sup> In my request for photocopies of Fray Angélico's letters to Fletcher from the Special Collections library at the University of Arkansas, I received a photo copy of two photos: one, a snapshot of the friar standing in front of the San Felipe Mission Church with eight other tribal people; the second, a photo of him in front of his last triptych in the Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Peña Blanca. This second

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photo also appears in Ellen McCracken's critical anthology (2000) and her historical article (2007), but this was the first time I've seen a reproduction of the first photo.

<sup>33</sup> Fray Angélico wrote and illustrated a column entitled "Out of the Centuries" for the *Saint Anthony Messenger* between 1934 and 1940. As Phyllis Morales reveals in her bibliography of Fray Angélico's work, the column was modeled after *Ripley's Believe It or Not*, and as McCracken observes, the column provided historical facts about the Catholic Church and the Franciscan fathers. "Out of the Centuries" had a comic effect, but the same artistic theory behind Fray Angélico's Peña Blanca frescoes also informed his comic sketches.

## Chapter Two: The Regional Poetics of John Gould Fletcher, Fray Angélico Chávez, and Américo Paredes

Fray Angélico's Franciscanism expands the parameters of Southwestern regional study, but at the same time his religious formation reinforces dominant regional paradigms and colonial histories of the Southwest. This chapter looks at Fray Angélico's poetry as the foundation for his Southwestern critical regionalism because it represents his Franciscanism. As with the poem "The Barefoot Boy" in the previous chapter, Fray Angélico wrote his poetry from a religious perspective, and his themes and conventions reiterate his Franciscan vocation. In 1969 Fray Angélico bid farewell to his poetry for good, saying in an apologia that "the pure English lyric poetry which I so much loved and strove after in the first half of this century suddenly became outmoded—and I myself with it."<sup>1</sup> Fray Angélico's writings shifted from poetry to history, an issue I more fully explore in later chapters. The present chapter reads Fray Angélico's poetry as an extension of his artistic work and an expression of his Franciscanism. In this sense, his poetry marks the formation of his Southwestern critical regionalism.

Fray Angélico corresponded with Arkansas-born poet John Gould Fletcher between 1939 and 1949, thus the first panel in this chapter's critical triptych considers this correspondence alongside of Fletcher's poetry and Fray Angélico's own *Clothed With the Sun* (1939) and *Eleven Lady Lyrics* (1947). As a member of the Writer's Edition, Fletcher was an important force behind the publication of *Clothed With the Sun*, and his correspondence provided the young Franciscan poet with a sort of mentorship. Fletcher won a Pulitzer Prize for his *Selected Poems* in 1938, so in many ways he is one



of the “famous” writers that Fray Angélico depicted in his 1939 “Out of the Centuries” sketch from the *St. Anthony Messenger*. Fletcher was also the recipient of the photograph of Fray Angélico and eight other San Felipe people in front of the mission church that I argue in the previous chapter inspired Fray Angélico’s *Messenger* sketch. The correspondence, the photo, and the sketch demonstrate the extent to which Fletcher influenced the critical regional formation of Fray Angélico’s writings. For this reason, the chapter’s first panel reads Fray Angélico’s Franciscanism within and against Fletcher’s own religious poetry.

The Fray Angélico-Fletcher correspondence demonstrates that both poets navigated an anti-Catholic sentiment in Eastern literary establishments, a sentiment that oftentimes shored up in Fletcher’s own epistolary responses to the friar’s poetry, especially his reaction to *Eleven Lady Lyrics*, a St. Anthony publication. Fletcher praised *Clothed* in a review for *Poetry* magazine, but he disdained *Lady Lyrics* in his letters to Fray Angélico. The two poets corresponded and sparred over issues of religion and aesthetics, and this debate especially played out through the Virgin Mary, a major symbol in Fray Angélico’s poetry. Fletcher responded to Fray Angélico’s *Clothed* and *Lady Lyrics* in a dialectical manner, and his correspondence illuminates how Fray Angélico’s Southwestern critical regionalism formed between and within regionalist and modernist poetry. The chapter’s second panel focuses on Fray Angélico’s fourth book of poetry, *The Virgin of Port Lligat* (1959), an extended poem Manuel Martín-Rodríguez describes as “a triptych of images.”<sup>2</sup> For this chapter, *Port Lligat* signals the culmination of Fray Angélico’s poetry and the formation of his Southwestern critical regionalism. Fray Angélico provides his own commentary at the end of the poem, and in this way he splits

his authorial voice between poetry and criticism. The commentary replaces Fletcher's mentorship after the Southern poet's death, and the book itself mediates Fray Angélico's Southwestern critical regionalism.

The third panel in this chapter's triptych is South Texas-Mexican writer Américo Paredes and his collection of recovered poetry, *Cantos de Adolescencia: Songs of Youth, 1932-1937* (2007). Better known for his 1958 study 'With His Pistol in His Hand' about the *corrido* hero Gregorio Cortez, and not for his precious poetry, Paredes is a paradigmatic figure in Chicana/o border studies. The last panel is thus a strategic connection to Fletcher and the friar-poet, a connection of my own making, means, and triptych methodology. I want to illuminate the parallels and distinctions between Anglo Southwestern and Chicana/o Studies, but I also want to flesh out the parallels and distinctions of the three different regionalisms that concern this dissertation. Paredes' *Cantos de Adolescencia* is a collection of poetry composed in Spanish and originally published in 1937 by a small bilingual press in South Texas. Incorporating Paredes and his poetry in this chapter's third panel puts Chicana/o border studies in juxtaposition—not in opposition—to Anglo Southwesternism. Fletcher was a well-known Pulitzer Prize-winning poet, Fray Angélico was a lesser-known Catholic poet, and Paredes was until recently an unknown South Texas poet. Both Fletcher and Paredes were secular poets who broke away from dogmatic religion, but the difference between their poetry is rooted in two different languages and regionalisms. The Southern poet used religious motifs to close off his sense of regionalism from the forces of industrialization and modernity, but Paredes tied South Texas to a global world, giving his poetry a more transnational sensibility. Fray Angélico's poetry falls somewhere in-between Fletcher's modern

regionalism and Paredes' regional modernism, the result of which formed a Southwestern critical regional mode of writing.

#### Panel One: Fletcher's Regionalism and Fray Angélico's Early Formation

Fray Angélico and Fletcher began corresponding frequently in 1939, the mission priest from Peña Blanca and in between his religious work; and the "famous" poet from Fayetteville, Little Rock, Memphis, and even Santa Fe. The correspondence lasted a decade, right up until Fletcher's premature death in 1950, and at the time Fray Angélico began dabbling in historical writings. The religious fervor of Fray Angélico's poetry received a cool reception from modernist critics, but he quickly became a well-published Catholic poet. Fray Angélico's collection at the Franciscan Archives in Ohio reveals the extent of his publishing ventures in Catholic anthologies and national venues throughout the 1930s and 1940s, and even into the 1950s and 1960. Fray Angélico's poem "Esther" appeared in Alfred Noyes' 1946 edited anthology *Golden Book of Catholic Authors*, and it also appeared in a 1944 collection by the Catholic Poetry Society of America called *Drink From the Rock: Selected Poems From Spirit: A Magazine of Poetry*. He also wrote the foreword to Elizabeth Patterson's 1956 collection *Saint Francis and the Poet*, and he contributed the poems "I Vowed" and "Marionette." In addition, Fray Angélico wrote all the poems from *Clothed With the Sun* as a clerical student in the Midwest, so although the collection was a product of the Writer's Edition and its local philosophy, the poems had already been published in some of the nation's Catholic periodicals.

Fletcher wrote a positive review of *Clothed* in the March 1940 issue of *Poetry* magazine, saying "this young mission-priest's achievements is his ability to echo the

spirit of the seventeenth-century metaphysical English poets without plainly following them in their direction and imagery.”<sup>3</sup> *Poetry* was a Chicago-based magazine that another poet who moved to Santa Fe, Alice Corbin Henderson, helped establish and co-edit. The magazine boosted the careers of Edgar Lee Masters, Ezra Pound, and Carl Sandburg, but Fletcher’s letters reveal that the venue was not so fond of Fray Angélico’s poetry. In one letter, Fletcher announced the review is forthcoming, but only after he had to “argue the point with George Dillon, the editor.” Fletcher then apologized and confessed, “I fear in its present form, it will disappoint you [Fray Angélico] as it stands. But I did the best I could under quite discouraging circumstances. Apparently, there is some hostility to Catholics in that quarter.”<sup>4</sup> Interestingly, Fletcher himself would express a similar hostility in his response to *Eleven Lady Lyrics*, marking a dramatic difference between his assessment of *Clothed* (a Writer’s Edition publication) and *Lyrics*.

Many of the Anglo writers who co-founded the Writer’s Edition did so to escape the “Puritan” literary establishment Fray Angélico attempted to tap into via his friend and mentor, Fletcher, who was a Pulitzer Prize-winning poet and a reader for the Writer’s Edition. Fray Angélico’s poetry was better received locally and in the modern Catholic world of literature and letters than in the world of *Poetry* magazine, and he lashed back at the institution (and perhaps even at his mentor) using both a counter-Reformation discourse and an anti-communist rhetoric. Responding to Fletcher’s news about the *Poetry* review, Fray Angélico used the discourse of the Red Scare to discredit his critics, and he scoffed at “self-professed ‘liberals’” who “out-Puritan the Puritans in their pinkish exclusiveness—and then prostitute the word ‘liberal.’”<sup>5</sup> In the end, *Poetry* ran the review, but only because of Fletcher’s influence, and not for any literary merit the

magazine afforded to the friar-poet's collection. Nevertheless, the Writer's Edition provided a regional venue for the publication of Fray Angélico's religious lyrics, and Fletcher gave his fellow Franciscan poet and friend his props in *Poetry* magazine, a modernist venue. Fray Angélico's poetry benefited from his friend Fletcher's literary cache, a characteristic that fundamentally compromised the his Franciscan vow of humility.

In Walter Romig's *The Book of Catholic Authors* (1943), Fray Angélico narrated his literary start in a personal essay that gives more serious substance to his 1939 *St. Anthony Messenger* sketch in which he promoted his *Clothed With the Sun*. As he explains in the essay:

The arduous and exacting studies on one's long way to the priesthood left precious little time for literary reading and writing, but somehow I had something published every month in this or that magazine up to my ordination in 1937. A handful of pieces, all verse, stood out above the average.

I returned to my home State as its first native Franciscan Padre, my boyhood dream a fact. My work among my people and the Pueblo Indians, where the priest must be a do-all in order to forge ahead, leaves little time or energy for hobbies. I became a "book-author" and "by accident," when a group of nationally known authors made a selection of my poems and published them in a pretty volume, called *Clothed With the Sun*. Had I not been stationed in this part of the country which is a mecca for artists and writers, I would not have a single book to my credit. This

edition of my poems sold out in a remarkably short time, although the purchasers were few among Catholic readers.<sup>6</sup>

Fray Angélico's self-portrait conveys a careful negotiation of his religious standing as a Catholic poet with his regional persona, taking on a face of humility while at the same time positioning himself within (and outside) the "mecca" of Southwestern literature. The description of his literary beginnings positions him in at least two ways: as a Catholic poet with Catholic readers; and as a Catholic priest who happened to get published while serving as a mission priest in New Mexico, a writer's and artist's haven.

Fletcher spent time in Santa Fe intermittently in the last stage of his life and writing, during what Lucas Carpenter calls Fletcher's "stage of Southern regionalism."<sup>7</sup> As Carpenter points out, Fletcher received his greatest public notice in the 1920s during his "Imagist stage" (10). Although he received a Pulitzer in 1938, Carpenter argues that "it seems almost as if Fletcher had the reviewers in mind when he selected almost all Imagist poems for the volume" (11). Reviewers did not look favorably at Fletcher's regionalist poetry, particularly after his association with the Tennessee-based Fugitive-Agrarian movement. Unlike his fellow poets from New England and the Midwest, Fletcher was a Southern-born poet and Harvard dropout who spent time in Europe after WWI. Carpenter says Fletcher's "prolonged stay in Europe was an attempt to come to grips with and comprehend the source of his own culture, since the Southerner, of all Americans, is privy to the emotions founded in the state of knowing himself to be a foreigner at home" (100). This Southern state of emotion produced a "characteristically Southern mode" in Fletcher's writing, and it constitutes what Carpenter calls Fletcher's Southern modernism (19).

After re-settling into Little Rock with his second wife, Fletcher visited Santa Fe on the advice of his fellow friend and poet, Haniel Long. Fletcher began corresponding with Fray Angélico after Long showed Fletcher one of the friar's published stories, "The Penitente Thief" (1938).<sup>8</sup> They corresponded for ten years prior to Fletcher's premature death in 1950 (he drowned himself near his Little Rock, Arkansas home). Santa Fe facilitated Fletcher's Southern regionalism, and his work for the Writer's Edition reading and editing manuscripts for publication put his Fugitive-Agrarianism into practice. The Writer's Edition published Fletcher's *XXIV Elegies* in 1935, a book Carpenter considers to be the beginning of his regionalist phase. Edna B. Stephens disagrees, arguing instead that, "the book does not belong to Fletcher's regional verse; instead, it can more accurately be placed as the last in the series of his religious works."<sup>9</sup> Both Carpenter and Stephens are correct if we imagine that Fletcher's religion is what defines his regionalism, but neither Carpenter nor Stephens consider religion a key category in Fletcher's regionalist writings. Instead, Carpenter's periodization of Fletcher's writings overlooks how the poet's Southern Calvinism informed his modern regionalism. Moreover, both critics diminish the importance of Santa Fe as a key "foreign" locale for the expression and development of Fletcher's modern regionalism, with a "real-life" Franciscan informant, to boot.

Aesthetically, the difference between Fletcher and Fray Angélico's aesthetic choices signals a divergence between modern regionalism and critical regionalism. Recall, in my introduction, I define modern regionalism as a mode of expression that responded to Northeastern hegemony by isolating the Southwest and appropriating its native lifestyle and folk practices. In Fletcher's case, the Southwest facilitated his

Southern sensibility and allowed him to experiment with his religious expression. Fray Angélico's critical regionalism, by contrast, reinforced his religion in an age of modernity. Literally in their letters, and symbolically in their poetry, the Virgin Mary articulates their regional aesthetic difference. For instance, Fletcher disliked Fray Angélico's *Eleven Lady Lyrics*, a collection of poems written mostly during the friar's WWII service as Army Chaplain, and published by New Jersey's St. Anthony Guild Press. The collection exemplifies Fray Angélico's love for the English lyric and his devotion to the Virgin Mary, both of which stand in stark contrast to Fletcher's own elegiac poetry. Fletcher attributed his dislike of *Lady Lyrics* to "some damnable and quite obstinately unredeemable fragment of Protestantism in my very soul [which] makes me rather averse to *most* poems about She whom you call the Blessed Virgin Mary."<sup>10</sup> Fray Angélico responded, "as a Catholic and a disciple of Francis of Assisi, Christ is the Son of God, a mysterious part of a triune Godhead, who became *incarnate*, took his human flesh and blood from a human maiden! This makes an infinite difference." For Fray Angélico, his and Fletcher's "views on matters of faith as well as any other pursuits depend on the roots," and he further posited a somewhat scientific, if not poetic, analogy when he continued, "If the roots are different in genus and species, the flowers, too, will be different."<sup>11</sup>

Fray Angélico's flower analogy took on a metaphoric meaning in his poetry, especially in *Eleven Lady Lyrics*. The collection renewed Fray Angélico's regional sensibility within a national and global setting, and he achieved it through organic metaphors. For instance, Fray Angélico informed Fletcher of his enlistment in a 1943 letter when he explained that he was "leaving Peña Blanca and its sagebrush for the



elmos of Cambridge—through the US army, for I have received my commission as a Chaplain with orders to proceed to the Chaplain’s School at Harvard!”<sup>12</sup> Coincidentally, Fray Angélico made his way east to Fletcher’s old stomping grounds, a moment he captured in the poem “Washington Elm”:

Here where we drill not long ago it stood  
 (A granite marker says with chiseled tongue)  
 Beneath whose shade the General reviewed  
 His first battalions when its limbs were young. . .

Perhaps the war will take us where a Tree  
 Once spread its branches on an ancient hill  
 And where another won our liberty  
 In blood, as Washington remembered still

Alas, the heritors, too often prone  
 To leave remembrance of both trees to stone!<sup>13</sup>

Fray Angélico positions himself and the army he drilled with in US history, not as it is chiseled in a granite marker, but through the Washington elm tree, an allegory for the nation’s body. The poem’s lyrical tone reinforces its celebration of American history and its wars of rebellion, but it tells this history through an alternative lexicon, the poem itself, which dates and places itself below the title (“Cambridge, 1943”). The poem becomes a means by which to document the historical place of the Mexican American

Southwest in the nation's center and in the nation's global wars, a historical event that redefined WWII, the nation's history, and Southwestern regional literature.<sup>14</sup>

There are eleven lyrics dedicated to the Virgin Mary in Fray Angélico's collection, so not all of the poems are about the Virgin. Nevertheless, the collection as a whole contemplates the modern condition of war. Even the fragmented arrangement of the lyrics throughout the collection suggests the destabilizing effects of WWII. Robert Hunt in his 1947 review of the collection finds the arrangement to be distracting, but it nicely portrays the poet's conflicted war-torn terrain in which writing, and especially poetry, is difficult. Fray Angélico's *Eleven Lady Lyrics* reinforced the nation's patriotism during and after WWII, and his lyrical poems contemplated the loneliness of war, death, and destruction with the language of celebration, life, and faith.

In Fletcher's *XXIV Elegies*, the poet expressed a darker outlook on war and the modern world. As Stephens points out, the poems "are built about the poet's grief over loss. . .the poet is grieving over man's spiritual loss in a world dominated by the machine civilization" (100). Here, "Elegy on a Transatlantic Voyage" demonstrates:

Iron hammers clanked, and tilting furnaces poured  
Rivers of molten steel to forge this shape;  
Elliptical whale that pounds with steady beat  
Snorting through high red funnels towards the sky:  
Indifferent to the winds, it swings across  
The wastes where Thetis and the Tritons mourned;  
Shouldering aside the weed, the fog, the drift,  
And the last solitude where man is lost.<sup>15</sup>

Fletcher generates an existential loneliness through the juxtaposition of nature and technology, man and machines, in which man stands in-between nature and technology, alone. The poem's invocation of another person does not alleviate the poet's solitude, but instead pronounces the poem's sense of loneliness and spiritual loss, an aesthetic choice that for the brooding Southern poet gives voice to what Lucas might call his Southern modernism. But as Stephens points out, *XXIV Elegies* is part of Fletcher religious verse and not his regional poetry. As I argue, Fletcher's religious verse articulates a mode of modern regionalist writing alongside of and within his elegiac, dark, and otherwise modernist poetry.

As a Southern Calvinist, Fletcher did not completely reject the Madonna, and many of the religious symbols, motifs, and themes that people Fray Angélico's mystical poetry also perform a critical function in Fletcher's poetry. At the subjective level, Fletcher's dark poetry perhaps prophetically foreshadowed his premature death, but his religious convictions shaped his regional poetics. Take Fletcher's parable "To a Woman Clothed With the Sun" as a parallel to Fray Angélico's own title poem in his *Clothed With the Sun* collection. Fletcher's poem calls on the mother as Muse when he writes, "Only through a woman's body can come perfect Man; only through a woman's instinct can be spoken the Word that sways the universe to the most distant star."<sup>16</sup> Emphasis on "Word" here plays on the religious significance of Logos, and it refers to the opening of John's Gospel: "In the beginning there was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."<sup>17</sup> The secular and the religious converge in poetry (the word), and the Mother serves as a vessel for the composition of the poet's perfect parable. Fletcher envisions the mother as an outlet for his own Logos, but for Fray Angélico the mother is

not so much a muse, but a manifestation of the ethereal and the earthly. The two representations of the Virgin Mary distinguish Fray Angélico's Franciscanism from Fletcher's Southern Calvinism, and this distinction defines the difference between their regionalisms.

According to David L. Jeffrey, early Franciscans adopted the lyric as a way to spread their faith in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and to convert the poor and common folk of England.<sup>18</sup> Thus, Fray Angélico's lyrics were an extension of a medieval Franciscan tradition in which "the literary iconography of Franciscan poetry is not alone the abstract Virgin, or the bride of the Song of Songs, but an effective presence, a vital referent for personal, human identification" (Jeffrey 32). In Fray Angélico's poem "Clothed With the Sun," he invokes Mary's apparition from the Book of Revelations. "In robe of cloth-of-sun, / With Pleiad-plaited coronet, / And slippered with the crescent! Gown sun-spun, / Crown star-set, / And the moon / For her shoon!"<sup>19</sup> Describing the Virgin as wearing the moon "for her shoon" maintains a classical rhyme scheme, while it also visually represents the mother's biblical apparition on a crescent moon in Revelations. "Shoon" also utilizes the archaic English language Fray Angélico adopted and adapted while studying in the Midwest. Moreover, the phrase also creates an affinity between Fray Angélico the Franciscan and Mary the "human maiden," for recall that in "The Barefoot Boy" he returns home "singing of silver shoon" (88). In this way, Fray Angélico's lyric uses medieval language to reinforce his Franciscan faith, while his representation of Mary extends his medieval faith to the modern world.

Mary grounds the friar's poetry in the everyday, but in Fletcher's poetry she enables his detachment from the modern conditions that caused him so much fear and

loathing. For Fletcher, the biblical mother was a repository for the “pure” South untouched by modern technology—more of an escape than an “effective presence.” Likewise, the Southwest became a repository or escape for the “literary pilgrims” who became disenchanted or diseased by the US’s urban centers in the post-WWI era. Fray Angélico’s Marian poetry, like the Southwest itself, generated an acute ambivalence for Fletcher that hinged on the region’s nuclear landscape. In his letter about *Eleven Lady Lyrics*, Fletcher concluded that Fray Angélico’s *The Single Rose: Poems of Divine Love* (1948) was a better collection because it was “a real development. . .something indeed admirable. . . Anyway, it is something remote from Los Alamos—the guilt of which *I* share, alas! daily and horribly.”<sup>20</sup> Fray Angélico’s lady lyrics were too close to the war that created Fletcher’s “guilt” over Los Alamos. In this way, the Atomic City became for Fletcher a synecdoche for the Southwest’s nuclear landscape, the guilt of which troubled him. Along with his strict sense of Calvinism, this atomic guilt formed Fletcher’s modern regionalism. Fray Angélico’s Catholic adoration of the Madonna repulsed Fletcher’s Protestant “soul” because *Lady Lyrics* was too close to the nation’s military industrial complex for Fletcher’s regional sensibilities. Of Los Alamos, the friar-poet claimed, “with my faith neither the atomic bomb nor the perfidy of nations and world leaders can upset me. This must be some sort of Spanish fatalism inherited from some old Moorish fellow!”<sup>21</sup>

Fray Angélico used his faith as an antidote to the Atomic era, and *Lady Lyrics* engaged in war, not with a sense of disillusionment, but through a critical regional portrayal of the WWII landscape that both reinforced and revised the nation. “Lady of Peace,” for instance, contemplates an impending battlefield while in a Hawaiian

Cathedral dedicated to an Our Lady of Peace image. Fray Angélico's rhyme scheme, meter, and traditional flower imagery create a sense of closure and peace in the poem, and it becomes like a rosary to the Blessed Mother, the beads of which are also the petals of a flower. The first stanza opens with a prayer: "I left a lei, Lady, / To say goodbye / Before we sailed away / To where men die, / And vowed to bead on my return / Fresh buds for dry" (4). In the second stanza, the poet looks ahead to future battles and potential death, and he concludes with a flower image to complete in his poem the circular ritual of praying the rosary. "Should I return not, Lady, / When battles cease, / Grant my vow and promise / Sweet release, / And lay your leis where I lie, / And peace" (4). The poet does not question his military duty; he instead uses his religion to resolve the conflict of modern warfare and regional dislocation.

In another poem, "Pacific Island Cemetery," the Franciscan poet personifies the cereus plant, a Hawaiian cactus native to Northern Mexico and the American Southwest, to achieve an organic imagery that personifies the death of Mexican American soldiers on foreign soil. The cemetery sets a dark tone in the poem, but the night-blooming cereus blossom mediates the poem's lyrical rhythm and the darkness of death. The cereus cactus creates a different kind of metaphor than the lei, and it allows the poet to pay witness to the horror of war and death while still maintaining the collection's lyrical tone. The poem begins in a cemetery where "giant-blooming cereus are out tonight. . .beneath a phosphorescent sky, / A lovely sight to view, but, oh! the roots, roots. . ." (8). This last lamentation sounds almost like Captain Kurtz's last words in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* ("the horror, the horror"), a delusional but poignant recognition of the modern colonial condition.<sup>22</sup> The poet recalls paying witness to the planting of the cereus cacti

“day by day not far apart, / Dank roots of mandrake foully mocking human forms, / Their twisted limbs and bloated bellies mottled dark / With mud and mildew, and their clotted sap like gore” (8). Lyrically, the colonial cacti “roots” become a metaphor for fallen Mexican soldiers, and planting a metaphor for the burying of mangled American bodies in foreign soil. Literally, the poet and his fellow fallen and standing soldiers participate in a similar colonial project as the cereus cacti, and the surviving ones who witness the planting/burying of the cacti/deceased also perpetuate the colonial project by burying the truth, like the cacti roots. “Forgive us, fellows, for forgetting what we know, / For letting earth’s erasure banish what we saw. / But you know we will remember blooming white, O souls / More glorious than the Pleiades or Southern Cross!” (8). Forgiveness comes in the form of the friar-poet’s cereus-metaphor, which calls on the Southwestern desert roots of its (Mexican) American soldiers and re-connects them to a desert plant and regional homeland.

Whether a tree, flower, or cactus, Fray Angélico’s imagery in *Lady Lyrics* stands in stark contrast to the context in which the poems were written. The collection mediates modern warfare and the poet’s Franciscan faith using earthly imagery that was particular to the friar-poet’s real, historical setting. Even at its darkest moments, *Lady Lyrics* resolves its conflicts by way of mediation and not isolation, which is quite unlike the imagery in Fletcher’s *XXIV Elegies*. There is emptiness in Fletcher’s elegies, a displacement that characterized his modern regionalism and desired return to a “pre-industrial” and “backward” time, particularly in the South, but also in the Southwest. Carpenter argues that, “*XXIV Elegies* indicated that Fletcher had found himself more comfortable than ever before in his role as a poet of the South” (11). “Elegy on the

Jewish People,” for instance, meditates on the biblical Jewish Exodus from Egypt in an unforgiving desert landscape. The land and people are scorched, the poet explains, “From hour after hour of the sun hanging still overhead / Like a great sword of bronze, grinding itself out on the stillness” (Fletcher 1935 6). All seems lost and full of despair, though the Jewish people’s “strange flame of the spirit” beckons on, “To light and to life, / Or to darkness and death, / Who know—who can say?— But today, / The deserts have opened, / The deserts have yawned and have uttered a voice, / The deserts have spoken:— / ‘God is the thunderbolt that falls, when the heart otherwise would be broken’” (6).

Fletcher’s biblical desert is a symbol of contradictions, for it is both barren and fertile, and like Fray Angélico’s cereus cactus, it signals both foreignness and belonging. Yet unlike Fray Angélico’s transplanted cactus, Fletcher’s desert remains detached from a material landscape. Instead, the poet internalizes the desert so as to renew his own spirit: “Since my God will not answer / The longing I have, I will build what He cannot achieve. / In my barren self will I gain / The pure fullness of heaven; / I will mock with my inward-urged power the blue sky and / the empty brown earth” (8). Unlike Fray Angélico, whose Franciscan faith gave his poetry a sense of roots and placement, even in foreign soil, Fletcher broke away from God and His domain, including the “blue sky” and “brown earth,” to make room for a “pure” heaven within himself, or a kind of pre-industrial space that exists individualistically and internally. The contrast is especially poignant in Fray Angélico’s lyric “Lady of Lidice,” which envisions the life of an abandoned Jewish village from the perspective of the Virgin Mary herself.



Fray Angélico's depiction of a Czech village in "Lady of Lidice" uses the Virgin Mary to re-member the abandoned village, which the Nazi Army massacred and destroyed in 1942, forcing its survivors into a concentration camp. "Lady of Lidice" is the first of Fray Angélico's ten other lyrics, which he scattered throughout the book, but more importantly the Lidice lyric sets the tone of the first section entitled "With Poems of War." The poet calls on the Catholic Mother to re-populate the village, and "Lady of Lidice" intercedes in the modern world from the fluffy heavens:

From God's lofty City  
my Lady looks down,  
the remembering lover  
of every small town,  
looks down less with pity than wistfulness over  
the town that is not;  
for gone are its people  
each household and cot  
the quaint Slavic steeple  
that tendered them cover,  
a smoldering plot. (3)

Fray Angélico's poem imagines Saint Mary from "God's lofty city," a dramatic difference from Fletcher's abandonment of God, heaven, and earth. Also, the friar-poet uses a careful rhyme scheme to balance the abandoned village with the quaint spirit of its people. In this way, "Lady of Lidice" intervenes in the modern (Jewish) world of

suffering, but it does not suffer from the same existential condition as Fletcher, nor does it escape from the modern condition like other Anglo Southwestern regionalists.

Fletcher's proximity and distance to the Writer's Edition put him a particular Southern location of culture in which he, as Lucas might put it, developed his regional literature of home as a foreigner. In Fletcher's poetry, the Mother is a female vessel for the perfect Logos, a pure flower, but the mother in Fray Angélico's hands is a cross-pollinated flower, so to speak. The difference between the two hinges on a religious variation that determines their regional aesthetics. Fletcher's representation of the Virgin Mary as a "pure" vessel reflected his Southern Calvinism and informed his modern regionalist writings. Meanwhile, Fray Angélico imagined the Virgin Mary as the "*Rosa Mystica*," or as his lyric puts it, a "rose being not a whit less / immaculate than white, / but showing in each petal's / curl and curve and tint / Eve fresh and pure, unshadowed / by evil's blighting hint" (35). In *The Single Rose* and speaking as "Fray Manuel," Fray Angélico again refers to Mary as the "*rosa mystica*" (mystical rose) when he explains that there are two mothers of Christendom, Mary and Eve.<sup>23</sup> As Fray Angélico explains, Christ's human mother relates him to the first Christian mother, Eve, whose transgression in the Garden of Eden resulted in Man's fall from God's grace. In "Fray Manuel's" words: "Because He is also the Son of Mary, who is often called the Rose of Sharon and the Flower of Carmel, and Mary is a descendant of our Mother Eve, and since the rosewood is related to the wood of the apple, therefore is he kin to the tree under which our first mother was deflowered" (1948 63). Fray Angélico's Marian imagery does not suggest the same notion of purity as Fletcher's, but it instead represents a catalyst for the friar-poet's Southwestern critical regionalism that is rooted in the local scenes of modern

warfare: an abandoned Jewish village; a foreign cemetery; a Hawaiian cathedral; and a Washington, D.C., boot camp. While Fletcher's regional poetics escape the modern world, Fray Angélico uses the Virgin Mary to resolve the dilemmas of modernity and mass destruction.

#### Southwestern Critical Regionalism: Fray Angélico's *The Virgin of Port Lligat*

Fray Angélico's fourth book of poetry, *The Virgin of Port Lligat* (1959), signals the culmination of his poetic works and the convergence of his mystical and material worlds. The poem is an extended metaphor inspired by Salvador Dali's 1950 painting *The Madonna of Port Lligat*, and it combines all the narrative elements of Fray Angélico's previous poetry: art, religion, and the written word. *The Virgin of Port Lligat* originally appeared in *Spirit* magazine in 1956, and in 1957, T.S. Eliot showed an interest in publishing it through New York's Faber & Faber. This publication never happened, but in 1959, the Fresno Academy Library Guild Press published the book with a reprint of Dali's surreal painting. The mystical number three shapes *The Virgin of Port Lligat*, for aesthetically the poem is told through three superimposed images: the painting, the mythological Sphinx, and nuclear physics. By extension, three parts compose the poem. There is an introduction entitled "The Setting" in which Fray Angélico describes the three overarching images. The second part is the poem itself, and the third section is "Notes" in which the poet gives a verse-by-verse interpretation of the poem's images. Although the poem is not about the Southwest, Fray Angélico makes a critical regional commentary on the place of the Southwest, religion, aesthetics, and atomic power.

The poem's commentary demonstrates that the Southwestern nuclear landscape is the mystery unfolding in the poem. For this reason, the poem signals the culmination of Fray Angélico's Southwestern critical regionalism in which he reveals Fletcher's "guilt of Los Alamos." In *The Virgin of Port Lligat*, Fray Angélico turned to Dali's 1950 painting *The Madonna of Port Lligat* to contemplate the miracle of life and the possibilities of nuclear physics in creating an allegory for religion in the modern world. Regional historian Paul Horgan and modernist poet T.S. Eliot pushed Fray Angélico to pursue publishing *The Virgin of Port Lligat* as a book. In 1957, Horgan sent the poem to Eliot in England, fully aware that "Eliot was also working for the publishing house of Faber & Faber, which frequently published non-mainstream works."<sup>24</sup> Yet, Eliot did not pursue a publication of *The Virgin of Port Lligat*, perhaps because the work was too Catholic, not Southwestern enough, or just not good enough for the Northeastern literary establishment Fray Angélico at one time referred to his dear friend Fletcher as "pinkish." Fletcher committed suicide in 1950, coincidentally in the same year Dali completed his painting, so the poem also signals a development beyond the mentorship Fletcher provided to his Franciscan friend.

The reception of *The Virgin of Port Lligat* by Fray Angélico's religious superiors was ambivalent because of Dali's secular painting of the Virgin Mary, mainly its questionable representation of Catholic dogma. Fray Angélico perhaps suspected it, for he prefaced his request for an Imprimatur by saying, "Pope Pious XII praised the artist for [the painting], and this set him to doing those better known Crucifixions and other religious works."<sup>25</sup> Fr. Vincent Kroger in his reply asked that the book be published without the painting, or with another frontispiece. Returned the friar, "I am presenting it,

and the poem, as art and not as devotional reading,” and so he pushed for the painting’s publication, for its omission would undermine the poem’s triptych of images.<sup>26</sup> Four days later, Fr. Kroger advised the feisty friar to “submit your manuscript to His Excellency of the Santa Fe Archdiocese for the ‘Imprimatur.’”<sup>27</sup>

Manuel Martín-Rodríguez reminds us that the images in *The Virgin of Port Lligat* “constantly subvert the allegorical religious impulse of the poem with images that point to sex, seduction, adultery, rape, parricide, and matricide” (98), and he describes Fray Angélico’s poem as “a triptych of images that serves as the primary device at the referential and allegorical levels: the Sphinx, the atom, and the Madonna” (93). Fray Angélico’s superimposition of three images crosses physical and metaphysical planes, science and mythology, region and religion, in a way that makes him the rebellious friar, the “bad Catholic” Fletcher always wanted him to be, but long after Fletcher’s suicide. Fray Angélico infuses his Marian poem with the mystery of life and the nuclear atom, thus resolving Fletcher’s conflicted and guilty reaction to *Eleven Lady Lyrics* a decade earlier. Using a critical voice in his commentary, Fray Angélico mediates Fletcher’s modern regionalism, Dali’s mystical surrealism, and his own Franciscan mysticism to create an alternative, critical regional portrait of art, poetry, metaphysics, religious dogma, the atom, and atomic energy. The poem expands Fletcher’s modern regionalist parameters of writing by tying nuclear science to mythology and religion, and in the commentary Fray Angélico directly ties the poem to the Southwest, a convergence of atomic energy, the Virgin’s body, and the regional landscape.

Dali’s 1950 painting *The Madonna of Port Lligat* becomes an allegory for Creation in Fray Angélico’s religious dogma, for as he describes the painting, “Reality is

violated, as if the laws of terrestrial gravity were suspended. . .yet gravity as a whole is not abolished, for the entire scene reminds one of the gravitational push-and-pull that keeps the heavenly bodies in place.”<sup>28</sup> The painting is a modern version of a traditional Renaissance Madonna and Child painting, with a mother and a child at the center suspended in the air. But the images surrounding Dali’s mother and child create a surreal setting for the painting, and the artist removes the bosoms of both mother and child in a perfect rectangular shape. The mother’s breast creates a sort of window that frames the child, whose own chest cavity is geometrically incised to create yet another window framing a piece of bread at the heart of the baby. Over the mother’s head hangs an egg from a string, suggesting an allegory of birth and creation, and Fray Angélico focuses on this allegory, and not the symbols that Martín-Rodríguez ties to sex and parricide. With a set of theater curtains flanking both sides of the foreground, the entire painting is composed as a frame within a frame within a frame. As it is, the curtains have been pulled back to suggest, for Fray Angélico at least, “an apocalypse or revelation—a look into the center of things” (xv). The significance of this allegory is that the poem performs a similar revelation: a window into Fray Angélico’s Southwestern critical regionalism.

In the commentary Fray Angélico compares the triune Godhead of his religion to the atom. Such a comparison, he says:

is as lawful as those found by the Church Fathers in the three manifestations of water and other elements, or by St. Patrick in the shamrock. — Another very old visual symbol for the Trinity, besides the triangle, consists of three intertwined circles. Now, *perspectively*

intertwined circles, describing nuclear orbits, are the accepted scientific and popular emblem for nuclear physics. (By a most uncanny coincidence, incidentally, the secret project of the first atomic test, and the site of the first nuclear explosion in New Mexico, were called “Trinity.”) (61 and 63)

In the context of Los Alamos and White Sands, *The Virgin of Port Lligat* stages a critical regional dialogue on the place of New Mexico in the post-nuclear world. Fray Angélico uncovers the Anglo Southwestern unconscious, the Los Alamos phenomenon that abhorred Fletcher. In Fray Angélico’s poetry, however, this nuclear landscape facilitates his religious meditation, and allows him to bring together his Old World religion and the modern American Southwest.

*The Virgin of Port Lligat* calls on modern symbols, like the painting itself and the orbit logo in nuclear physics, as well as ancient (sphinx) and old world (Virgin and Child painting) mythologies. In this way, Fray Angélico extends his religious poetry to the modern American Southwest and the construction of a new, nuclear-driven mythology. By extension, the poem extends New Mexico’s geographical and cultural lexicon through a triptych of images that is a sophisticated model of Southwestern critical regionalism that forms and is informed by painting, poetry, Catholic dogma, Franciscanism, and regional history. *The Virgin of Port Lligat* opens up a gateway to understanding the orbit that is religion, science, and region in the formation of Southwestern historical and cultural discourses. Recall that the triptych mediates two adjacent panels that do not interact except in relation to the central panel. In this way, Fray Angélico’s poetry represents a Southwestern critical regionalism that dialogues with and expands the

discourses of regionalism and modernism, and his *Virgin of Port Lligat* reinstates his religion in an age of modernity .

In 1969, Fray Angélico published his last collection of poetry, and he gave it the same title as Fletcher's own 1938 Pulitzer Prize-winning collection. In the Foreword to *Selected Poems: With an Apologia*, Fray Angélico alludes to his literary affiliation with Fletcher when he explains, "The poems selected are mostly those which others liked well enough to have them re-printed in books or journals. And all this is done with what a person hopes is a bit of pardonable smugness from the fact that, having once strolled on occasion through the woods of Parnassus, one strayed momentarily above the timberline to be noticed briefly by the gods of his day."<sup>29</sup> The apologia in some ways makes no apologies for crossing the line between religion and regionalisms, and the title becomes like a testament to the friar-poet's old friend Fletcher, the collection itself "a quiet farewell to an era." Yet Fray Angélico tells of his own poetic satisfaction, and it is not of the same sensibility, or even the same soil, as "the woods of Parnassus" he strolled through at one time. The apologia closes with a memory of WWII, and the moment in which Fray Angélico came full circle with his poetry. "During World War II, while watching with some anxiety the receding outline of Honolulu and her beautiful island from the crowded deck of a troop transport, my mind and emotions went off awhile and spun a quiet ditty which I entitled *Lady of Peace*" (n.p.). He goes on to explain that many months later, while reading the poem in print, he recognized the *Requiem* of the Anglo-Saxon poet Robert Louis Stevenson whose lyrics were a major inspiration for Fray Angélico's own poetry. "I recognized Stevenson's *Requiem* re-stated in my own situation and from my own philosophy, and in my own manner, while sharing by curious



historic circumstance the same image of tropic isle and sea. Then I knew that my journey after beauty in the simple lyric had made the full round, and I was content.” The memory ties Fray Angélico’s poetry to an alternative aesthetic lexicon from the “gods of his day,” and in doing so his poetry embodies a Southwestern critical regionalism: part religion and part regional, part modern and part ancient, part regionalist and part modernist.

There is a Franciscan perspective in Fray Angélico’s poetry that ties it not only to a colonial history on a global scale, but also to a cosmic space of representation that expands the parameters of modern Southwestern regionalism. Yet contrary to the modernist condition that this expansion perhaps originates from, Fray Angélico’s Southwestern critical regionalism is rooted in his Catholic religion and Franciscanism. This means that because of his Franciscanism, it is best to think of Fray Angélico’s poetry as critically regional, and not simply as a by-product of modern regionalism, but a mediation of regionalist and modernist sensibilities of the Southwest. The last panel in this chapter’s critical triptych considers the poetry of South Texas-Mexican writer Américo Paredes to flesh out Fray Angélico Southwestern critical regionalism, and to sustain the study’s interest in comparative regionalisms. In 2007, the Recovering the US Hispanic Literary Heritage Project posthumously published a collection of Paredes’ early poetry, just six years after Fray Angélico’s 2001 collection, both reminders of the continued interest in Hispanic literature written before 1965. In the introduction to Paredes’ *Cantos de Adolescencia*, editors B.V. Olguín and Omar Vásquez Barbosa argue for “a complete paradigm shift in Chicana/o literary and cultural studies,” one that considers “Chicana/o existentialism and its relationship to post-WWI existentialism.”<sup>30</sup> The chapter’s triptych cultural critique begins this comparative work using Fray Angélico

as the central panel between Fletcher's modern regionalism and Paredes' regional modernism.

### A Third Panel: Paredes' Precocious Poetry and Regional Modernism

Américo Paredes is considered a "founding father" of Chicano Studies, particularly with his groundbreaking study of the *corrido* hero Gregorio Cortez in "*With His Pistol in His Hand*." More recently, Chicano literary scholars have also discovered Paredes' creative works, like his unpublished 1930s novel *George Washington Gómez* (1993), his short fiction in the collection *The Hammon and the Beans* (1994), and more recently his poetry. Paredes published his own collection of poetry in 1991, *Between Two Worlds*, and admitted in the Prologue that he burned much of it in 1960 because it had no literary merit. But by 1980, Chicano literature was well established, something which may have caused Paredes to rethink his earlier decision. "It occurred to me that I might compete for the title of Grandpa Moses of Chicano literature, depending on how you define Chicano and literature."<sup>31</sup> Unlike Fray Angélico who never identified as Chicano, Paredes imagined for himself a tentative and indefinite place in Chicano literary studies, but since then, many scholars, most of them his own students, have cemented his importance. Fray Angélico's place is not so secure, even as some argue that his religion made him oppositional. The fact is that Fray Angélico identified as Franciscan and not Chicano, so religion distinguished his regionalism from Paredes' own.

As this study argues, religion is an index of differential regionalisms, so it also becomes a way to stage a comparative discussion of Fletcher, Fray Angélico, and Paredes. Though many similarities connect Paredes and Fray Angélico—their status as

Chicano prototypes, literary men, and WWII veterans—they fundamentally diverge at the level of religion. This makes all the regional difference in their work. Paredes was a secular poet and writer who began writing at an early age and winning local poetry contests. In 1937 the Librería Española in San Antonio, Texas, published *Cantos de Adolescencia*, and after that, Paredes began publishing his poetry and short fiction in secular English and Spanish magazines. Between 1944 and 1946, Paredes served in the US Army writing as an enlisted soldier and political editor for the *Stars and Stripes*, and many of the short stories he wrote at the time now comprise the collection *The Hammon and the Beans*. Of the three poets, Paredes' writings were more secular and less religious than Fletcher's or Fray Angélico's. The logic of this study follows that religion creates the conditions for regional writing, so Paredes' poetry belongs to an altogether different panel and regional repertoire than the critical regional one at the center of this dissertation.

In many ways, Paredes' existential disconnection from organized religion ties him to Fletcher's modernist sensibility. Yet as I argued before, Fletcher's Southern Calvinism gave his work a modern regionalist sensibility that stages an escape from the forces of modernity. Southern religious traditions were for Fletcher an antidote to Northern industry and capitalism (Carpenter 52), thus it follows that religion was also for Fletcher a mode of regional representation. Both Fletcher and Fray Angélico turned to regionalism to counter the effects of modernity, but Fletcher's region was not rooted in an organized religion. This uprooted-ness makes for a sense of dislocation in Fletcher's work, which perhaps reflects a modernist condition, but was also a way for Fletcher to represent a chaste region. Fletcher put religion to work toward regionalism, and this was

a dominant mode of regionalist writing during the Writer's Era. Fray Angélico participated in these dominant discourses, but he reversed the order of region and religion by putting regionalism to work toward a religious end. His religious poetry was rooted in his Franciscanism, and this rootedness created a critical regionalist mode of writing that was an alternative to Fletcher's modern regionalism. Meanwhile, Paredes broke away from religion and religious themes altogether, but he rooted his sense of regionalism in the region itself, or as Fletcher put it, "the empty brown earth" (1935 8).

The earth is not empty in Fray Angélico's poetry, for he peoples his lyrics with plants, animals, and the Virgin Mary to contemplate the modern world and religious traditions. Unlike Fletcher who felt most at home when a stranger, Fray Angélico used his religion to reestablish his home, even when he was a stranger. Literally, Fray Angélico participated in US neo-colonization and Franciscan missionization of the Pacific Islands during WWII. His linguistic ability came in handy while he was serving in the former-Spanish colonies of Leyte and Guam, and his religion rooted his poetic imagery in the "brown earth." In this way, religion in Fray Angélico's wartime poetry resolved his foreignness and established his global belonging. Likewise, the theme of national belonging and ethnic foreignness impinged on the short fiction Paredes wrote while serving as a correspondent and editor of *Stars and Stripes*. Yet unlike in Fray Angélico's poetry and short fiction, the threat of ethnic betrayal leaves Paredes' stories without a resolution, and ultimately disconnected from any kind of belonging, whether regional or national. Nevertheless, Paredes focused much of his poetry on the "empty brown earth," and not so much to escape modernity. Instead, his poetry escaped the

constraints of his own regional homeland so as to tap into a transnational imaginary that expanded his Texas-Mexican sense of place.<sup>32</sup>

In a 2002 essay that precedes the edited and translated *Cantos de Adolescencia*, Olguín maintains that Paredes' "Pocho poetics" put his anti-imperial diatribes against the US and other European powers to the test. In the introduction to *Cantos*, Olguín and Barbosa argue that Paredes' "highly racialized and gendered transnational illusions threaten to destabilize [his] panamericanist and internationalist discourses precisely because he replicates imperialist fantasies of the exotic Other" (xxxvi-xxxvii). Moreover, as the editors explain, "Paredes' contrapuntal engagement with the British and Spanish literary canons—which he claims to love even as he identified this love as a function of US imperialism—forces us to further assess the oftentimes effaced relationship between Mexican-American literature and the European and Euroamerican traditions" (xi). Olguín and Barbosa provide a critical opening for this chapter's comparative conversation, for they argue that Paredes' poetry is "a new avenue of inquiry" for "Chicana/o existentialism and its relationship to post-WWI existentialism" (xxxviii). Unlike Fletcher's free-verse style and free-floating metaphors, Paredes' precious poetry points to a love for the lyric that parallels Fray Angélico's own poetic verse. But despite these technical similarities between Paredes' poetry and Fray Angélico's own, their religious differences produced differential regionalisms that turn on their portraits of the "brown earth."

Fray Angélico's lyrical celebrations of the earth and the Mother Mary tied him to a Franciscan tradition, but Paredes chose a more existential and modernist representation of region, the earth, and the universe. Paredes' 1935 poem "Africa" represents this

modernist sensibility, and as Ramón Saldívar argues, it draws inspiration from African American modernism. “Paredes’s poem resonates with the certainty of how art, song, and dance function as historical knowledge,” says Saldívar, and the work of Langston Hughes especially influenced Paredes (259-261). Hughes’ poem “What is Africa to Me” seems to have been the catalyst for Paredes’ own “Africa,” both written during the interwar period.<sup>33</sup> Paredes’ poem harkens:

Africa! Africa!  
 Black soul with a song  
 And a chain.  
 Africa! Africa!  
 Black soul with a long  
 Cry of pain.  
 Carved piece of jade,  
 Soft beauty made  
 In the depth’s of the jungle’s fierce breast. . .  
 Africa! Africa!  
 Bare back that has felt  
 The whip of the white.  
 But in spite of the chains  
 The song remains,  
 I can hear it go echoing yet. (1991 18)

Paredes alternates between the spirit of African people and the history of slavery, and his rhyme scheme balances the contradictory forces of beauty and enslavement. There is a

longing to join the “tremulous” and “sobbing drums” which “incite such a curious unrest,” but in the end the poet only hears an echo, suggesting his distance from the music and its “black soul” (18).

African American modernism inspired Paredes, but he infused this modernism with a regional sensibility that grounded his poetry in the South Texas-Mexican landscape. This means that even when his poetry was not about South Texas, it expressed a particular regional modernism, much in the same way Fletcher’s poetry expressed a Southern perspective, even when his poetry was not about the South. But unlike Fletcher’s “empty brown earth,” Paredes identified with the brown landscape and with the darker people of the world, giving his modernism a regional sensibility that separated him from Hughes and African American modernism, and connected him more to Fray Angélico’s critical regionalism. But Paredes’ poetry is not critically regional, despite José Limón’s position that critical regionalism is a better model for understanding Paredes’ work. Rather, it is best to read Paredes’ poetry as an index of his South Texas regional modernism. Paredes penned lyrical poetry, but his thematic connections to African American modernism disconnected his poetry from the religious themes that I argue ground the aesthetics of Southwestern critical regionalism. As his poem “Africa” makes evident, Paredes drew on a transnational landscape and modernist traditions that uprooted the religious ones of his South Texas homeland. This disconnection is in sharp contrast to Fray Angélico’s critical regionalism, in which Franciscanism positions him in relation to the world, and eventually to Catholic tradition in the Southwest.

Fray Angélico identified with the marginal classes because of his religion, and not out of sympathy or shared oppression, as a 1939 photo of him in the Saint John the

Baptist Franciscan Archives demonstrates. The photo is of Fray Angélico in his brown robe and sandals, and two indigenous men wearing loincloths stand on either side of him. The inscription below reads, with the friar's characteristic irony, "Our new mission in the Congo!"<sup>34</sup> The photograph and its inscription provide a sharp contrast to Paredes' own "Africa," for Fray Angélico was a religious missionary and an agent of modern colonialism. By contrast, Paredes disassociated his poetry from religion and in the process created a modernist portrait of his regional homeland. In "The Rio Grande," for instance, the river is an ambivalent home for the pained poet who imagines, "When the soul must leave the body, / When the wasted flesh must die, / I shall trickle forth to join you, / In your bosom I shall lie."<sup>35</sup> The Rio Grande connects to the transcontinental sea, which by extension allegorically connects the poet to the colonized peoples across the globe. "We shall wander through the country / Where your banks in green are clad, / Past the shanties of rancheros, / By the ruins of old Baghdad" (41). Olguín argues Paredes' river is a "pantheistic image" that allows Paredes to switch from an "I" to a "we" pronoun. While the river is a sign of the poet's homeland, the poet also extends the river's route, so that Paredes calls on the South Texas landscape, but at the same time he moves away from the local and connects it to a global world. As a result, Paredes' poetry expresses a dislocated sense of his homeland, and a type of South Texas-Mexican modernism that removes the region from its religious traditions and local imagery.

Fletcher's Muse was pure and untouched by the material world, but Paredes posited a darker muse, like in the poem "Prayer," which again begins by harkening back to Africa: "Exotic beauty! Moorish princess! / Oh, Night! Sad Goddess! Mother of me! Sister of Death cold and dreary, / Listen to my weak soul that implores!" (37). The gaze



Paredes directed toward the Muslim and African worlds said little about them. Instead, he used a mode of regional modernism to darken his muse, and he borrowed liberally from African American modernism to do so. Further, Olguín and Barbosa point out that Paredes dedicated much of his poetic verse to his Anglo American muse Carolyn, revealing a deep irony in Paredes' work and his "proto-Chicano" poetry (xlii). In "Prayer," Paredes literally darkens his muse, and his poems to "Carolina" Hispanicize his muse's name, symbolically browning her identity. By contrast, Fletcher represented his regional sensibility through a pure Virgin clothed with the sun, and in a sense reinscribed the Southern white womanhood that Paredes "tainted" in his regional modernist poetry. Paredes poetically transgressed the Southern taboo of white women's inter-racial relations, and he broke away from South Texas social practice by browning his Anglo American muse using African American modernism.

Women do not speak but are spoken for in the work of all three poets in this chapter, but how they are spoken for speaks to the degrees of regionalism that this chapter's selection of poetry represents. Ironically, Paredes kept white womanhood intact by focusing his desire on the Muslim and African worlds of his poetry, thus reinforcing Fletcher's Southern sensibility. Fletcher and Paredes' poetry represent women as silent vessels whose beauty reflects the respective poet's regional sensibility. Fletcher's muse was pure and Christian, Paredes' muse dark and Orientalized, making for two adjacent regional panels and aesthetic modes in this chapter's triptych of poets. At the center of this triptych is Fray Angélico's *The Virgin of Port Lligat* because it represents the culmination of his poetic works, and a sophisticated model of his Southwestern critical regionalism. Fray Angélico's Marian poetry falls somewhere in-

between Fletcher's Southern Calvinism and Paredes' Hispanic Orientalism—*una rosa mystica*, so to speak—a ruddy white flower that bridges the Southern poet's modern regionalism and the South Texas-Mexican poet's regional modernism. In the end, Fray Angélico's poetry was both grounded in his religion and steeped in the regional traditions of his beloved New Mexico, making for a Southwestern critical regionalism that was neither entirely regionalist or modernist, but a mediation of the two.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Fray Angélico, *Selected Poems*, n.p.

<sup>2</sup> Martín-Rodríguez, "Painting the Word/Wording the Painting," 93.

<sup>3</sup> Fletcher, "Poems of a Friar," 339.

<sup>4</sup> John Gould Fletcher to Fray Angélico, December 15, 1939.

<sup>5</sup> Fray Angélico to Fletcher, December 18, 1939.

<sup>6</sup> Fray Angélico, "Fray Angélico Chávez, O.F.M.," 61.

<sup>7</sup> Carpenter, *John Gould Fletcher*, 10. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>8</sup> Fray Angélico to Fletcher, June 21, 1940.

<sup>9</sup> Stephens, *John Gould Fletcher*, 101. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>10</sup> Fletcher to Fray Angélico, January 7, 1948.

<sup>11</sup> Fray Angélico to Fletcher, February 3, 1948.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, April 10, 1943.

<sup>13</sup> Fray Angélico, *Eleven Lady Lyrics*, 5. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>14</sup> See Carey McWilliams *North From Mexico*, especially Chapter Fourteen "The War Years," for a historical discussion of Mexican American military participation during WWII. See also B.V. Olguín's critical essay "Sangre Mexicano/Corazón Americano" for a literary discussion of Mexican American soldier narratives. As Olguín argues, "reassessments of the variable status of war in Mexican-American history and culture reveal that US wars demand, and may even enable, broader diachronic and more complex remappings of Mexican-American identity and ideology" (84).

<sup>15</sup> Fletcher, *XXIV Elegies*, 1. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>16</sup> Fletcher, *Parables*, 44.

<sup>17</sup> The Book of John is a significant text for teaching about Christ as the Logos, as God himself incarnate, and it is also the inspiration for much of Fray Angélico's religious work, specifically his Passion narratives in art and in writing, and especially an unpublished novel entitled *I, John*. In "Sonnet of the Stations" from *Clothed With the Sun*, Fray Angélico adapts the traditional sonnet form (fourteen lines in an iambic pentameter rhyme scheme) to narrate the fourteen Stations of the Cross. Like traditional images of

the Passion in Catholic Churches, Fray Angélico numbers each verse with a Roman numeral, and he utilizes the sonnet's rhyme scheme to create harmony and narrative flow. Fray Angélico's sonnet thus fuses many forms of representation, but it is critical for how it tells a religious narrative to a regional readership. "Sonnet of the Stations" uses John's Gospel, so in this sense it functions in the same way the lyric did for thirteenth and fourteenth-century Franciscans: to spread the teachings of St. Francis. The poet inserts himself in the ninth verse, the climactic moment in which Christ falls for the third time before being crucified, and so the poem fulfills the poet's Franciscan vow to emulate Christ. The poem concludes, not with Christ's death, but by finding consolation in the mother to emphasize her significance in Fray Angélico's Franciscan faith, but also to reiterate a critical regionalist mode of religion and writing.

<sup>18</sup> Jeffrey, *The Early English Lyric*, 30. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>19</sup> Fray Angélico, *Clothed With the Sun*, 26.

<sup>20</sup> Fletcher to Fray Angélico, January 7, 1948.

<sup>21</sup> Fray Angélico to Fletcher, February 3, 1948.

<sup>22</sup> Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture*, 98-99.

<sup>23</sup> In *The Single Rose*, Fray Angélico's poetry makes up the first part, but the second half is commentary by "Fray Manuel de Santa Clara," an alter ego that splits the author's identity. The secondary title, "The Rosa Unica and Commentary of Fray Manuel de Santa Clara," suggests that Fray Manuel is a mission priest at Santa Clara Pueblo, but Fray Angélico did not serve the Santa Clara Pueblo. In an alternative translation, the latter half of the subtitle is a reference to the author's religious vocation, so that "de Santa Clara" does not necessarily mean "from Santa Clara," but "of Saint Clare." St. Clare of Assisi was one of the first female followers of St. Francis who imitated her mentor: she rejected her wealthy upbringing, lived an austere lifestyle, founded the Order of Poor Ladies, and suffered an arduous death. Read this way, Fray Angélico's religious aesthetics produce an alternative "Santa Clara" that does not so much signify a place as much as it situates the text in the name of Saint Francis's first female disciple. As a side note, Fray Angélico's nephew, Thomas Chávez, brought to my attention the fact that Wagon Mound's original name was Santa Clara. The information is instructive, for it explains better the secondary title, which refers to Fray Angélico's original name, as well as to the original name of his birthplace.

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Nevertheless, only those close to Fray Angélico would know this kind of “insider” information, so the knowledge does not dismantle my reading. To the contrary, the information strengthens my argument.

<sup>24</sup> Jaehn, “Of Poetry and Praise,” 27-28.

<sup>25</sup> Fray Angélico to Fr. Vincent Kroger, October 22, 1957.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, November 25, 1957.

<sup>27</sup> Fr. Vincent to Fray Angélico, December 9, 1957.

<sup>28</sup> Fray Angélico, *The Virgin of Port Lligat*, xiii-xv. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>29</sup> Fray Angélico, *Selected Poems*, n.p. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>30</sup> Olguín and Barbosa, intro to *Cantos de Adolescencia*, xxv and xxxviii. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>31</sup> Paredes, *Between Two Worlds*, 9. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>32</sup> Saldívar, *The Borderlands of Culture*. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>33</sup> I would like to thank my dissertation advisor Professor A. Gabriel Meléndez for pointing out this connection to me.

<sup>34</sup> Fray Angélico Chávez Collection, Franciscan Archives Cincinnati.

<sup>35</sup> Paredes, *Cantos de Adolescencia*, 41. Hereafter cited in text.

### Chapter Three: Folk Religions and the Ethnographic Fiction of Alice Corbin Henderson, Fray Angélico, and Jovita González

The Santa Fe Writer's Edition was an outpost of Rydal Press, and it began operation in 1933 under the co-operative editorship of Alice Corbin Henderson, Witter Bynner, Haniel Long, and John Gould Fletcher, all of whom published collections of poetry in Santa Fe in the 1930s. As the previous chapter revealed, Fray Angélico and Fletcher maintained a ten-year correspondence in which the two dialogued and debated over religion. I also argued that their regional differences turned on this religious debate and manifested in their representations of the Virgin Mary, making Fletcher a modern regionalist and Fray Angélico a critical regionalist. As a member of the Writer's Edition, Fletcher read and edited *Clothed With the Sun* before it went to press, and was published with the motto "regional publication will foster the growth of American literature," as well as the signature logo of Saint Francis. Fray Angélico animated the quaint logo and participated in the Southwestern modern regionalism of the Writer's Edition, but his Franciscanism fostered a critical regional sense of the Southwest in his poetry, art, and short fiction.

Fray Angélico's second published book, *New Mexico Triptych: Being Three Panels and Three Accounts*, best exemplifies how Fray Angélico utilized the triptych in his work. The St. Anthony Guild Press first published the collection in 1940, and it features an ensemble of three short stories arranged as religious panels in a wood carved *retablo* (tableaux). *New Mexico Triptych* quickly became a regional favorite, and its secular readers far outweighed its religious ones. In the friar's portrait of himself for *The*

*Book of Catholic Authors*, he humbly expresses a concern with his regional popularity, saying he fears that St Anthony Guild Press “is far from satisfied with the response of his Catholic clientele.”<sup>1</sup> However, his regional readership did not diminish the book’s religious work. Instead, *New Mexico Triptych* mediates regional and religious discourses, so that each story performs a folk religious practice particular to the Southwest, just like the Peña Blanca murals at the Our Lady of Guadalupe Church. Fray Angélico completed his Via Crucis murals at about the same time he published *New Mexico Triptych*, so the two texts intertwine in ways that reinforce my critical paradigm. The demolition of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church destroyed the murals, but Fray Angélico transmitted his murals’ sense of Southwestern critical regionalism to his short fiction, especially in *New Mexico Triptych* but also in *From an Altar Screen* (1957). Fray Angélico’s regional tales transmit biblical and folk religious stories to a modern regional audience, thereby imbuing Southwestern modern regionalism with a religious, critical regional sensibility.

As a critical paradigm, triptych cultural critique is rooted in Fray Angélico’s religious art and aesthetics, so this chapter comes full circle to the little text that in many ways inspired my triptych cultural critique. This chapter especially focuses on *New Mexico Triptych* and puts it in dialogue with the work of Alice Corbin Henderson, especially her *Brothers of Light: The Penitentes of New Mexico* (1937). Corbin Henderson’s book is an ethnographic portrayal of the Penitentes in Abiquiú, New Mexico, and it precedes *New Mexico Triptych* whose central story is entitled “The Penitente Thief.” Fray Angélico’s book resembles Corbin Henderson’s, for both utilized artwork to illustrate the written text. Alice Corbin’s husband William Penhallow Henderson illustrated *Brothers of Light* with woodcut images of the Penitente

Brotherhood's Easter rituals. Fray Angélico partook in the same ethnographic tradition as Corbin Henderson's "verbal-visual" ensemble, but he used a religious aesthetic that produces a critical regional portrait of New Mexico.

Instead of mimicking Corbin Henderson's style, Fray Angélico refocuses her ethnographic lens in ways that compliment how Jovita González revised the regionalism of the Texas Folklore Society and her mentor, J. Frank Dobie. Both Fray Angélico and González participated in the dominant ethnographic discourses of their time, but they also rewrite them using folk religious traditions that make the Southwest a critical region. This chapter's critical triptych turns to women's writing, one an "Anglo foremother" according to Lois P. Rudnick, and the other, according to Sergio Reyna, a "precursor" to Chicano literature.<sup>2</sup> In the previous chapter, I staged a comparative discussion of Fletcher, Fray Angélico, and Américo Paredes, and concluded that their representations of women and religion reflected their modes of regional writing. Religion remains a critical category in this chapter's discussion of Corbin Henderson, Fray Angélico, and González, but it focuses on women's writings. Corbin Henderson is the first panel in this discussion, Fray Angélico the central panel, and Jovita González the third panel. What connects them is my notion of ethnographic fiction, not poetic style, and so the chapter's triptych cultural critique understands how Corbin Henderson and González represent folk religions in relation to their male counterpart, Fray Angélico, and in relation to each other.



### Panel One: Alice Corbin Henderson and Southwestern Regionalism

If Mabel Dodge Luhan was the doña of the Taos artist society, then certainly Alice Corbin Henderson was her Santa Fe counterpart. Dodge Luhan and Corbin Henderson differed personally in terms of their domestic choices and upbringing, for the Taos matron first visited New Mexico as a married Buffalo socialite, then married Tony Lujan after relocating to Taos. She subsequently took Lujan's last name but changed the "j" to an "h" so that her eastern friends could pronounce it more accurately.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, Corbin Henderson moved to Santa Fe not out of domestic restlessness but sick with tuberculosis. Her husband followed with their daughter in tow, and they left behind a thriving Chicago art scene where William Penhallow Henderson was a rising artist and Alice Corbin an influential editor of *Poetry* magazine. Marta Weigle and Kyle Fiore credit the Henderson couple with establishing the Santa Fe writer's colony, and even writers of the time credited Corbin Henderson with establishing a Southwestern literary tradition. The couple supported native craftsmanship and art, and even petitioned the city to change its residential street name back to its Spanish original, from Telegraph Road to Camino del Monte Sol (Cline 23). In many ways, Dodge Luhan and Corbin Henderson had similar cultural agendas, but while New Mexico provided a break from the social and religious constraints of elite middle-class domesticity for Dodge Luhan, it provided a renewal for Corbin Henderson where her health and her regionalism thrived.

The Corbin Hendersons on several occasions hosted the Poets' Roundup, an ad hoc group of exile, relocated, or itinerate poets who socialized, shared their work, and raised money between 1930 and 1939 to fund the Writer's Edition. According to Corbin Henderson's biographer T.M. Pearce, the "environment she had established [in Chicago]

followed her to Santa Fe.”<sup>4</sup> The doctor gave her a year to live, but the Southwest proved to be a regenerative locale. She co-founded and co-edited the *Writer’s Edition*, co-edited and published in *Poetry* magazine, produced two collections of poetry, and penned *Brothers of Light*, all before passing away in Tesuque in 1949. In 1922, Alice Oliver, the Henderson’s only child, married John Evans, the son of Mabel Dodge Luhan in Taos, signaling a new Anglo gentry and its appropriation of native Hispanic and Pueblo land, language, and marriage practices. As Pearce explains, “The young couple built their own home in Tesuque, a village north of Santa Fe. Grandchildren in the years that followed the building of both houses became the occasions for shared companionship within the families and for joint entertainment of friends and acquaintances in Santa Fe, Tesuque, and Taos” (28). Following Audrey Goodman, Santa Fe’s Anglo Southwestern literati literarily “imagined” itself in harmony with the regional landscape. Yet, the union between Alice and John was not just imaginary, for it appropriated local practices to establish a seamless place for New Mexico’s twentieth-century Anglo gentry.

In 1928, Corbin Henderson compiled the anthology *The Turquoise Trail*, a publication of the Houghton Mifflin Company which featured the poetry of Mary Austin, Witter Bynner, Alice Corbin herself, John Gould Fletcher, Haniel Long, and even Harriet Monroe, Edgar Lee Masters, and Carl Sandburg, among others. The title alone appropriated New Mexico’s Hispanic and Indian histories, for as Corbin Henderson explains in the “Preface,” the title calls to mind the “prehistoric ‘Turquoise Trail’ between Old Mexico and New Mexico. . . Looking southwest from Santa Fe, across the pinyon-spotted desert, one sees the small conically shaped ‘Turquoise’ hill which was, and still is for the Indians to-day, the principle source of supply. Hence the significance

of both the title and the sub-title of this book.”<sup>5</sup> Corbin Henderson maintains that “the life in New Mexico represents an atmosphere and a world entirely different from that of any other part of the country. . . it is only here indeed that one still finds the essence of the original province” (vii). Ironically, her title demonstrates the opposite, for the ancient Turquoise Trail demonstrates that New Mexico was at the center of trade, travel, and migration even in pro-Colombian times. One wonders, then, which original province Corbin Henderson means. *The Turquoise Trail* operates under a formidable contradiction at the root of modern Southwestern regionalism. Corbin Henderson appropriates without unsettling the Southwestern landscape she and her Writer’s Edition friends imagined and enacted.

Alice Corbin Henderson and John Gould Fletcher were both modernist and mystic poets, but their poetry differed to degrees of gender, voice, and place. Their religious sensibilities worked toward regional regeneration, but Corbin Henderson’s mystic earth was not the pure, virginal (Southern) landscape like in Fletcher’s poetry. Instead, Corbin Henderson’s poetry redefined the terms of modernist poetry and modern Southwestern regionalism with a self-reflexive female and perhaps even a nascent, eco-feminist voice. Corbin Henderson maintained Fletcher’s religious and modern regional sensibility, unlike Dodge Luhan in Taos, who broke with all religious and traditional convention in both Anglo and Taos Pueblo culture. Alice was born in St Louis, Missouri in 1881; Mabel in 1879 to a wealthy Buffalo, New York family. When Alice was three, her mother died of tuberculosis and she moved with family members to Chicago where she received her high school education.<sup>6</sup> In 1916, Corbin Henderson was also diagnosed with tuberculosis and moved to New Mexico where she wrote her collection *Red Earth: Poems of New Mexico*,

published in 1920 by Ralph Fletcher Seymour in Chicago. The Writer's Edition published *The Sun Turns West* in 1933, one of its first publications and a collection of lyrics that provide self-portraits of the author growing up for a time in the South and moving to the Southwest. In contrast to Fletcher's distance from the earth, Corbin Henderson identifies with it, like in her lyric "XII," a tribute to nature and the poet's sense of beauty. The poet identifies with Mother Earth as she beckons, "Earth, draw thy coverlet over my face, / For I am weary and would rest a space."<sup>7</sup> Corbin Henderson's Mother Earth is not Fletcher's "empty brown earth" (1933 8), and so she redefines the religious in Fletcher's own modern regional poetry.

In a 1949 tribute to Corbin Henderson, Fletcher credited her and Mary Austin as the leading ladies "of American literature as it has developed in New Mexico."<sup>8</sup> Fletcher made special mention of *Red Earth*, "a classic example of what was originally meant by Imagism," and he added that *Brothers of Light* was "a book of scenes and backgrounds" that "has equally the objectivity, the directness of good Imagism" (48 and 54). Corbin Henderson's work thus embodied what for Fletcher was a quintessential modernist style that found expression in the Southwest, but it is equally important to consider how Corbin Henderson's religious sensibility quietly informed Fletcher's criticism. New York's Harcourt, Brace, and Company published *Brothers of Light* in 1937, the couple's third collaboration but the first of its kind, since their previous two collaborations were children's books that the couple composed in Chicago. The fourteen black-and-white illustrations in *Brothers of Light* are woodcut prints similar in style to the ones Henderson created for his wife's first two books, but far different in subject matter. A sense of antiquity informs the *Brothers of Light* illustrations, for the human figures that carry

crosses or that stoop over in acts of self-flagellation blend into the woodcut environment in such a way that suggests the human figures are part of the natural landscape. Coupled with its prose, the illustrations in *Brothers of Light* envision the Penitentes and the Southwest as timeless and antiquated, no doubt appealing to Fletcher's religious (regional) sensibility. But there are moments in Corbin Henderson's narrative when the modern surfaces and contradicts the book's visual representation.

Though Corbin Henderson was primarily a poet, *Brothers of Light* is an ethnographic portrait of the Penitentes, or as Lois Rudnick puts it, "a respectful portrait of the Penitente brotherhood, the religious society of laymen that served the rural communities of northern New Mexico."<sup>9</sup> Ever since Charles Lummis' portrayal of the Penitente brotherhood in his 1893 *Land of Poco Tiempo*, the religious group became the subject of public ridicule and distorted literary images. Thomas J. Steele argues that Corbin Henderson's portrayal transcends previous depictions of the Penitentes with "sensitive insight and a sincere search for truth," though she often "weakens into what her 1930s readers expected, some of the lurid-Lummis stereotypes."<sup>10</sup> In 1936, the murder of journalist Carl N. Taylor by his sixteen year-old houseboy, Modesto Trujillo, brought even more negative attention to the Penitentes and their "strange" sacred rituals.<sup>11</sup> The murder and media attention certainly framed Corbin Henderson's book, as Alice the poet becomes Corbin Henderson the ethnographer, perhaps in a way to set the record straight. The prose and pictures suspend time so as to create a primitive space that ironically erases the two participant-observers. Yet, there are critical traces of Abiquiú's modernity in the background of Corbin Henderson's portraits that disrupt the discourses

of modern regionalism by intervening in the book's otherwise isolated portrait of New Mexico.

"In New Mexico," Corbin Henderson begins, "the farther you go from railroads and highways, the farther back in time you find yourself. A wagon-road or a trail to a small mountain village may lead you into the Seventeenth Century, so little have customs and manner of living changed."<sup>12</sup> Here, Corbin Henderson contrasts the railroads and the highways with the old wagon trails that lead back to religious custom, creating a spatial dichotomy that allows Corbin Henderson to erase time. Ironically, this erasure of time also erases the literal machine (the railroad or car) that transports the couple from Santa Fe in the first place. Nevertheless, the couple's very presence makes evident the location of modern culture in traditional New Mexican villages. This is especially apparent if we consider the couple's physical presence in Abiquiú. They lodge in the family home of their native informant Jo, who Corbin Henderson explains, "had been born in Abiquiú, but he had been away at school in the East and had only recently come back to help his father in the trading-store" (14). Jo is a modern-day subject, and his family home is a critical index of progress in New Mexican village life. Below the second floor where the Henderson's lodge is the family trading store, which as Corbin Henderson observes is bustling with Penitentes purchasing their *calzones* (underpants) for the reenactment of the Crucifixion on Good Friday. Jo is thus a complex native informant whose family home brings together the folk religion of local Penitentes, the capitalist economy they participate in, and the ethnographic curiosity of its "foreign" Anglo visitors.

Jo's family home collapses religious ritual, capitalism, and ethnography, troubling in the process the book's modern regionalism. The book's portrait of the family's Navajo

nurse Encarnación (Incarnate) is especially instructive in this regard. Jo explains to Corbin Henderson what he “knew of her history; that she had been brought to Abiquiú as a child, perhaps as a captive after a raid on the Navajos. Now she was keeping house for his father while the rest of the family were away. Jo’s elder brother was then a secretary of the American Legation in Madrid” (15). Encarnación’s portrait in Corbin Henderson’s book is a revelation of sorts that signals a critical break from the modern regionalist discourses in which the narrative speaks. Though the narrative is neither about Jo nor his Navajo nurse, Corbin Henderson must erase their presence, like it erases the couple itself, even as she acknowledges their critical presence in the story. Corbin Henderson demonstrates with the presence of Encarnación that old labor structures facilitate new Hispanic wealth and power in New Mexico, and the portrait also—perhaps unwittingly—points to how Hispanic structures facilitate the emergence of new Anglo wealth and regional power.

Corbin Henderson’s location of culture surfaces again in her description of a church and its array of carved *santos* (saints). “All of the figures, except one,” says the author, “were of native craft, the primitive wood sculpture of this country. . . Only one of the figures—a small blue and white image of the Virgin—was obviously a store product.” Looking a lot like “Queen Victoria,” Alice concludes that the store-bought statue looks “queerly out of place among the genuine expressions of native genius” (21). The moment is self-reflexive because we catch a glimpse of the author herself in the face of a Victorian *santo*, and inside the sacred space of the Abiquiú church, a moment of dis-identification that distances Corbin Henderson’s Protestant sensibilities so as to identify with the folk Catholic ritual of reenacting the Crucifixion in all of its medieval and

primitive splendor, including self-flagellation and a “real” crucifixion. Corbin Henderson slowly gives way to the fervor of penitential activity in which she finds herself, and she ultimately experiences a kind of ethnic rite of passage by identifying with Francisca, “a young Mexican girl who lived with [Encarnación]” (40). Again, Encarnación’s presence reflects back on Corbin Henderson, who re-imagines herself in the likeness of Francisca, a name that no less refigures the male version Francisco, Spanish for Francis and perhaps even a reference to San Francisco, the patron saint of Santa Fe. Corbin Henderson’s ethnographic portraits thus provide a more grounded regionalism than Fletcher’s own religious sensibility. As a result, Corbin Henderson’s modern regionalism redefines the ethnographic with a poet’s sensibility, and it frees her from the religious restrictions on women’s poetry that would have otherwise blocked her “mystical” identification with New Mexico.

Rudnick considers the “metaphor of land as woman” a key ingredient in Anglo women’s regional literature (13). In Corbin Henderson’s work, according to Rudnick, she “dreams herself into the kind of mystical communion with nature that she believed engendered Indian poetry” (14). Yet, Corbin Henderson’s “communion” is not necessarily *with* the natives as much as it is *as* a native. This is evident in *Brothers of Light* during the *tinieblas* (post-Crucifixion earthquakes) inside a Penitente *morada* (secret house) where Francisca befriends Corbin Henderson. Outside of the *morada*, Corbin cannot distinguish Francisca from the rest of the black-shawled women, but she identifies with Francisca inside the *morada*, which becomes like a womb during the *tinieblas*: dark, female, and earth shaking. Corbin Henderson is re-born in the *morada* “when the heavens were darkened and the earth gaped, and graves were burst asunder,”



and this earth-shaking moment in the book is also symbolic of the poet's rebirth from an Anglo outsider to a village insider (43). Thus, from this perspective, "Queen Victoria" is Corbin Henderson's own autobiographical signature, a strange, queer, and out-of-place image that nonetheless allows her in figurative terms to put a foreign face (her own) to a native body (Francisca). Rather than escape Fletcher's empty brown earth, Corbin Henderson identifies with it so as to infuse her fellow poet's notion of (Southern) womanhood with a female-identified version of modern Southwestern regionalism.

There are key moments in Corbin Henderson's book that document her own modern history in-between her modern regional portrait of Abiquiú's Penitentes. Visceral images mark these moments, as Corbin Henderson projects her own self onto traditional figures, creating what Fredric Jameson might call the "political unconscious" or "signatures of the visible." For Jameson, the political unconscious is the assertion that cultural analysis can lead to "the multiple paths that lead to the unmasking of cultural artifacts as socially symbolic acts" (20). In this sense, following Jameson, "history is *not* a text, not a narrative, master or otherwise, but that, as an absent cause, it is inaccessible to use except in textual form. . .its narrativization in the political unconscious" (35). Corbin Henderson's autobiographical moments are signs of the political unconscious informing and undergirding modern Southwestern discourses that erase the real historical conditions shaping the region. These autobiographical images are contradictions that reveal what Corbin Henderson's narrative represses, but they also serve as symbolic resolutions that assimilate her foreignness and the history she represents, or her text's "absent cause." Corbin Henderson's images make visible their "underlying impulse," as Jameson might put it, "albeit in what is often distorted and repressed unconscious form

...some sense of the ineradicable drive towards collectivity.”<sup>13</sup> In contrast to Fletcher, who stole away from the empty brown earth to resolve his modernist dilemmas, Corbin Henderson re-collected herself and her “absent” history in New Mexico’s folk religious traditions.

#### Panel Two: Fray Angélico’s Critical Regional Fiction

Fray Angélico’s short fiction mediates modern regionalism and his religious aesthetics in a way that re-signifies the meaning of religion in Corbin Henderson’s book. Religious symbols signify an ancient tradition for Corbin Henderson, but in Fray Angélico’s fiction they take on a life of their own to narrate biblical tales that pass as modern-day folklore. Fray Angélico’s stories are more fictive than ethnographic, more religious than regional, and so his ethnographic fiction represents New Mexican folk culture in critically regional ways. His seemingly simple stories are not oppositional, but they are religious allegories that use dominant Southwestern themes and discourses in order to transmit a theological lesson. The St. Anthony Guild Press published *New Mexico Triptych* in 1940, a collection of three short stories: 1. “The Angel’s New Wings”; 2. “The Penitente Thief”; and 3. “Hunchback Madonna.” In 1938, the *St. Anthony Messenger* first published “The Penitente Thief” alone, and the story drew the attention of Haniel Long who gave it to Fletcher.<sup>14</sup> While Fletcher was oftentimes ambivalent about Fray Angélico’s religious poetry, he was especially enamored of *New Mexico Triptych*, as he stated in one letter, “Your three stories seem to me the only ones I have ever read. . .by someone who has lived inside the New Mexican environment, which truly [get] the environment correctly.”<sup>15</sup> The regional appeal of Fray Angélico’s fiction

came to fruition with his second collection, *From an Altar Screen*, which New York's prestigious Farrar, Straus and Cudahy published in 1957. Clearly, Fray Angélico's fiction took on a more regional body than his poetry, but it nonetheless retained the same religious fervor.

Both of Fray Angélico's published collections of short fiction make use of the New Mexican *retablo* (tableaux). In an "Authors Note" at the end of *From an Altar Screen*, Fray Angélico defines the term as "*Retablo (ray-tah-blow)*, n. 1. A sacred picture crudely painted on a board. 2. A series of such paintings, also statues, set in panels or niches on a decorated frame to form a reredos or altar screen.—unwritten dictionary of New Mexico Spanish."<sup>16</sup> The tone of Fray Angélico's definition is ironic, as he explains, "You will not find this 'retablo' of seven panels in some remote chapel in the hills of Talpa or Chimayó, or exhibited in the Taylor Museum at Colorado Springs or the Old Palace of the Governors in Santa Fe. Nor have any of the separate panels been part of the public domain, as in the Brooklyn Museum or the Harwood Foundation at Taos" (118). There is a sense of falsity that informs Fray Angélico's definition; thus his stories are not meant to be authentic. He as much confesses, "I filched every bit from the more general domain of New Mexican sky, scape, and village; more particularly, from the shadows cast by firs and piñons at certain hours, from the still air of adobe homes and chapels at dusk" (118). Instead of authentic documents of New Mexican folk life, Fray Angélico's stories represent "the soul of a simple people at various periods across a couple of centuries. The more or less exact date of each tale appears hidden somewhere in the background of each panel" (119). These "hidden" historical details in the backdrop

of the friar's tales give his fiction a double voice, but there is more at work behind the regional scenes of his religious narratives.

Fray Angélico's definition of *retablo* underscores the importance of oral culture by citing an "unwritten dictionary" as its authoritative source, but it also mocks its own authenticity, folklore, and ethnographic representation. He laid out his philosophy of oral and written cultures in a 1949 article from *The New Mexico Folklore Record* entitled "The Mad Poet of Santa Cruz." What is most interesting about the article, however, is not the article itself, but a note that I found attached to it in the Franciscan Archives. Fray Angélico sent the article to his Father Provincial, and he noted, "The enclosed article knocks the props out of a lot of theories about literature in the Southwest. If others had translated the manuscript and written it up, they would have gotten a totally wrong slant about the case and the friars concerned. Luckily, I found it first."<sup>17</sup> The transcript in question was the poesy of Miguel de Quintana, a settler of Santa Cruz de la Cañada accused of heresy and tried by the Holy Office of the Inquisition. "Had not some injudicious Padres suspected him and his verses of heresy," explains the friar in his article, "we would not have this information and even autographs of his poems, so important for being the first and only signs so far discovered of New Mexico literature since the time of Villagrà."<sup>18</sup> The discovery provides evidence for Fray Angélico's theory that, due to a lack of printing facilities in New Spain's far northern territories, the Southwest's literary production passed from settlement to settlement down succeeding generations, either on scraps of paper or by word of mouth, and "in this manner it took on the habiliments that set off folklore from other forms of literature" (10). The root of

these stories was a literary, according to Fray Angélico, so his ethnographic fiction returns to what he believed was the source of New Mexican folklore in the first place.

While Fray Angélico's stories are fictive and not "real" folklore, they nonetheless inscribe reliable historical fictions that are as much about the modern era of museum folk culture as they are about New Mexico's folk past. Saints literally come to life in Fray Angélico's short stories, but how they come to life is what distinguishes his Southwestern critical regionalism from Corbin Henderson's modern Southwestern regionalism. "The Penitente Thief" is the central panel in *New Mexico Triptych*, so it is central to the book's visual aesthetic, its sequence of stories, and its cultural critique. Fray Angélico literally draws on New Mexico's Hispanic folk art in his three drawings, as the author's black-and-white sketches mimic the *santero* (saint woodcarver) tradition popular during the post-statehood Spanish Revival movement. As with Corbin Henderson's *Brothers of Light*, "The Penitente Thief" also dialogues with the nation's sensationalist and distorted depictions of the Penitentes in the national media. But Fray Angélico wrote from a religious perspective that fictionally opens up New Mexico's folk religious practices, and in the process transmits traditional Catholic stories to a modern audience. Using the biblical story of the Good Thief, "The Penitente Thief" rewrites the narrative from a Southwestern perspective, creating a religious sense of the region in the national imaginary, and a critical regional sense of the region within the Southwest itself.

As a piece of fiction, *New Mexico Triptych* does not pretend to be a factual account of New Mexico's folk communities, and it makes this certain in the last story, "Hunchback Madonna," when the narrator draws attention to the discourses of authenticity and the ethnographic eye. Fray Angélico orders the stories in *New Mexico*

*Triptych* liturgically, not chronologically, and traditional holidays and feasts days mark time. The first story, for instance, takes place during Christmas in the winter, the second story during Holy Week in between fall and spring, and the third during the feast day of the Blessed Mother in the spring and summer. “The Angel’s New Wings” begins dismally in the context of modern historical change and cultural theft in the fictional village of Río Dormido (Sleepy River), but the collection moves back in time and concludes with a celebratory tone in Río Tordo (Mottled River). The collection’s seasonal order reinforces its theme of renewal and rebirth, for it begins in the dead of winter and concludes with a new spring. In this way, the stories appear timeless and a-historical, but their movement (literally) throughout history, as Padilla points out, inscribes in the background of these quaint tales a post-1848 history of conflict between the Anglo US and New Mexico’s Hispano community.<sup>19</sup> These background details reconfigure Corbin Henderson’s “portraits and backdrops,” but the stories also conform to the modern regionalism of both Fletcher and Corbin Henderson. Fray Angélico’s fiction foregrounds a regional portrait of the Southwest, but it also accounts for his Franciscanism and creates the conditions for his critical regionalism.

Each story in *New Mexico Triptych* centers on a traditional religious icon and Catholic festivity: the herald angel and Christmas Eve in “The Angel’s New Wings”; the cross and Holy Week in “The Penitente Thief”; and Our Lady of Guadalupe in “Hunchback Madonna.” In “The Angel’s New Wings,” Nabor is an aging *santero* (woodcarver) who goes in search of his stolen *santos* (saints) the night of Christmas Eve. The story begins in the church where Nabor is repairing the herald angel’s wings, broken by the much younger hands that are now setting up the *nacimiento* (manger scene). Just

then, the priest informs Nabor that all the *santos* were stolen. Nabor is confused by this act of sacrilege, so the priest explains, ““There are people in Santa Fé or Taos who buy them for good money, Nabor. Some good-for-nothing in Río Dormido has run away with them for that purpose.””<sup>20</sup> The theft draws attention to the Anglo-driven cultural market for sacred images, suggesting that the story takes place sometime at the turn of the twentieth century. Nabor’s search for the herald angel through Río Dormido shores up how modern US influences like Santa Claus and money have displaced village traditions and changed rural people. Ironically, the disappearance of Nabor’s *santos* serves as a resolution to the village’s modern decline, since in their absence Nabor pays witness to them coming to life. As everyone gathers in the church for midnight mass, Nabor sees his *santos* come to life and take their place in the *nacimiento*, a procession that resembles a classic folk reenactment of the *Posadas* (folk Christmas play). The finale suggests that traditions do not disappear with the onslaught of modernity. Instead, traditions reappear in different forms and manifestations, like the story’s modern rendition of a folk practice.

The author’s cover illustration is a *retablo* of three images composed in a triptych, and each panel features the pre-dominant saint of each story hovering over the main protagonist. Literally, “The Penitente Thief” is at the center of Fray Angélico’s visual-verbal arrangement of stories; thus it is central to the book’s triptych aesthetic and to its historical time travel. From a historical perspective, “The Penitente Thief” is set in-between the first story and the third story, the twentieth-century American Southwest and nineteenth-century Northern Mexico. In the first image, the protagonist Nabor walks with a cane beneath an image of the herald angel, and the third image depicts Mana Seda (Sister Silk) collecting flowers beneath Our Lady of Guadalupe. Both Nabor and Mana

Seda have a hunchback, and they both face the central panel, an image of “The Penitente Thief” walking with a (stolen) horse beneath a crucifixion image. The hunchbacks suggest at the surface level the characters’ antiquity, but at the counter-historical level and in the spirit of Padilla’s assessment, their hunchbacks suggest the crippling effects of capitalism. Yet there is another level of meaning in Fray Angélico’s triptych of images that turns on the ethnographic interest in New Mexico. After all, the counter-historical sequence of the stories suggests a historical revision and religious revival, not decline, in the context of modern Southwestern regionalism. “The Penitente Thief” is central to the collection’s historical reversal and revision.

“The Penitente Thief” takes place during New Mexico’s Territorial Period (1850-1912), a fact the story makes evident with its reference to Governor Lew Wallace, who was territorial governor in the turbulent years of 1878 to 1881 when Billy the Kid was wreaking havoc in Lincoln County. Governor Wallace became famous for arresting and jailing the Kid in 1878, but he also garnered literary fame when he authored *Ben Hur* while serving as territorial governor of New Mexico. “The Penitente Thief” makes reference to this literary fame when describing the title character’s most extraordinary thieveries. “An outstanding event was the Governor’s visit to San Ramon,” explains the narrator. “Governor Wallace, who had just written a novel about the Christ, was shaking hands with the ranchers and townsfolk. While holding Lucero’s hand he turned to an aide and remarked that this fellow made a fine model for the Good Thief. It was only later that His Excellency found his gold watch and chain missing” (28). Governor Wallace is a critical reference that demonstrates there are not just two voices (or a double-voice) informing *New Mexico Triptych*, but a triple-voice that tells a story within



a story within a story. “The Penitente Thief” is set in the fictional village of San Ramon during the Penitentes’ Holy Week observances (first story), but it also re-tells the biblical Good Thief story (second story), while at the same time it tells a story of New Mexico’s modernization (third story).

Lucero is the main protagonist in “The Penitente Thief,” a ne’er do well burglar who meets up with his attorney friend Maldonado annually during Holy Week, ostensibly to observe their Penitente brotherhood’s Easter ritual of reenacting the Crucifixion, but really to go on a drunken spree, sometimes lasting “thirty-six hours at the least, very often forty-eight, every single one a span of utter forgetfulness, except for short but very lively dreams just before waking” (27). The story is narrated in three sections over the course of three years, and each year Lucero and Maldonado get so drunk, they find themselves crucifying a Christ-like figure in a dream-like state without their Penitente brethren. In the last sequence of the story, Lucero is laid up in bed with a fever, and Maldonado pays a visit to his dying friend to confess to the murder of Señora Encarnación (Lady Incarnate), the client he has been swindling for her estate. Soon after on Good Friday, despite Lucero’s fever—or because of it—he gets out of bed to attend the crucifixion of “the Penitente in White with his heavy cross” (48), the same one who appeared to him and Maldonado in the previous two years. Lucero decides to steal one of Tom Hutchins’ horse to help “the One in White” up Mount Calvario (Calvary), a theft that shores up how New Mexico’s Hispanic community—and the book itself—is embroiled in the US’s emergent capitalism, even to the detriment of its own unity in the post-1848 Southwest.

Lucero and Maldonado are Penitentes, but not of the ethnographic sort in Corbin Henderson's book. Instead, these two characters are more like Jo, Corbin Henderson's native informant, at least at the symbolic level, for they are all a part of and apart from the Penitente brotherhood. Fray Angélico's two Penitentes become symbolic of the cultural theft that underlies the first story, and though Lucero learns not to steal from his people, Maldonado dies the sinful thief because he fails to learn Lucero's lesson. In the end, Maldonado is *too* American. The name Encarnación connects "The Penitente Thief" to *Brothers of Light*, and though perhaps it is a random coincidence, Fray Angélico kills off Doña Encarnación, a figurative reference to Corbin Henderson's book. While "The Penitente Thief" punishes Lucero and Maldonado for participating in an Anglo-driven cultural market, it also uses this Southwestern market to transmit a moral message about the state of modern Hispanic culture. The themes of religion, theft, and cultural identity create a Southwestern critical regional allegory in *New Mexico Triptych*, and especially in "The Penitente Thief," that on the surface tells a regional narrative; subtextually reveals a hidden narrative; and retells a religious narrative in triptych form.

Fray Angélico's short fiction and folk images cut across the Southwest in critically regional ways, and they inscribe a critical regionalism that is not wholly Southwestern, not entirely Mexican, but somewhere in-between the two. The stories follow the liturgical seasons, and this teleology allows the collection to reverse time. "The Angel's New Wings" is set in the twentieth-century American Southwest, but "Hunchback Madonna" moves back in time to nineteenth-century Northern Mexico. "Hunchback Madonna" especially uses the discourses of modern regionalism to spin an image of the fictional mission church. "Old and crumbling," as the narrator describes it,

“the squat-built adobe mission of El Tordo sits in a hollow high up near the snow-capped Truchas” (59). Every spring the faithful and the unfaithful, the locals and the foreigners alike, flock to El Tordo mission church to see the image of the “Hunchback Madonna,” and “to hear from the lips of some old inhabitant the history of the town and the church, the painting and the grave, and particularly of Mana Seda” (60). Here, the story draws on what Genaro Padilla calls a New Mexican *cuento* tradition, but Fray Angélico draws attention to how the story’s audience weaves the parameters of its “authentic” folk narrative. The story is more fictional than folkloric, as Fray Angélico rewrites the Mexican folktale of Our Lady of Guadalupe in a way that mediates native religiosity and tourist curiosity. While the story offers space to re-tell a traditional Mexican tale, it also opens up a space for redefining “authentic” New Mexican culture and Southwestern folklore.

The stories in *New Mexico Triptych* move back in time and space, from the American Southwest to Northern Mexico, and “The Penitente Thief” mediates this reversal by following liturgical time. “Hunchback Madonna” inscribes an ethnographic self-awareness that brings the audience into focus and redraws the Southwestern landscape. This mediation of regionalisms is especially poignant in retrospect, and I can explain with a story. One of the first documents I read about Fray Angélico was a curious 1949 *National Geographic Magazine* article entitled “Adobe New Mexico.” The photo spread was nestled in-between an article about the Stone Age in Arnhem Land and an article on New Guinea sheep airlift. Mason Sutherland interviewed Fray Angélico to “learn the history of the Spanish Americans,” and he describes the Franciscan friar, “As an unofficial archivist at St. Francis Cathedral, he was translating yellowed Spanish

documents, throwing new light on Church and State history.”<sup>21</sup> There is a photograph of Fray Angélico translating these documents, and the caption below reads, “The Reverend Angelico Chavez, a wartime Army chaplain now assigned to Cochiti Pueblo, here explores antique Spanish documents in the Museum of New Mexico, Santa Fe” (830). New Mexico became an ethnographic curiosity in the nation’s imaginary, not unlike the hunchback Madonna in Fray Angélico’s story, but the article also reinforced the state’s military industrial complex and discourse of progress by juxtaposing New Mexico’s modernization and antiquity.

Sutherland draws attention to how New Mexico’s “Atomic Age city” brought the attention of *National Geographic* to the oldest city in the first place. “From the heights above Santa Fe, oldest capital city in the United States,” opens the article, “one can see the lights of Los Alamos, the Atomic Age city” (783). At the same time, Sutherland takes note of Fray Angélico’s status as a WWII veteran. Fray Angélico would redress this representation of his Franciscanism in his own representations of New Mexico and WWII. In 1946, the Archdiocese of Santa Fe published Fray Angélico’s *The Old Faith and Old Glory: Story of the Church in New Mexico Since the American Occupation*, a commemoration of the US Catholic Church’s centenary anniversary in New Mexico. The cover illustration is based on the famous Iwo Jima photograph, but Fray Angélico modified the famous photo to reflect the Southwestern landscape. Indians, Hispanics, and Anglos lift the US flag as Archbishop Lamy stands by watching and directing. The Archbishop balances the illustration’s regional landscape in the background and its international referent in the foreground. As Fray Angélico explains in a note, “In the center background stands the Cross of the Martyrs as symbol of the Faith planted here by

the Spanish Franciscans, and on either side spread the Sangre de Cristo mountains and the Santa Clara Valley cliffs typical of this region.”<sup>22</sup> Fray Angélico’s natural and built landscapes represent the region’s religious history, and the illustration demonstrates nicely how religion shaped his global wartime experience.

Fray Angélico’s service as a WWII Army chaplain is a critical juncture in his lifelong work, for it staged a shift in his writings toward historical recovery, but his wartime experience also expanded his sense of regionalism and religious service. By the end of WWII, Fray Angélico’s Southwestern critical regionalism encompassed a global consciousness that extended beyond dominant discourses of modern regionalism and resolved New Mexico’s wartime (and war torn) environment. World War II especially informed the last story in *From an Altar Screen*, “The Colonel and the Santo,” which is set outside of Los Alamos in the Santa Clara Valley. The colonel and an Army chaplain drive across the Valley to the home of a fallen soldier, Cash Atencio, to notify his mother of his death in Japan. The name “Cash” puzzles the chaplain, who otherwise speaks authoritatively about the region and its Spanish American people, and at one point he even corrects the colonel when he refers to Cash as Mexican. “It is only here in New Mexico that some people can *think* the word ‘Mexican,’” says the padre, “and at the same time pronounce the altogether distinct word ‘Spanish’” (109-110). For the colonel, the priest’s words “go some way towards explaining [Cash’s] irresponsible outbursts,” and he proceeds to tell the story of how Cash perished in Japan (110). As the two military persons drive passed a blue mesa resembling “some gigantic elephant,” the colonel speaks for the first time in twenty minutes, saying that the mesa reminds him “of another bluff on a far Pacific island, as well as the one purpose of this his first visit to

New Mexico” (108). As it turns out, Cash perished at the foot of a mountain bluff that the colonel’s “Mexican” soldiers called “Elephant Butte,” a reference to New Mexico’s landscape and Fray Angélico’s way of suggesting how local soldiers found comfort in their foreign surroundings while fighting overseas.

The closer the chaplain and the Colonel get to the Atencio home, the more the Colonel opens up about his wartime experiences as they drive through the northern New Mexican landscape. When the Colonel sees an image of a crucified figure in military uniform in the Atencio home, he exclaims, “That’s the strangest way of dressing Christ on the Cross!” The chaplain explains, “That is not Christ on the Cross, sir, but the figure of a once very popular saint in New Mexico, by the name of San Acacio. Acacio! That explains Cash’s name. I’ll bet you anything it was his grandfather’s name, and his father’s name” (114). There is a strange resemblance, as the Colonel explains, between Cash’s crucified body in Japan and the saint’s crucified image in the Atencio home. When the Colonel asks the padre not to tell Cash’s mother how he discovered the soldier’s body, it is already too late, for the padre tells her in Spanish. Instead of breaking down, the mother thanks the Colonel, takes a ribboned medal “from his helpless fingers,” and pins it to San Acacio’s heart (117). Fastening her son’s military ribbon to San Acacio’s crucified body connects the Southwest and its folk religious traditions to the military industrial state. Here, “The Colonel and the Santo” makes evident how local religious customs are globally significant, and the story connects the Southwestern landscape to the Far East, shedding light on how the global is local, the foreign familiar, in Fray Angélico’s Southwestern critical regionalism.

Figuratively, “The Colonel and the Santo” serves as a form of cultural translation between its national audience and its regional New Mexico, not unlike the 1949 *National Geographic* article “Adobe New Mexico.” Literally, the chaplain serves as a translator, but symbolically he is a mediator between the war torn Colonel and the Spanish American mother. While World War II causes the Colonel’s post-traumatic stress, New Mexico’s religious traditions affirm the state’s patriotism, and particularly the standing of its Mexican soldiery and Spanish American citizens in a post-Trinity era. Fray Angélico’s story resounds the post-war discourse of the *National Geographic Magazine*, and the Colonel especially embodies the uninformed—and perhaps even the uniformed—reader. Santo Acacio gives the story a religious grounding that is absent in the magazine and the Colonel’s modernist perception of the region. The story’s military chaplain mediates languages and regional landscapes, and in the end two forms of regionalism, one remote and one modernist, one native and the other foreign. In this sense, “The Colonel and the Santo” offers a fictional window into Fray Angélico himself upon his return from overseas. Much like Fray Angélico’s critical regional writings themselves, the chaplain in “The Colonel and the Santo” creates a middle-ground between opposite forces, temporarily resolves their differences, then re-establishes the boundaries that maintain the integrity of the region and its religious traditions.

### Third Panel: The Double-Sided Regionalism of Jovita González Ethnography

José Limón has already pointed out that a transnational framework does not account for the contradictions of South Texas regional writers like Américo Paredes. Limón suggests instead critical regionalism as an alternative framework for

understanding Paredes, but scholars fail to recognize the importance of religion in the formation of Southwestern critical regionalism. Unlike Paredes' seminal study *'With His Pistol in his Hand'*, the border ethnography of Jovita González captures and makes critical a folk religious dimension in the South Texas communities she studied. As a student of renowned ethnographer J. Frank Dobie, González's folktales addressed a specific, Anglo male audience, but there was also another Catholic audience that read her work and that critics have so far failed to acknowledge. The religious themes and folk practices that González's writings documented for secular audiences also inscribed a religious undertone that her religious fiction fleshed out. In this way, González and Fray Angélico's ethnographic fiction compliment each other. Unlike Fray Angélico, however, González was a trained ethnographer from the University of Austin and not a local priest dabbling in fiction. Chicano scholars read González's folk tales much in the same way they read Fray Angélico's fiction: as double-voiced critiques. But this chapter's triptych is a better mode of understanding how González's work dialogues with other forms of regionalism, and in this case Alice Corbin Henderson and Fray Angélico's fiction.

Figuring González's work as the third panel in this chapter's critical triptych identifies a tradition of Southwestern critical regional writing that is neither overshadowed by dominant Southwestern discourses, nor overdetermined by Paredes' male-oriented secularism. Using Fray Angélico's work as a critical paradigm perhaps suggests the substitution of New Mexico for South Texas, or Fray Angélico for Américo Paredes in US borderlands theory. This is only the case if Fray Angélico is understood as simply a New Mexican writer. Fray Angélico's work engaged in multiple historical contexts, making his regional writings and art critical to how we think about the



Southwest in relation to the rest of the US, Mexico, and the global world. Like Paredes, Fray Angélico expanded the Southwest, but Paredes rejected both institutional and folk Catholicism, and for this reason Paredes is more of a regional modernist than a critical regionalist. The same border sensibility that produced Paredes' regional modernism also informed González's sense of place and South Texas-Mexican folklore, but her religious fiction demonstrates that she also utilized a critical regional mode of writing that is equally important.

Several of González's folktales from Reyna's 2000 collection *The Woman Who Lost her Soul and Other Stories* originally appeared in the Catholic magazine *Mary Immaculate*. Limón argues that González's folktales embed a sense of "repressed" resistance to the male-dominated Anglo hegemony her work addresses, while Reyna suggests that González's work is double-voiced and a folk prototype of Chicano literature. The emphasis on resistance in both cases erases the religious significance of González's work, and as a result, both undermine the critical regional importance of her South Texas-Mexican folklore. For instance, in the recovered novel *Caballero*, co-authored in the 1930s with Eve Raleigh and published for the first time in 1996, the story opens with a sketch plan of the Mendoza y Soria hacienda. The novel begins on Palm Sunday in "the year of our Lord, 1748," and it takes place during the turbulent years of the US-Mexico War.<sup>23</sup> In the introduction to *Caballero*, Limón compares González's historical novel to Paredes' own recovered novel of the 1930s, *George Washington Gómez*. The two novels differ in terms of historical era and regional aesthetics, and they even open completely different, as Paredes begins mythically and González in the material and spiritual landscape of South Texas. Nevertheless, Paredes overshadows how

Limón reads González, despite her precedence and critical regional representation of the South Texas-Mexican landscape and folk religious practices.

Mexican women were central to South Texas politics, as *Caballero* shows, making the politics of representation a difficult venture for González, herself a South Texas-Mexican woman who wrote for the Texas Folklore Society between the 1920s and 1940s. Like other Spanish-speaking women of her generation, González's social class and position facilitated her writing career in English.<sup>24</sup> What makes González so unique is not the fact that she was writing, but that she was writing as a trained ethnographer. González was born in the border town of Roma, Texas, in 1904 to a landowning Mexican family, and she graduated with her Masters of Arts degree from the University of Texas at Austin in 1930 working under the direction of Dobie. The work of Corbin Henderson, Fray Angélico, and González attest to how twentieth-century Southwestern ethnography secularizes all things religious, making religion a critical regional index of Southwestern folklore. For González especially, the secularization of religion helped to engender her subjectivity, a Mexican American woman navigating both the Anglo-dominated field of ethnography and the religious restrictions of her Texas-Mexican community. Two different versions of the title story in *The Woman Who Lost Her Soul* demonstrate the interworking of religion, gender and ethnography in González's folktales, suggesting a complex politics of representation that this chapter's triptych cultural critique brings to light.

"Without a Soul" and "The Woman who Lost her Soul" appear back-to-back in a section entitled "Tales of Ghosts, Demons, and Buried Treasures" from Reyna's collection. "Without a Soul" was a presentation González made at the 1928 Meeting of

the Texas Folklore Society, and the second was published in the 1935 and 1936 issue of *Mary Immaculate*. The two versions differ slightly, but to such a considerable degree of voice, perception, and attention to audience that they are worth investigating. First of all, the 1928 presentation at the Texas Folklore Society conference is told from Jovita's first-person female perspective, but the second version takes the perspective of González's grandfather, Don Francisco. Also, Jovita's 1928 presentation is set during All Saints Day and All Souls Day, two Catholic feast days that structure González's two authorial voices. Jovita explains in her presentation, "Late one November afternoon, on All Saints' Day, to be more exact, I went to see my old friend Father José María. I had just discovered an old manuscript and I wanted to consult him concerning its authenticity. The polite, copper-colored maid who came to the door asked me to wait in the living room."<sup>25</sup> The maid explains to Jovita that the priest is busy with preparations for "the day of the dead," a folk Catholic observation that follows All Saints Day when the living remember the dead, and the dead return to the living. Jovita explains the significance of the two feast days through the "copper-colored maid" with cultural authority and within the rectory, a structure that collapses the home and the church, and connects the two otherwise unrelated women. When the maid leaves, Jovita indicates the class differences between them as she lights a cigarette and walks over to the window where she watches "the always interesting Mexican community," and explains, "From where I stood I commanded a good view of the street" (135). In the context of her presentation to the Texas Folklore Society meeting, attention to the window signals Jovita's critical awareness of her place in relation to the Mexican community. The window separates her from the rest of the Mexican community as she observes an old woman preparing a

flower wreath, street vendors selling paper flowers, and people crossing themselves in front of the church at the sound of the six o'clock Angelus. Her presentation becomes like a window, along with herself, into Mexican traditions for the Texas Folklore Society and its modern regionalist discourses.

Dual Catholic feast days create a supernatural tone in González's presentation, but they also establish a kind of border sensibility in her ethnographic portrait. From the window, she hears people shouting "*La Desamalda*" and "*Maldita*," and she sees them running away from a figure dressed in black (136). As the Mexican community runs away, Jovita leaves the confines of the rectory and the class and divisions it embodies to seek out the accursed woman's story. After following the woman, who has no name, Jovita comes to know her in the confines of a dark hut, as the woman explains that the reason she is without a soul is because she had an affair with her best friend's fiancée. Her best friend Rosario committed suicide and forever cursed the woman. The tale concludes with the woman screaming in hysterics at the sight of a toad because she believes her soul is in its liver. González closes the presentation without a resolution as both women in the story—one hysterical, the other quiet—remain outside of the Mexican community in a dark hut. The two representations nevertheless reinforce the dichotomy of female behavior in South Texas-Mexican communities: either passive or hysterical. On another level, the hysterical woman becomes a reflection of Jovita herself— a middle-class woman who defies social convention by walking the streets and other male-dominated spaces in her fieldwork. Thus, the title "Without a Soul" leaves the subject of the presentation open to interpretation. In the end, the story's dual religious structure

becomes a window into González's own ethnographic subjectivity and the problems it presents to the Anglo and Mexican communities of South Texas.

The dual structure, unresolved ending, and distance from the Mexican community in "Without a Soul" engenders a modernist sensibility that breaks from tradition, much like González herself who defied middle-class gender conventions in her ethnographic fieldwork. Ironically, González collected traditional folktales from South Texas-Mexican border communities, and her folktales rarely focus on women's work. In fact, most of González's folktales focus on the male-dominated spaces of the Texas-Mexican *ranch* (ranch), and they addressed a primarily an Anglo male audience. There was little room for the female voice and experience in the male-dominated domain of González's folktales, both in the Mexican and Anglo communities of South Texas. Being neither wholly part of the Mexican community nor entirely a member of the Anglo community, González was literally on the border of two communities. "Without a Soul" was perhaps an autobiographical admission of González's modernist condition and border subjectivity as a Texas-Mexican woman writing for an Anglo American audience. As Limón points out, González navigated the male-dominated academy interested in her stories, but her stories also managed to inscribe a female experience within and against the traditional gender roles of the South Texas-Mexican communities she studied. In "Without a Soul," the audience is left with a fragmented sense of the female subject, and for González a modernist reflection of her own place outside of the Mexican community.

"Without a Soul" takes place against the backdrop of Catholicism, and it does so as to reel in an audience interested in the "authentic" Mexican community. The story itself, however, tells about how women defy religious tradition, and the isolation they

experience as a result. Yet there is more to “Without a Soul” than González’s presentation, for she published a version of it entitled “The Woman who Lost her Soul” in the Catholic magazine *Mary Immaculate*. In this version, González’s female voice does not control the narrative. Instead, the second story takes the perspectives of Don Francisco and Father José María, two patriarchal figures González uses to position herself back in the community she studied from a distance. In a folktale entitled “The Philosopher of the Brush Country,” González reveals that Don Francisco was the name of her great-grandfather, so her fictional decision to make him a narrator in “The Woman Who Lost Her Soul” became also a way to re-establish her place in the traditional Mexican family. Don Francisco’s version does not refer to All Saints Day and All Souls Day, because its audience perhaps did not need an explanation of the two Catholic feast days. “The Woman who Lost her Soul” reads more like a short story told from the perspective of Don Francisco rather than an oral presentation from González’s own. There is no sense of observation in this second version, for the two male figures, Don Francisco and the priest, unquestionably belong to the Mexican Catholic community, and they command the authority Jovita wrests from the window in “Without a Soul.”

Don Francisco’s version of “The Woman who Lost her Soul” begins with a more bucolic tone, and as he stands at the window he watches the passersby:

From the courtyard opposite the parish school came the sound of children’s voices, now urging some one to make a home run, now cheering the victor, now showering strong Spanish interjections with Latin vehemence on the defeated. Outside the glorious sunshine of a Texas afternoon. The last rays of the sun tinted the blue sky with brilliant hues,

garnet, purple, and gold; a gay colored sky, a gay colored neighborhood.

Here, an adobe house painted a brilliant blue, there a tin roofed shack shamelessly flaunted its title to the world, *El Viento Libre* (Free Air).

(141)

Life and not death sets the tone of “The Woman who Lost her Soul,” and Don Francisco watches the world, not with the same curiosity as Jovita, but in a kind of fervent splendor in which he takes note of the social, natural, and architectural landscapes. The “easy going way peculiar to the Mexican temperament” is broken when “*La Desalmada*” appears in the street (142). All community action ceases, and Don Francisco leaves the rectory to follow the accursed woman to the dark hut in which she shares her story. At this point, the two versions are almost exactly alike, but instead of ending with the woman in a delusional state, the story culminates and opens up to a resolution.

González’s fictional *Mary Immaculate* story takes a turn for the better at the point where it concludes in her Texas Folklore Society presentation. Don Francisco returns to the rectory and relays his adventure to Father José María, who tells the ranchman the woman’s name is Carmen. The name is telling, for the woman remains nameless in “Without a Soul,” but by identifying her with a name, the story also re-integrates Carmen in the community. In the end, Don Francisco adopts Carmen with the Padre’s help, and they take her home to his wife, Doña Margarita. While “Without a Soul” concludes without a resolution, in “The Woman who Lost her Soul” Don Francisco intervenes in the woman’s madness and, in many ways, gives her back a soul. The woman has a name in the second story, a sign that she is no longer an outsider, nor fragmented from her family. Instead, Don Francisco and Father José María bring her back into the community, a

figurative González family reunion that resolves the alienation at the end of Jovita's 1928 presentation. In the end, the religious venue allows González to mediate the secular expectations of her mentor Dobie, and to resolve the alienation she perhaps felt as an agent of the Texas Folklore Society.

While Chicano scholars, and especially Limón, take note of the González-Dobie connection, they ignore the equally important González-Catholic connection that indicates she directed her writing toward a Mexican American audience, and through a different kind of regionalism. González's Catholic Mexican American audience may have been imagined, by all accounts, but it nonetheless allowed her to recover a Spanish-Mexican past—and her place in it—outside of the secular institutions that dictated the direction of her collected folklore. By navigating both the religious and the secular discourses of her Anglo and Mexican American communities, González inscribed a Southwestern critical regionalism that is particular to South Texas, but that also mediated the patriarchal institutions that either silenced or alienated her. Like Corbin Henderson, González used a mode of participant-observation that erased her presence in the Mexican communities she studied. Both women observed and recorded folk religious practices for a secular readership, and both went against the religious prescriptions of the Mexican communities they studied. The result of such a secular endeavor for Corbin Henderson was her identification as part of the religious community she studied, marked poignantly by the Queen Victoria statue in the chapel and Francisca in the *morada*. However, the result for González was not so affirmative, for in her presentation to the Texas Folklore Society she dis-identified herself, or as her title puts it, she was “without a soul.” Nevertheless, González re-identified herself from a male perspective in the religious



story, and interestingly as Don Francisco, her great-grandfather, as well as the male version of Corbin Henderson's own Francisca.

The differences among the three writers and their regionalisms in this chapter's critical triptych are religious differences, and as this study has so far demonstrated, these religious differences are also indicative of differential Southwestern regionalisms. The Southwest liberated Corbin Henderson's writing in a modern regionalist way, but the Southwest for González was less liberating than Corbin Henderson imagined. Corbin Henderson and González represented religious tradition for secular audiences, but their writings generated two different forms of regionalism that Fray Angélico's short fiction mediated. González dis-identified (from) her religion when addressing a secular audience, because as a Mexican American woman amongst the company of so many Mexican *and* American men, she transgressed the sacred boundaries her folktales attempted to reinforce. Yet, as González's two published pieces on the same folk story demonstrate, changing the terms of religion also meant a shift in regional representation. The demonstration is an instructive lesson, for it shows that the diversity of regional aesthetics and writing takes place within the body of a single author's works, and this is the logic I use to understand the breadth and depth of Fray Angélico's Southwestern critical regionalism.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Fray Angélico, "Fray Angélico Chávez, O.F.M.," 62.

<sup>2</sup> Rudnick, "Re-Naming the Land," 26. Hereafter cited in text. Reyna, introduction to *The Woman who Lost her Soul*, xv.

<sup>3</sup> Cline, *Literary Pilgrims*, 82. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>4</sup> Pearce, *Alice Corbin Henderson*, 13. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>5</sup> Corbin Henderson, *The Turquoise Trail*, viii. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>6</sup> Armitage, "Red Earth," 36.

<sup>7</sup> Corbin Henderson, *The Sun Turns West*, 32.

<sup>8</sup> Fletcher, "Alice Corbin and Imagism," 48. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>9</sup> Rudnick, intro to *Red Earth*, 15-16.

<sup>10</sup> Steele, intro to *Brothers of Light*, n.p. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>11</sup> Pulido, *The Sacred World of the Penitentes*, 3.

<sup>12</sup> Corbin Henderson, *Brothers of Light*, 11. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>13</sup> Jameson, *Signatures of the Visible*, 34.

<sup>14</sup> Fray Angélico to John Gould Fletcher, June 21, 1940. In the letter Fray Angélico says, "Thank you very, very much for your understanding comments on my stories. I am glad you enjoyed them. The middle story, 'the Penitente Thief,' was originally published in a magazine, and it was through it that Haniel Long and I became acquainted—then you through Haniel! So the genealogy of our friendship can be traced back to poor Lucero and his horse!"

<sup>15</sup> Fletcher to Fray Angélico, June 14, 1940.

<sup>16</sup> Fray Angélico, *From an Altar Screen*, 118. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>17</sup> Fray Angélico to Fr. Provincial, no date.

<sup>18</sup> Fray Angélico, "The Mad Poet of Santa Cruz," 10. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>19</sup> Padilla, *The Short Stories of Fray Angélico Chávez*, xii.

<sup>20</sup> Fray Angélico, *New Mexico Triptych*, 7. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>21</sup> Sutherland, "Adobe New Mexico," 824. Hereafter cited in text.

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<sup>22</sup> Fray Angélico, *Old Faith and Old Glory*, n.p.

<sup>23</sup> González and Raleigh, *Caballero*, xxxv-xxxvi.

<sup>24</sup> I refer to New Mexican Hispanic women writers Fabiola Cabeza de Baca Gilbert, Nina Otero-Warren, and Cleofas Jaramillo; Texas-Mexican women writers Adina de Zavala and Elena Zamora O'Shea; California writer María Amparo Ruiz de Burton; and Mexican writers Josefina Niggli and Maria Cristina Mena.

<sup>25</sup> González, *The Woman who Lost her Soul*, 135. Hereafter cited in text.

Chapter Four: Reconfiguring Nuclear New Mexico in  
Fabiola Cabeza de Baca, Fray Angélico, and Haniel Long

This chapter makes a partial shift in its subject matter to consider the significance of the Nuclear Age in the regional aesthetics of Haniel Long, Fray Angélico Chávez and Fabiola Cabeza de Baca, all key figures in New Mexico at the time they penned their experimental autobiographies. Long's *Malinche (Doña Marina)* (1935), Fray Angélico's *La Conquistadora: The Autobiography of an Ancient Statue* (1954), and Cabeza de Baca's *We Fed Them Cactus* (1954) are the texts in question. Long and Fray Angélico represent New Mexico using a female voice while Cabeza de Baca at times uses a male voice to preserve New Mexican folklore and history. Each narrative uses a type of transvestite ventriloquism to re-tell New Mexican history, a literary technique I use to connect and differentiate the three narratives in question.<sup>1</sup> Religion still functions as a critical lens in my analysis, but I focus especially on each narrative's ventriloquism as a way to uncover the representation of New Mexico's nuclear landscape. How the three historical fictions make use of their transvestite voice indicates what kind of regionalism each book represents: modern, critical, or modernist. Despite the similarity in literary technique and experimental voice, each author's mode of representation differs to a considerable degree.

Fray Angélico's *La Conquistadora* comprises the chapter's central panel, a narrative in which the "female" statue tells its own story. *La Conquistadora* was published at the height of the Spanish Revival and at a time when Hispanic women's writing was a popular item among the local reading public.<sup>2</sup> Cabeza de Baca was a state

extension agent, and she published *We Fed Them Cactus* in 1954, the same year the St. Anthony Guild Press published *La Conquistadora*. The two narratives together demonstrate the local and national interest in New Mexico after the Trinity Site explosion and the incorporation of Los Alamos as the “Atomic Age city.” But while the two books focus on New Mexico history, they do so from divergent religious perspectives that come to bear on their regional aesthetics. Cabeza de Baca’s representation of the natural landscape in *We Fed Them Cactus* provides a modern regionalist portrait of New Mexico, but Fray Angélico’s *La Conquistadora* expands the local parameters of Cabeza de Baca’s narrative by tying the Catholic statuette to New Mexico’s military industrial complex.

Land was religion for Cabeza de Baca, and so the natural landscape takes precedence over the built environment in *We Fed Them Cactus*. Cabeza de Baca participated in New Mexico’s dominant discourses, but as a descendant of New Mexico’s Spanish colonial *rico* (landed) class, her work also re-figured the state’s Spanish Revival discourses. As a teacher, an employee of the state, and a cultural activist, Cabeza de Baca was a modern woman who supported the modification of traditional culture. But Cabeza de Baca was not a feminist or a modernist, though much of her experience might qualify her as either one. During the Writer’s Era, the Southwestern landscape facilitated the liberation of Anglo women’s creativity and the expression of their feminist visions, but Cabeza de Baca uses a male perspective to tell a history of the Llano, or Staked Plains, of New Mexico. *Cactus* recounts New Mexico’s folk past using the voice of the family’s ranch hand, El Cuate, whom Cabeza de Baca compares to the land. In this way, the New Mexican landscape does not liberate Cabeza de Baca from the patriarchal discourses of her family, much in the same manner as her Texas-Mexican counterpart

Jovita González. In the end, Cabeza de Baca closes *We Fed Them Cactus* with a warning about the state of modern New Mexico and its post-Trinity Site landscape.

Perhaps the greatest myopia of Southwestern regional writing is the modern nuclear landscape, but at the level of allegory Cabeza de Baca resurrects and re-members that which the discourses in which she wrote erased. In response to technology and to the nation's industrial development, John Gould Fletcher, as I noted in Chapter Two, retreated into the safety of his regionalism and the purity of his female religious icons. Corbin Henderson also retreated into the rural space of northern New Mexico, but with an eye toward folk religious practices. Cabeza de Baca staged a similar retreat as Corbin Henderson, but instead of reversing time, Cabeza de Baca preserved time. In all three cases, Fletcher, Corbin Henderson, and Cabeza de Baca created a regional isolation zone to buffer the forces of modernity. But the matters of family, land, and memory differentiated Cabeza de Baca from her Anglo counterparts, and distinguished her modern regionalism from others. For Cabeza de Baca and Fray Angélico, the politics of memory were at stake in their historical fictions, particularly in light of New Mexico's nuclear landscape. Both New Mexican writers re-member the region's past with a post-nuclear significance, but where Cabeza de Baca retreats into New Mexican isolation, Fray Angélico fuses religion and atomic power to counteract the destructive forces of modernity.

This chapter's teleology is not chronological, because it begins with Cabeza de Baca's *Cactus* and concludes with Long's *Malinche*. However, the objective of this reversal is to trace the significance of the nuclear landscape in these three Southwestern historical fictions using religion as its analytical lens. *Cactus* provides a local and even

provincial depiction of Northern New Mexico, but Long displaces the local for a more global representation of the region. Put another way, Cabeza de Baca brings the region back together in the face of modernity while Long offers a more universal depiction of the Southwest in his *Malinche*. Long adopts Anglo women's discourses to tell a regional modernist history of the Spanish conquest of Mexico from a female perspective that is more expansive than Cabeza de Baca's *Llano*, but less local than Fray Angélico's *La Conquistadora*. Indeed, Long's *Malinche* predates the Trinity Site, but the chapter's teleology is a useful way to uncover the connection between the Writer's Era and New Mexico's nuclear landscape. The chapter's sense of time diverges from the rest of the dissertation, perhaps because the logic of Atomic power exceeds common conventions of time and space, as Fray Angélico demonstrates in his poem *The Virgin of Port Lligat* (1959). My reverse logic is not intended to discover or even recover something about the texts in question, but to uncover the roots and repercussions of the Trinity Site, or what Fletcher called the "guilt of Los Alamos."<sup>3</sup> I apply the notion of transvestite ventriloquism with an eye toward religion to uncover New Mexico's nuclear landscape in these three texts, and the regional writing they represent.

#### Preserving the Present Past: Cabeza de Baca's *We Fed Them Cactus*

Fabiola Cabeza de Baca was born on her family ranch near Las Vegas, New Mexico in 1894, and she received her education from New Mexico Normal School (currently New Mexico Highlands University) where she graduated in 1913 and became a certified teacher.<sup>4</sup> In addition to her work as an educator of rural New Mexican children, Cabeza de Baca was a home extension agent for the New Mexico Agricultural Extension

Service (NMAES), and she was also an avid writer. For instance, Cabeza de Baca authored several articles for local newspapers like *The Santa Fe New Mexican*, and she wrote many unpublished pieces of history and folklore that remain in the Fabiola Cabeza de Baca Gilbert collection at the Center for Southwest Research. Most significant among Cabeza de Baca's writings are two Spanish-language bulletins promoting domestic modernization and two cookbooks, *Historic Cookery* (1939) and *The Good Life* (1949). The first cookbook was published at the start of the New Deal era and the last at the end, so they highlight a crucial period in the formation of modern regionalism. In fact, New Mexico Governor Thomas Mabry used *Historic Cookery* as a public relations tool in the 1940s (Reed 123). Meanwhile, *The Good Life* remains in print and is a staple on Southwestern cooking bookshelves. *Cactus* too is still in print, and it has become a foundational text in Southwest and Chicana/o Studies.

Merrihelen Ponce provides a catalogue of criticism in her biographical study of Cabeza de Baca and *We Fed Them Cactus*. Overall, regional reviews praised the book for its "authenticity," while some critiqued it for its style, structure, and provincialism.<sup>5</sup> Chicano critics at first disregarded Cabeza de Baca and other Hispana writers of her time for their classist and imperialist inclinations, but feminist reassessments re-read the deeper implications of these writings. Genaro Padilla perhaps gestures toward this deeper understanding with his notion of "lies, secrets, and silence" as a way to understand pre-Chicano Movement New Mexicana autobiographies.<sup>6</sup> In Padilla's framework, these narratives are complicit on the surface and resistant at the subtext. Anne Goldman refines Padilla's framework to argue that New Mexicana cookbooks offer a "muted cultural critique."<sup>7</sup> For Tey Diana Rebolledo, Cabeza de Baca and other New Mexicana



writers use “narrative strategies of resistance” and are precursors to Chicana literature.<sup>8</sup> Ponce and more recently Elizabeth Jacobs disagree based on a class distinction between early Hispana writers and the contemporary Chicana generation. Ponce argues that what distinguishes Cabeza de Baca as a writer was her *noblesse oblige*, “the obligation of the rich to help those less fortunate” (2). But Cabeza de Baca was also a state employee, and the regional atmosphere of the New Mexico Federal Writers Project shaped her work as much as her middle-class upbringing.

Distinguished by her family name, class status, and Spanish colonial roots, Cabeza de Baca worked to preserve what she called “the folkways of the first white colonists in this land of New Mexico.”<sup>9</sup> As Maureen Reed puts it, “Cabeza de Baca belonged to a family that felt distinguished by its roots in New Mexico’s Spanish Colonial past. The Cabeza de Baca name linked her to one of the first Spaniards in what is now the American Southwest, Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca, who explored present-day New Mexico in the early 1530s” (124-25). Her family’s ancestral name aside, archival evidence shows Cabeza de Baca’s claim to ancestry in action. Many of Cabeza de Baca’s handwritten notations on the documents in her collection at CSWR contest the official historical record, like one notation on an article by Milton W. Callon, “Las Vegas, New Mexico—The Town that Wouldn’t Gamble.”<sup>10</sup> Callon discusses Cabeza de Baca’s grandfather, Don Luis María, whom he says “allegedly came to the Province of New Mexico with his father from Spain.” Fabiola circled the word “allegedly” and wrote over it, “He was from N. Mexico.” The correction is a clear assertion of her ancestral claim that, as Becky Jo Gesteland McShane points out, sets the “standards that we now judge

who qualifies as an ‘authentic’ cultural spokesperson, who counts as a ‘genuine’ native, and who gets to tell the ‘true’ story.”<sup>11</sup>

Although Anglo literature and ethnography dominated the discourse of modern Southwestern regionalism, Cabeza de Baca and other Hispana activists before, during, and after her time refigured the dominant discourse with a more “authentic” representation of New Mexico. To this end, Cabeza de Baca helped establish La Sociedad Folklorica, an organization founded in 1935 by her distant cousin, Cleofas Jaramillo. The establishment of this Spanish-speaking organization both complimented and contested the Spanish Colonial Arts Society, co-founded in 1929 by Mary Austin whose vision soon came to dominate New Mexico’s own sense of self. Yet Austin’s “passion for ‘authenticity,’” as Reed points out, oftentimes excluded Native American and Hispanic peoples, even as she focused her attention on them (50). From this angle, La Sociedad Folklorica not only appealed to the “authenticating strategies” of Austin’s Spanish Colonial Arts Society, but it also exceeded them with more “authentic” strategies than its sister organization. La Sociedad emphasized the preservation of not only Spanish art and customs, but of the Spanish language as well, shoring up a profound contradiction in the English-dominant Spanish Revival movement. Spanish was a relative category, says Reed, that “though it set [Jaramillo] above mestizos, it ultimately separated her from the Anglos the Spanish label had originally sought a bond with” (118).

Hispana writers needed to master the English language in order to write books about New Mexico. Cabeza de Baca’s distant cousin Jaramillo wrote a memoir entitled *Romance of a Little Village Girl* (1955) in which she expresses discomfort with writing in an “almost foreign” language. At the same time, Jaramillo uses her silence as a

representational strategy to describe the “quiet romance” of her New Mexican village in Arroyo Hondo. This strategy of repression and erasure in Jaramillo’s work supports Padilla’s “imprisoned” framework in which there are moments of release and resistance that, while perhaps not as assertive as Rebolledo claims, emanate from Jaramillo’s strategic silence. It is not so much that Jaramillo’s critique is “muted,” as Goldman has it, even though Jaramillo describes her own narrative as “quiet,” but rather that New Mexican Hispanic women writers asserted their agency in-between two dominant discourses of power *through* repression and silence. The resistance that this strategy of repression yielded was not the angry type prevalent in Chicana literature, contrary to Rebolledo’s assessment, but a “quiet” resistance in Jaramillo’s work that fits Padilla’s imprisoned framework. Cabeza de Baca’s *Cactus* also deploys a strategy of erasure, but she achieves it not through quietude, but through projection.

*Cactus* gives voice to El Cuate (The Twin), her father’s ranch hand and the oral component in the book. El Cuate tells stories about the past and reconnects the author to the traditions she otherwise dismantles in her own modern experience. Virginia Scharff says that “Cabeza de Baca was assuredly an agent of the state and of modernization,” but Scharff also recognizes that Cabeza de Baca “considered herself part of a deeply rooted social order based on principles of mutual aid.”<sup>12</sup> Cabeza de Baca took the word “extension” to mean the passing of her work to other people, says Scharff, and all her “endeavors extended across the potentially endless space and time of publication a place, as much the product of her imagination and intent as of history” (130). As a home demonstration worker, Cabeza de Baca promoted modernization, but she also extended in her writings and in her work traditional culture. This is to say that while Cabeza de Baca

was a modern woman, she was not a modernist. That is, as an extension agent she participated in the state's modernization projects, but in her writings she reimagined a cohesive region in the face of (her own) modernization. While Cabeza de Baca supported modernization, she also critiqued the effects of modernity on New Mexico, especially the dislocation and displacement of her family land base. To this end, Cabeza de Baca used nostalgia over realism to write about the Hispanic folk community because the glory of her family name was at stake, and not just the state of regional literature. Yet there are cracks in the surface of *We Fed Them Cactus* that signal not so much "whispers of resistance," as Padilla might have it, but acts of erasure. Ironically, these acts of erasure facilitate the way *Cactus* re-members the author and her own modern experience in the representation of New Mexico folk traditions and history.

In the Preface to *Cactus* Cabeza de Baca describes her methodology as a cross between the oral and written histories she collected about New Mexico's Llano or Staked Plains. "All of the chapters present authentic historical facts," says Cabeza de Baca. "For dates which my informants did not have at the tip of the tongue, I consulted New Mexico histories and the Spanish archives of New Mexico."<sup>13</sup> Despite the book's basis in fact, however, Cabeza de Baca uses fictitious names, "since it would be impossible for me to remember the names of all the people who were mentioned by El Cuate in his tales . . . Don Manuel Salcedo lived, but in real life he had another name" (ix). This passage reveals two interesting things. First, it establishes El Cuate's basis in fact and not purely fiction and, second, it establishes Cabeza de Baca's ethnographic authority. The author relies on El Cuate's cultural memory, and while she knows El Cuate's "real" name, she opts for a pseudonym. This anonymity is a strategy of erasure that on the surface

maintains the authenticity of the book's cultural memory, but it also re-members the author herself, a modern woman, in the likeness El Cuate, a traditional figure.

Although critics refer to *Cactus* as an autobiography, only the latter part of it tells of Cabeza de Baca's life, and she for the most part controls the narrative byway of a male-driven ventriloquism that upholds the patriarchy of her Hispano community. Cabeza de Baca dedicates *Cactus* to her brother, Luis María Cabeza de Baca IV, her grandfather's namesake. As she claims, "This is his book, for without his help, patience, and inspiration in assembling the material, I could not have compiled the Spanish American history of the Llano" (x). In addition, by letting El Cuate speak, Cabeza de Baca represents the oral tradition in written form using a male perspective and regional discourse. The concluding image in the Preface demonstrates this male-driven discourse:

The *ricos* of colonial days lived in splendor with many servants and slaves. Their haciendas were similar to the Southern plantations. To those coming from what was then the United States of America, the life of the New Mexican *ricos* was not understood because they kept their private lives secure from outsiders. The latter judged all New Mexicans by the people of the streets, since the families of the wealthy were never seen outside the home and the church. There were family gatherings, but as families of influence married among themselves, there was not much opportunity for outsiders to learn their ways of living. (xii)

By comparing hacienda life to Southern plantations, Cabeza de Baca reestablishes the racial imperialism of a previous era precisely at the moment of desegregation. The analogy establishes the anti-urban character of modern regionalist discourses, and it uses

a strategy of erasure to rebuild the patriarchal home and women's place in it against the backdrop of modern change.

New Mexico's regional isolation is marked poignantly by exclusive marriage practices and women's prescribed place in the home and church. By not focusing on women's work and the private space of the home, Cabeza de Baca maintains its sanctity, despite her own marriage to an "outsider," which ironically broke from the tradition she describes in the Preface. Cabeza de Baca does not disclose her own personal transgressions, even in the autobiographical part of *Cactus*, so she silences her own acts of resistance to patriarchal tradition. Cabeza de Baca was a modern woman, but unlike her fellow Anglo female writers, the Southwestern landscape did not necessarily liberate Cabeza de Baca from the patriarchal demands of tradition. Instead, as a product of her class, Cabeza de Baca complied with her family's social and religious practices. Yet her one true religion was the Llano, for as she explains, "I have never been inclined to ask favors from heaven, but for rain, I always pleaded with every saint and the Blessed Mother" (11). Religion for Cabeza de Baca is not tied to the Catholic Church or to the *rico* home; instead, it is rooted in the New Mexican landscape and a secular spirituality. Cabeza de Baca asserts this spirituality within and against modern regionalist discourses and her family's gender expectations.

There is a circular structure to *We Fed Them Cactus*, for the Llano allows Cabeza de Baca to reverse time when she imagines it as "a lonely land because of its immensity . . . loneliness without despair" (3). Cabeza de Baca's spiritual connection to the land is similar to the regionalism of other Anglo writers, but by the end of *Cactus*, the Llano is a dust bowl. The book concludes with a warning about the future of the Llano that is, as

Rebolledo puts it, a “description of the land as purgatory. Bitterness over lost land and nostalgia over lost culture are implicit in the images of a barren wasteland that had before been a paradise.”<sup>14</sup> Yet purgatory is an orthodox Catholic concept, and as I argue, Cabeza de Baca did not tie her book or its landscape to the Church. In the last chapter, Cabeza de Baca has this to say: “The land, between the years 1932 and 1935, became a dust bowl. . . The whole world around us was a thick cloud of dust. The sun was invisible and one would scarcely venture into the outdoors for fear of breathing the foul grit” (177). While Rebolledo likens the final image of the Llano in *Cactus* to a purgatory, it is more instructive to see the end as apocalyptic and symbolizing a post-nuclear New Mexico. By the 1950s, the entire nation was feeling the reverberations of the Trinity Site and the bombs at Nagasaki and Hiroshima, a series of events that would connect New Mexico to the global world, and specifically to Japan. The Llano is an allegory for home, but it is also an allegory for Cabeza de Baca herself who is caught between the traditions of the past and modern changes in the present, just like the land itself.

The book’s title works against the romance implicit in its nostalgia, for *We Fed Them Cactus* refers to New Mexico’s 1918 drought when ranchers fed their cattle water from the desert cactus. As a result, the Llano is a contradictory space of representation, and the book is a modern-day folk narrative about 1950s New Mexico. The book’s collective voice makes it difficult to categorize, but Rebolledo argues that it is resistant to dominant Anglo culture, while McShane uses it to identify a particular regional and female genre of “cultural autobiography” (190). Though Cabeza de Baca’s cookbooks express a woman-centered consciousness, the representational strategy in *Cactus* makes it more of a modern-day folk narrative of 1950s New Mexico. The book’s strategy of

silence mirrors Cold War strategies of containment, as women have little voice in *We Fed Them Cactus*, and this ironically includes even the author herself. Cabeza de Baca reconfigures the patriarchal and masculine spaces of the Llano, not with a female-centered history, but with a modified sense of the author's own feminine self. El Cuate is the key. Cabeza de Baca describes El Cuate as "a real western character reared on the Llano," and her memory of him is a testament of the past (15). But she also speaks through El Cuate, who becomes her own twin, and she introduces him in Spanish and English. "El Cuate, The Twin, who was the ranch cook" (15), she says, and he is everything the author's father is not. Cabeza de Baca draws analogies between nature and the two men accordingly. While she connects her father to the sky and rain, their source of wealth and money, she compares El Cuate to Mother Earth. "El Cuate was an old man, and he had a history behind him. To me, he seemed to have sprung from the earth." (15). From Cabeza de Baca's perspective, the Llano and El Cuate are one, and the connection allows her to re-member the Llano in a cross-gendered likeness to herself.

El Cuate's voice predominates the start of the book, and Cabeza de Baca relays stories of the past in the oral voice of her twin. In conventional autobiographies, the story begins with the author's birth, but in *Cactus*, the Llano takes precedence, followed by El Cuate, and then the people, places, and bandits of the Llano before the book actually focuses on the author's life. The two opening movements, the Llano and El Cuate, foreground the book's regional landscape and set the stage for the author's re-birth as El Cuate's alter ego and, by extension, as a woman of the Llano. El Cuate tells of traditional ways in the past, but he often veers off into tangential stories that signal Cabeza de Baca's own voice, which intervene in the lessons his folktales are meant to teach.



For instance, “Fiesta at San Hilario” is a story about community gatherings, religious practices, and social customs. El Cuate especially takes note of the *baile* (dance), and he concludes his story with a note on the star-crossed love of Narciso Paez and Rosa Salcedo. ““This has nothing to do with my story,”” says El Cuate, ““but I cannot help but mention it, as I can never recall the rodeo without thinking of the tragedy which happened as we rounded up in Revuelto in September”” (34). Later, when everyone else moves into the house, Cabeza de Baca asks El Cuate to tell of the tragedy, and it provides an opportunity for Cabeza de Baca to insert herself and her own voice in the narrative. The tragedy of “Fiesta at San Hilario” is about two lovers who marry outside of their class, but by the end of the tale, the story becomes Cabeza de Baca’s own. When El Cuate reveals, ““It was still the custom for parents to make matches, but American influence was becoming more and more evident as the years rolled on, and young people were more at liberty to choose their mates”” (33), he indirectly addresses Cabeza de Baca’s own marriage to a man her family did not approve.

Cabeza de Baca omits her own personal history in order to maintain her family’s class conventions, but there are moments when she comments on them through El Cuate’s tales, like in “Fiesta at San Hilario.” This initial tale of star-crossed lovers sets an ambivalent tone for the rest of the book’s discussions of marriage, which are few and far between, but that are nonetheless significant moments. Towards the end of the book, when Cabeza de Baca discusses the time her uncle Ezequiel C. de Baca ran for governor of New Mexico in 1916, she briefly mentions her engagement to a young man. As she explains, “I know that some of our *empleados* and the young man to whom I was betrothed did not vote for my uncle” (165). This one-line passage is interesting because

it represents a clean break from the book's otherwise idyllic depiction of ranch life on the Llano: her father's employees, after all, vote against her uncle. Implicit in the statement is how statehood tipped the balance of political power and created a class conflict, but as the tragedy of San Hilario reveals, class conflict plagued New Mexico even before statehood, so much so that American influence altered traditional marriage practices long before Cabeza de Baca's own.<sup>15</sup> The passage also connects politics and marriage in such a way that suggests statehood opened up a space for Cabeza de Baca and women of her class to break away from family tradition. Still, Cabeza de Baca maintains traditional *rico* marriage practices and implies through the passive voice that her family arranged the marriage. As she puts it, "the young man to whom I was betrothed." Yet Ponce, Reed, and Scharff point out that the man Cabeza de Baca married, Carlos Gilbert, was an outsider who did not meet her family's expectations. Instead, the marriage came as a result of Cabeza de Baca's strong will, something she altogether erases in the above passage by way of the passive voice.

*We Fed Them Cactus* re-members traditional folklore by using three voices that preserve the oral tradition, modify the written one, and insert Cabeza de Baca's own. In this way, Cabeza de Baca does not simply remember the past. Instead, she reconfigures the body of Hispanic folklore with a historical awareness of times passed, meaning *We Fed Them Cactus* is not just an ethnographic account, but a modern-day folk narrative about New Mexico's modern present. Modern regionalism facilitated Cabeza de Baca's strategy of erasure, but the book shores up the contradictions of modern regionalism for New Mexican Hispanic women writers, especially in light of its nuclear context. The opening Llano is plentiful, but the final image symbolizes a post-Trinity New Mexico and

the shattering effects of modernity. In the end, *We Fed Them Cactus* is a different kind of modern regional tale, for Cabeza de Baca brings together her book's three voices in a way that combats the destructive forces of modernity while at the same time she demonstrates what lies beneath the surface of New Mexico's modern regionalist discourses.

#### Mediating the Past Present: Fray Angélico's *La Conquistadora*

The apocalyptic Llano at the end of *Cactus* symbolizes the fear and terror of nuclear destruction in post-Trinity New Mexico, and Fray Angélico writes *La Conquistadora: The Autobiography of an Ancient Statue* from within the same historical context. Published in 1954, Fray Angélico's *La Conquistadora* is another cross-gendered autobiography that takes the perspective of a female statue and reinforces Spanish Revivalism. Unlike Cabeza Baca who silences the female voice and maintains New Mexico's regional isolation, Fray Angélico's *La Conquistadora* mediates the state's colonial past and its post-nuclear present. The Nuclear Age and the Spanish Revival connect the two texts, but Fray Angélico's *La Conquistadora* was a product of a different discursive framework than Cabeza de Baca's *We Fed Them Cactus*. Originally, the St. Anthony Guild Press out of New Jersey published *La Conquistadora*, so the book was a product of Fray Angélico's religious connections. As I have maintained throughout this study, religion formed the basis of Fray Angélico's Southwestern critical regionalism. Cabeza de Baca and other modern regionalist writers of her time expressed a secular spirituality rooted in the Southwest, but Fray Angélico's religion was a vocational and dogmatic one rooted in his seminary training in the Midwest. His religion was his

Franciscanism, and not the Southwestern landscape. In this way, Fray Angélico put the Southwest to work toward a religious endeavor, and, in turn, religion created a safety net for the friar's work, a way to mediate the cultural integrity of the Southwest against the destructive forces of modernity.

While Fray Angélico moved away from New Mexico to receive his education, Cabeza de Baca was teaching and working as a home extension agent in rural New Mexico. The Southwestern landscape literally allowed Cabeza de Baca to escape Catholic tradition, for she traveled across the state and overstepped the boundaries of middle-class Hispano womanhood. Nevertheless, *Cactus* maintains Catholic tradition through El Cuate and its male-centered history. Fray Angélico, on the other hand, feminizes New Mexico's conquistador-centered history with a tale of Marian devotion in New Mexico and throughout New Spain. The ancient statuette La Conquistadora, the "oldest Madonna of the Americas," speaks with an assertive "I" and not in an "imprisoned," "muted," or silent tone. While Cabeza de Baca shrouds the Nuclear Age in a silent allegory, Fray Angélico openly addresses it and literally redresses his narrative voice in the gendered vestments of a woman. Cabeza de Baca voices her cultural dissent through El Cuate and through constructions of female silence, and she is less boisterous than Fray Angélico's La Conquistadora. Fray Angélico's vocation as priest gave him the poetic license to assume the voice of a female statue, but as this chapter argues, this was a critical regional way to retell New Mexican history.

*La Conquistadora* speaks through a transvestite voice, that is, literally through her clothing. In this way, Fray Angélico's cross-dressed autobiographical voice opens up Cabeza de Baca's insular depiction of New Mexico to a more expansive, critical regional

history. By writing *La Conquistadora* in the first person, Fray Angélico brings the statuette to life in a literary move that blurs historical fact with a fictional narrative, producing what Luis Leal calls “a very original fictitious autobiography.”<sup>16</sup> Leal identifies many narrative techniques in Fray Angélico’s autobiography derived from Latin American literature, but what sets Fray Angélico apart from these Latin American precursors is the friar’s religious and historical intent (38). The fictitious technique of “letting an inanimate object become the narrator,” says Leal, “is common in Latin American fiction” (39). Nevertheless, Leal ignores the significance of transvestism as a narrative technique in Fray Angélico’s *La Conquistadora*, something Ben Sifuentes-Jauregui argues is a discursive strategy in Latin American literature. “The figuration of Latin American national identity and of transvestism are analogic,” says Sifuentes-Jauregui, and the gendered figuration of the transvestite figure embodies this analogy.<sup>17</sup> For instance, Sifuentes-Jauregui revisits the Cuban “boom” novelist Alejo Carpentier’s work, particularly the fashion articles he wrote as “Jacqueline” for Cuban high society magazine *Social* between 1925 and 1927. As Sifuentes-Jauregui argues, Carpentier “began experimenting early in his career with literary simulation, ventriloquizing the voices of others” through “rhetorical strategies Carpentier used to signify ‘feminine’ qualities unto himself, to dress himself as a woman” (11). Fray Angélico performed a similar kind of transvestite ventriloquism, but one particular to New Mexican history and Spanish-Mexican Catholicism, and not necessarily representative of a national or transnational analogy.<sup>18</sup>

*La Conquistadora*’s autobiography is a story about modern New Mexico and the post-nuclear era as much as it is a history of the Spanish colonial past. In this way, it

parallels Cabeza de Baca's *Cactus*. The statuette tells the history of New Mexico's Spanish conquest and its canonical Conquistadores, but it also feminizes this conquistador-driven history using a transvestite performance. Literally, the statue's name is the feminine version of "conquistador" because, as "she" explains, "I came to the Southwest with the Spanish pioneers who called themselves conquistadores."<sup>19</sup> This connection to gender, dressing, and voice is apparent in the statuette's description of its original appearance:

My long gown showed only at the hem in front and for a short space above my left foot, and at the narrow sleeves of my entire right arm and up to the elbow of my left arm. The rest was covered by an Oriental scarf wrapped across my breast, and by a large gracefully folded mantle that dropped lightly from my head down to my feet. One edge of this large veil fell over my left ear onto my left shoulder and breast, and was caught in folds under my bent forearm. The other edge fell behind my right ear to cover my entire back, and then was brought over my right thigh and slightly bent knee to be tucked with the other folded edge beneath my left arm. (9)

The description is almost sacrilegious as it describes the statue with a highly erotic and colonial body marked by its feminine voice and its Oriental clothing. Though particular to New Mexico, the statuette's clothing and descriptions of it signify a global world that extends beyond the regional scope of Cabeza de Baca's *Cactus*.

The 1954 cover photograph provides a visual allegory for the critical regional significance of the statuette's clothing. At the center of the photo stands La

Conquistadora, and Fray Angélico stands in the foreground to the right with a dress draped over his left arm while his right arm appears to be in the act of changing the statuette's dress.<sup>20</sup> The narrative provides an ironic twist to the cover photo when at one point the statuette claims, "I was not touched from the waist down" (40). Yet the photo and the very nature of dressing the sacred icon points to the instability of New Mexico's sacred regional discourses. Renowned regional photographer Laura Gilpin snapped the photo for *New Mexico Sun Trails*, and so the photo captures the two local New Mexican icons—one living, Fray Angélico; one inanimate, La Conquistadora—through a regional lens. Yet the presence of Fray Angélico creates a layered representation that breaks up the photo's regional scope. His Franciscan garb especially invokes the religious history that the autobiography tells, and the critical regional representation of New Mexico that the book captures. Inside the cover an inscription reads, "My favorite dress from Guatemala and my ancient blue mantle, and my little infant with golden shoes. The friar holds another old mantle of Chinese figured silk" (n.p.). Gilpin's photo frames the statue with a regional gaze, and the friar gives it a religious significance; the inscription links the two to a global history that extends from Guatemala to China, with New Mexico in the middle. This is to say that the cover photo's triangulation of statuette, friar, and camera does not necessarily break away from New Mexico's modern regionalism as much as it balances the state's regionalism with a larger global picture.

Fray Angélico's autobiography of an ancient statue is also a history of religion in the New World, and for this reason it has from time-to-time been consulted as the official history of the Catholic Church in New Mexico. Yet La Conquistadora does not simply enact New Mexico's Spanish Revival discourses—it invokes an altogether

different discourse of female beauty that ties religiosity in New Mexico to a national and hemispheric world of performance. La Conquistadora speaks with an assertive “I” in the opening sentence: “I am a small wooden statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary, dressed in real clothes of silk and gold braid like a Spanish Queen of old, and I have been in this country for more than three hundred and twenty-five years” (1). In order to maintain the statuette’s significance to a modern world, it invokes a modern Spanish American dancer to describe the significance of its name, reinforcing in the process the statuette’s gender performativity. “It is really a popular nickname,” says the statuette, “given to me by a people who regarded me with loving intimacy, like folks in more recent times who affectionately called a famous dancer ‘La Argentina’” (3).<sup>21</sup> When the statue compares the self to “actresses,” Fray Angélico reinforces the narrative’s feminization and performative aspect. In this way, La Conquistadora’s autobiographical voice is, quite literally, a cross-dressed performance.

By opening with analogies to modern actresses and female performers, Fray Angélico’s transvestism not only invokes modern times, but it also mediates the past and the present. The analogies to modern female icons suggest that Fray Angélico’s audience was more familiar with secular representations of beauty, but he reconfigures these secular representations with a religious meaning that spans both time and space, just like his Dolores Del Río mural of an earlier era. Even in the beginning, at the time of the statuette’s imagined “birth,” modern man used his tools to carve the statue out of nature:

As I said from the start, I have been in this country for more than three centuries and a quarter, but I am much older. Exactly how old, only the lord and I know, and a lady, even a wooden one, will not tell her exact



age. All I can say is that long, long ago, there was a big willow tree in a faraway land. On the meadow all around it bloomed flowers of every color and shade, and the willow wept because it was always green, while the meadow wore dresses of every hue as the seasons varied. Then one day a man came and chopped the tree to the ground. Both the bole and the branches were to be cut into smaller parts, and these split into smaller pieces, and all would be burned to ashes in somebody's hearth. This was the end, the willow tree knew, and this was just as well; for this was the usual fate of trees.

Every bit of the willow went into the fire when the pieces had dried out, all except one. And this was because another man picked up a small section of trunk and took it home to his little shop filled with chisels and mallets and unfinished statues. (4)

Despite the mythical dimension of the statuette's "origin story," it shows signs of modern development and man's power over the earth's natural resources. The woodcutter, after all, chops the willow tree down to the ground for fire wood, then with his mallets and chisels transforms "a short willow log" to "a beautiful woman standing on a graceful pedestal" (4-5).

At the level of allegory, the origin story describes the autobiography itself, a woman carved out of religious history and Fray Angélico's literary imagination. The willow tree is an interesting origin for the statue and, by extension, for the autobiography because it metonymically recalls the author's family tree on the book's dedication page. On the surface, the author's dedicated genealogy maintains the idea of cultural purity, for

it demonstrates that the author's parents were distant cousins. Such an inbred family structure reflects Spain's legacy of *limpieza de sangre* (pure blood), even if only perfunctory, for in the first few pages of the narrative the (family) willow tree gets chopped and burned. The autobiography asserts the statuette's "I," making no mistake that "she" is speaking, but the autobiography also allows the author to intervene in modern regionalist history with his own strange family history that shakes the foundations of New Mexico's Catholic heritage. After all, as the narrative reveals, the author's family has a crypto-Jewish past that undergoes a historical transformation. In the chapter about Ana Robledo, the female progenitor from the author's family tree, the statuette reveals that Ana performed the physical changes to it amid rumors about the family being *conversos* (converts). The statuette suggests that the breaking and bending of its body was necessary to conform to the "general custom, in Spain as well as her New World colonies, to dress sacred images in real clothes" (40). At the same time, these physical changes meant to prove the Gómez Robledo family's Catholic faith, so in many ways Fray Angélico's autobiography represents an ambivalent family origin.

La Conquistadora addresses—and even undresses—Fray Angélico's crypto-Jewish family history when the statuette tells of one hurtful village rumor about "las colitas." Francisco Gómez, the male progenitor in the author's family tree, was a Portuguese-born convert who, as La Conquistadora tells it, was complicit with Spanish colonial abuses to protect his family. La Conquistadora explains in the following story:

The fact is that one of the sons (some said Juan, others said Francisco) had an abnormal coccyx which was noticed when as children they bathed in the little Santa Fe river. . . Now all the men of the family were supposed to

have this appendage and were disdainfully referred to as '*Las Colitas*.'

Deeply hurt by this and other displays of envy and ill will, the father stood by each governor sent from New Spain, even when some of these committed outrages against the people and the missions. (37)

Strangeness is grafted onto the male Gómez Robledo body, and at the same time the statuette must endure severe mutilations to transform its wooden body so as to follow the fad of the day, "to dress sacred images in real clothes. . . All statues of Mary, no matter what their title, came to be dressed like Spanish Queens, with jeweled crowns and with silken gowns and mantles of royalty" (40). *La Conquistadora*'s clothing is socially symbolic of Spain's dominance and wealth in the New World, but it also allowed for a new form of veneration that was particularly Catholic, and that provided a way to hide, quite literally, the foreignness of Fray Angélico's ancestors.

Fray Angélico's transvestite ventriloquism reinforces New Mexico's Spanish regional charm as much as it shores up the state's regional performativity. *La Conquistadora* crosses gender lines and blurs what is sacred and what is sacrilegious, but as the statuette reveals, New Mexico history is full of these types of crossings. As the first chapter reveals, the statuette came from Mexico with Fray Alonso de Benavidez, the famed Franciscan who was born in Spain, became a priest in the New World, and served as *custos* of New Spain's far northern frontier (9). *La Conquistadora* describes the journey to New Mexico from Mexico City from within a wooden box on an oxcart along the *camino real* (the king's road), and despite the enclosure, the description is like a travelogue of the northern route. Literally, the enclosed box makes for a closeted space from which the statuette makes its way in to New Mexico and addresses the audience.

Along the way, *La Conquistadora* tells the story of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the brown-skinned virgin who appeared to Juan Diego in 1531 at Tepeyac near Mexico City. In fact, the statuette tracks the journey north through the Our Lady of Guadalupe images, one a New World *mestiza* and the other a Spanish queen. Though the two images have a similar religious history, they diverge at the level of ethnicity and nationality. *La Conquistadora* is careful to distinguish between them. The statuette confesses, “[I]n my solitary dreams I began to be grateful to Our Lady of Guadalupe, not the holy painting in the Valley of Mexico, but a much older statue in Spain” (41). Here, the autobiographical voice enacts an “authenticating strategy” that detaches New Mexico from Mexico, even though the narrative reveals an inter-American connection between the two places, one regional and one global.

*La Conquistadora* connects New Mexico to a larger global world, even though it at the same time maintains the state’s provincial discourses. The autobiography shows that New Mexico is always already a global site, and its globalization culminates with the state’s modern nuclear history. The statuette prophetically calls attention to the state’s nuclear context early in the narrative when describing the journey north from within the enclosed box and just outside of White Sands where the first atomic bomb was tested:

At one point before we again met the river, as we approached a great table mountain of black lava, like a mammoth pancake burnt black at the edges, I saw a single white cloud hanging motionless many miles to the east. And I thought of another cloud that would hover over that spot three hundred and twenty years later—a cloud shaped like a giant mushroom

and casting invisible death for leagues around the flats of Alamogordo.

(26-27)

From within the enclosed space of the wooden box, the statuette offers a glimpse of what's beneath the autobiography's historical performance in a closet-like fashion. Reference to Alamogordo opens up a window into White Sands without completely exposing it, creating a shadow narrative that literally hovers over the autobiography and at times presents itself (undresses, even) in the story. Within a nuclear context and its strategy of containment, the concealing and revealing of the author's "I" is a narrative strategy that also works to reveal and conceal the present in the past, and the performance of the past for the present.

While Fray Angélico's Prologue speaks from a mythical register that suspends time and space, the Epilogue positions the statue squarely in the US military industrial complex and post-nuclear world. Fray Angélico does so by describing the statuette's modern pedestal, carved "in the humming shops of the atomic city of Los Alamos, not long after the first bombs went off at Alamogordo, then at Hiroshima and Nagasaki" (129). In a 1950 article from *El Palacio*, Fray Angélico reveals that his father was the carpenter who made the statue's pedestal while the friar himself decorated it with rococo molding.<sup>22</sup> This critical knowledge further supports the notion that the statuette's "birth" in the Prologue is an allegory for the autobiography itself, for its "ancient" pedestal is actually "a modern work of precision underneath. . . fitted together, and purposely, in the humming shops of the atomic city" (129). The statue's pedestal exemplifies a clear example of how, literally, beneath the surface of the statuette's clothing, the traditional is also modern and the regional global. On the surface, the autobiography paints a

picturesque and even romantic portrait of New Mexico, but as the cover photo suggests, there is much beneath the surface of La Conquistadora's dresses. In this sense, the statuette's autobiography works like a closet, unveiling and re-dressing like the statue itself, and suggesting a critical regional framework in which the autobiography operates.

From the start of Fray Angélico's autobiography when the woodcarver chops the willow tree down for firewood, the tree's conflagration is like an apocalyptic image that marks the book's Nuclear Age and gives birth to the statuette. Yet on another level, Fray Angélico's autobiography of an ancient statue is also his own autobiography, particularly in light of his military and religious service overseas. In this way, Fray Angélico's ventriloquism takes place through his transvestite performances. Double invocations of the self—"I myself"—abound throughout the narrative to indicate two autobiographical voices: the statuette and the author, both of which collapse at the site of the statuette's clothing. In fact, Fray Angélico purchased a custom-made dress for the statue when in Germany during his second military duty overseas, and he also used his uniform to have a second dress hand made.<sup>23</sup> Thus, what appears to be ancient is actually modern, and in the end the autobiography fuses La Conquistadora with the state's military industrial complex and post-Trinity Site landscape.

By the end of *La Conquistadora*, Los Alamos becomes like a mirror image of the statuette and, by extension, of the author himself. The autobiography's depiction of Santa Fe and Los Alamos uses the rhetoric of that 1949 *National Geographic Magazine* article "Adobe New Mexico." Recall, in Mason Sutherland's words, "From the heights above Santa Fe, oldest capital city in the United States, one can see the lights of Los Alamos, the Atomic Age city" (783). Sutherland interviewed Fray Angélico after he

returned from his overseas military service early in the 1940s. By 1954, the friar had also just returned from his National Guard service during the Korean War. Unlike the destructive landscape at the end of *We Fed Them Cactus*, the Atomic City appears as a bejeweled one in *La Conquistadora*, striking a similar pose as the statuette itself adorned with precious clothing and jewelry. “Every year now, on a late Sunday afternoon in June,” she says, “as my procession winds slowly down the narrow streets of Santa Fe to my chapel at Rosario, I can make out the atomic city against the blue mountain flank, a thin white blur that turns into a necklace of lights as darkness falls” (129). The lights of Los Alamos allow the statuette to come out of its closet, so by the end of the narrative, instead of longing to look like a meadow, or telling its story from inside of a wooden box, the statuette identifies with the nuclear landscape that surrounds the sacred city of Santa Fe.

*La Conquistadora* does not isolate Santa Fe’s regional space, nor does it lose sight of New Mexico’s regional locale. Instead, the invocation of the Atomic City renders a critical regional portrait of New Mexico, or in the words of the narrator, “a sister state of all the other United States of North America” (130). By contrast, Cabeza de Baca’s Llano in *We Fed Them Cactus* is unique to New Mexico, making the region less of a “sister state” and more like an only child of the Southwest. Both *Cactus* and *La Conquistadora* are set in New Mexico, but Cabeza de Baca isolates the region so as to bring it back together in the face of modernity. Meanwhile, Fray Angélico positions the state within a larger global map. In this way, *La Conquistadora* is a modern regional icon that in Fray Angélico’s autobiography becomes a critical regional symbol of New Mexico’s place in the hemispheric and global world. Fray Angélico mediates the

differences between Cabeza de Baca's New Mexico and Haniel Long's Mexico. In *We Fed Them Cactus* the author tones down and conceals her own transgressions so as to remember New Mexico conservatively and provincially. Cabeza de Baca regroups the region in light of its modernity, but Haniel Long's *Malinche (Doña Marina)* uses New Mexico as a hemispheric gateway into a regional modernist interpretation of Mexico's conquest.

#### Haniel Long and Regional Modernism: The Case of *Malinche*

Haniel Long was a New England poet who, like his peers Witter Bynner and Alice Corbin Henderson, moved to New Mexico suffering from tuberculosis. Fellow poet and longtime friend Bynner introduced Long to the scenic Southwest after Bynner himself moved to Santa Fe to recover from tuberculosis and on the advice of his own good friend, Corbin Henderson. The three poets formed the Writer's Edition with the assistance of John Gould Fletcher, and they also began meeting at the Corbin Henderson home where they started the Poets' Roundup. Born in Rangoon, Burma in 1888, Long spent the first three years of his life there, the son of Methodist missionary parents who moved back to the US in 1891, settling in Pittsburgh and "living, by choice, among the poor. . .the indigent and miserable."<sup>24</sup> The Long family also spent time in Minnesota, where the father held other pastorates. "Prior to the time of his entrance at Harvard," says Long's biographer Robert Burlingame, his "life was that of the traditional boy in America. At home there were normal and healthy relationships with his parents and sisters, and with his cousins, most of whom were girls."<sup>25</sup> In 1903 Long attended Exeter; in 1907 he entered Harvard; and in 1910 he joined the English Department faculty at the



Carnegie Technology School. Due to ill health and nervous strain, Long retired from his teaching position in 1929 and moved his wife and son to Santa Fe, where he co-edited the *Writer's Edition* and published his work prolifically.

As with Corbin Henderson, Long's move to the Southwest proved to be regenerative, both in a physical and in a poetic sense. In 1924, the Longs purchased a home in New Mexico, and in 1929, they permanently relocated to the Santa Fe literary scene where Haniel started up the *Writer's Edition* and began publishing his and other literary works, both regional and non-regional, including his own *Atlantides* (1933), Corbin Henderson's *The Sun Turns West* (1933), Fletcher's *XXIV Elegies* (1935), and Fray Angélico's *Clothed With the Sun* (1939). Long was a lyrical poet who combined Classical, Oriental, and Christian styles, a diversity that *Poetry* magazine questioned and ultimately dismissed. These aesthetic standards provoked Fletcher's 1935 review of *Atlantides* for *The New Republic* in which he defended Long. Fletcher also defended Fray Angélico's *Clothed With the Sun* in his 1940 *Poetry* review, but Fletcher argued more forcefully for the aesthetic value of Long's poesy, especially his multiple styles, from English verse to Imagist modernism, as well as Long's re-invention of old traditions using free verse and daring portrayals of sexual love. In Fletcher's words, *Atlantides* is "a permanent addition to the best American poetry that has appeared these last twenty years," and he concludes that, "to anyone who has either read or appreciated poetry, it is obvious that the kind Mr. Frost writes is both pretentious and childish and at bottom execrably bad."<sup>26</sup> Harsh words for America's canonical poet, but Long defied poetic convention like his fellow poet and friend Fletcher.

Regional upbringing and religious experience differentiated the poetry of Fletcher and Long, for Long's New England sensibility infused his poetry with a mystical sense of the earth, and so did the "Indo-Chinese landscapes and peoples" of his childhood.<sup>27</sup> Long's poetry captures the vagaries of modern-day life through simple images that are akin to Chinese poetry, which no doubt reflected the Indo-Chinese landscapes in which he grew up, but that also stemmed from the Long family's Methodism. Religion and his parents' missionary activity overseas were formative to Long's sense of regionalism and regional aesthetics, and so the expanse of Long and Fray Angélico's religions and regionalisms was similar. Both Long and the friar composed lyrics that meditated on the beauty of all living things, but Long celebrated the "mystic earth" while Fray Angélico celebrated the "*rosa mystica*." Neither Long nor Fray Angélico erased the forces of modernity from their poetry, but Long built on the modern forces that uprooted and many times destroyed traditional culture, while Fray Angélico mediated them. The best example of Long's regional modernism is *Malinche*, his second venture into what Bert Almon calls "symbolic history," a narrative of the Conquest of Mexico as told from the perspective of Cortés Indian translator and mistress who was at one time part of the noble class. In *Malinche*, Long crosses the US-Mexico border, takes an "outsider" perspective, and speaks in the voice of a Mexican Indian woman at the center of religious conquest and cultural conflict.

Long's best known work was his first "symbolic history" called *Interlinear to Cabeza de Vaca* (1936), which was also a product of the Writer's Edition. Long composed *Interlinear* in an epistolary manner, writing from the first-person perspective and reinterpreting the Spanish castaway Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca's 1542 account of

the New World to the king of Spain. Cabeza de Vaca was a Spanish official who shipwrecked off the coast of Florida in 1528 and made his way back to Mexico with three other survivors in 1536. Recall, this is the same Cabeza de Vaca to whom Fabiola's family claimed descent. Long literally took the voice of Cabeza de Vaca, demonstrating the historical and cultural forces that predetermined Fabiola's reclamation of her Spanish lineage almost two decades later. In *Malinche* Long takes the perspective of Hernán Cortés' Indian mistress and translator, and the narrative follows the conquest through a series of diary entries written ostensibly by Malinche herself. *Interlinear* and *Malinche* embody two different historical experiences that get diffused through the gendered voices of Long's historical subjects: one a male Spaniard who wrote and published his own account of his New World experiences; the other an Indian female with the gift of language but who was illiterate.

Because of Malinche's illiteracy, Long relies on second-hand accounts, especially Bernal Diaz del Castillo's narrative of the Conquest of Mexico and Cortés' reference to her in his letters to King Charles V. In this way, Long weaves together a first-hand account of Malinche, who was also known as Doña Marina to the Spaniards. The title's double invocation of its subject's name points to the narrative's double meaning: on the surface, it is an account of the conquest, but it is also a much deeper commentary on the cultural politics of modern male-female relations. Burlingame describes the difference between *Interlinear* and *Malinche* in terms of prose. Whereas Cabeza de Vaca represents a masculine spirit, Malinche represents a feminine one that "lingers in the luxuriant imagery of her prose" (Burlingame 79). As Burlingame describes it, "Malinche's prose" is metaphorical and flowery, not like Cabeza de Vaca who speaks directly and without

embellishments. Ironically, “Malinche’s prose” narrates the bloody conquest of Mexico in poetic passages that juxtapose man’s violence with nature’s beauty. In one instance, Malinche describes her duty as a caretaker of the wounded Spanish soldiers: “To-day they taught me their important words, those that mean fever and blood and pus and death, and gold and money and fear, and haste and worry, and nightmare and prayer, and mother and Mother of God.”<sup>28</sup> Long uses a form of transvestite ventriloquism that is more ventriloquist than transvestite, for unlike La Conquistadora’s literal dresses, Malinche’s speech signifies a rhetorical re-dressing.

Long juxtaposes destructive and artistic images—blood, pus, and death, on the one hand, and nature, beauty, and birth, on the other (8)—creating an ironic sense of time and space in *Malinche*. By taking Malinche’s voice, a historical figure who through her gift of language mediated the Conquest of Mexico, Long makes the conquest appear inevitable and the destruction of traditional culture necessary. As Long has it, Malinche believes that Cortés is the white-skinned god Quetzalcoatl, so from her perspective the Conquest is Mexico’s spiritual destiny. “The Feathered Serpent, the White God, has kept his word and returned to us,” she says early in the narrative (5). Later, after arriving in Tenochtitlán, Malinche converses with Montezuma and tells the Aztec ruler, “the God is not Cortés, he is *in* Cortés, hidden, undiscovered. . . . Quetzalcoatl has come back to us not in his own likeness . . . . To free him will need love, inexhaustible love” (29). Malinche’s belief in the power of love becomes a vehicle for Long’s modernist views of womanhood and his answer to the fragmented relations between man and woman. As he puts it in his Epilogue, “Malinche is an important and interesting gift to human consciousness from the history of the New World” (39). Long compares Malinche to Jeanne d’Arc, Alcestis,

Dante's Beatrice, and Milton's Eve, and he argues that, "Like Jeanne d'Arc, Malinche is a doppelganger; she moves in two worlds, a world of actuality we are familiar with, and a more psychic world with which we are growing more familiar" (40). In short, "Malinche's prose" reflects Long's concern with repairing social relations between man and woman, and the Epilogue reveals that at the mythical level Long's story is meant also to rearrange the image of woman in the male psyche.

The "Epilogue: Regarding Malinche" is central to the book's ideological spirit, the author's aesthetic choices, and the narrative's "female" voice, even though it seems to come as an afterthought at the end of the story. The "Epilogue" demonstrates that "Malinche's prose" is rooted in European myth and classical tales of divine womanhood, and in many ways it reflects Long's New England sensibility. However, despite its rootedness in European womanhood, *Malinche* is a New World history that is especially significant to the post-WWI era when the entire European social and political fabric was in a state of crisis. In this way, the book's deeper implications opens up the regional unity that Cabeza de Baca establishes in *Cactus*. Long's regional narrative has a universal scope that disseminates beyond New Mexico, the Southwest, and even Mexico. Halfway through the Epilogue Long begins to call Malinche by her Nahuatl name, Malintzin, "the termination 'tzin implying affection and respect" (41). At the level of nomenclature Long implies affection and respect for his "all-around" heroine who was equal to Cortés, and not a subordinate in the male psyche, or a scapegoat for the Conquest of Mexico. Malinche embodies what Long calls a third type of heroine who moves beyond both the maternal and the courtesan images of European womanhood byway of her gift of language (46-49). As Almon explains, the "archetype of the interpreter

naturally involves an element of reciprocal action, of shared enterprise—an element too often lacking in the conventional literature of passion.”<sup>29</sup> Thus, while the title’s double invocation of Malinche’s name suggests the narrative has a double-meaning, the notion of a third category puts in Long’s *Malinche* in a curious location of culture akin to Chicana feminist renditions of Malinche/Doña Marina/Malintzin.

Malinche is not the violated mother of Mexico in Long’s portrayal, a representation that is contrary to Mexican philosopher Octavio Paz, who saw Malinche as the source of Mexico’s modern downfall in his foundational book, *The Labyrinth of Solitude* (1950). Instead, Long’s *Malinche* represents an alternative modernism that sees her as a mytho-historical mother. In this way, Long pre-conceives Emma Pérez’s notion of third space Chicana feminism, and, by extension, his *Malinche* is a more thematic precursor to Chicana literature than Cabeza de Baca’s *We Fed Them Cactus*. For Chicana feminists, Malinche is a paradigmatic figure because of her linguistic ability and, as Norma Alarcón argues, because she is Our Lady of Guadalupe’s “monstrous double.”<sup>30</sup> Chicana scholars counteract previous Mexican and Chicano assessments of Malinche as a sell-out, arguing instead that she assisted the Spanish conquest because she believed Cortés was Quetzalcoatl. In this regard, Long’s narrative gives voice to Malinche/Doña Marina/Malintzín in a way that connects his transvestite ventriloquism to Chicana feminism. In *Malinche*, Long begins speaking from a third perspective when he says, “She who speaks to you out of her heaven is that Malinche whom Hernán Cortés called Marina” (3). In this first line, the narrative acknowledges two persons, Malinche and Marina, one Indian identity and one Spanish, but the third voice suggests an outsider

is speaking (ventriloquism). “Malinche’s prose” thus re-defines the notion of a “third space” and throws new light on Chicana feminist discourse.

There is a third way to read *Malinche* and its political unconscious, and her Nahuatl name embodies this unspoken representation. As Burlingame says, Long’s regional prose does not strive for folk realism; instead “the personalities of his books transfuse as much of his personality as they reveal of their own” (73). Burlingame argues that “Long’s personality acts as a liberating catharsis,” but his assessment assumes *Malinche* is independent of its regional context (73). On the contrary, the book is dedicated to Erna Fergusson, a native-born New Mexican who first introduced Long to Malinche. Fergusson even composed a movie script about the slave girl’s experiences as Cortés’ interpreter, but this work never germinated.<sup>31</sup> Instead, Fergusson inspired Long’s *Malinche* and its modern regionalist tale. Long’s politics of feminism fuel his Malinche narrative, but only in the Southwest can the germination of his feminism take place through the body and voice of a voiceless Mexican Indian woman. Long’s narrative about the Conquest of Mexico is not literally about New Mexico, but symbolically *Malinche* is a pretext to the destructive forces that transform the New Mexican and Southwestern landscape after the Trinity Site explosion.

By starting forward and then moving back in time, this chapter prescribes the significance of the nuclear landscape in Long’s regional modernist history of Mexico. From within this nuclear framework, Malinche’s juxtapositions of destruction and reincarnation are socially symbolic signs of the book’s own historical context and the author’s regional modernism. Though published six years before Trinity, *Malinche* nonetheless inscribes a regional modernism that is linked to, as Fletcher would put it, “the

guilt of Los Alamos.” New Mexico’s modern landscape informs “Malinche’s prose,” but in a way that does not loathe the forces of modernity. Instead, conquest from the perspective of Long’s Malinche is necessary, including all the attendant forces of destruction. Here, Long’s Malinche and Fray Angélico’s Conquistadora converge. Yet unlike Fray Angélico, who put the Southwest to work toward a religious and critical end, Long put religion toward a regional modernist end. Long’s Malinche imagines the Spaniards are fulfilling a religious prophecy, and particularly Cortés who she sees in the likeness of Quetzalcoatl. Thus, Long’s Cortés is a silent figuration signifying destruction, prophecy, and reincarnation. He is a historical force that appropriates local religious traditions and, by extension, signifies Long’s own cultural force as a transplanted Northeastern writer in the Southwest.

Malinche is a repository for Long’s cultural commentary, but Cortés signals the book’s political unconscious that is at worst destructive and at best artistic. Cortés is a colonial force that Long’s Malinche must reckon with, and he is a historical force that Mexico would rather forget. For Long, Cortés is a figure that shores up the duplicitous predicament of modern New Mexican culture, and he is a necessary colonial force that transforms the New World and its religious traditions, not unlike the Writer’s Edition itself and its own appropriation of New Mexico’s local, religious traditions. As the product of the Writer’s Edition, *Malinche* participates in New Mexico’s regional culture industry, a modern institution that also appropriated local religious traditions for secular audiences. Long literally appropriated Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca’s voice in *Interlinear*, and he constructed one for Malinche, but it is Cortés who embodies the destructive/creative forces of Long’s regional modernism. Read not as a man but as a



figuration, Long's Cortés is a sign of New Mexico's modern era, which sees the rise of the Writer's Edition alongside of Los Alamos—artistic innovation alongside of mass destruction.

Long's *Interlinear* and *Malinche* participate in an era that precedes Cabeza de Baca's *We Fed Them Cactus* and Fray Angélico's *La Conquistadora*. But this chapter's critical triptych reads its three texts in reverse to shore up the silent significance of the Atomic era in these transvestite historical fictions. Long's *Malinche* provides a different kind of representation of the Southwest than Cabeza de Baca because Long openly defied gender conventions by allowing a silent subject the ability to speak. Fabiola Cabeza de Baca did not have as much gender privilege as her Anglo contemporaries, and so she silenced her own voice in *We Fed Them Cactus*. But the double-edged Llano nevertheless shows signs of modern change. These changes to the Llano signal an apocalyptic landscape that in Fray Angélico's hands becomes a gateway to a global religion and a critical regional conquest. Both Fray Angélico's *La Conquistadora* and Long's *Malinche* welcome modern change, despite the mass destruction and appropriation of local religious belief that come with modernization. For Fray Angélico, though, conversion and not necessarily appropriation fuel his religious narrative, especially as it plays out on the body of his family history and the body of the statuette itself. In fact, Fray Angélico's "autobiography" performs a series of conversions, both literal and symbolic, that in the end transform secular discourses to tell a religious history of the New World. Cabeza de Baca stayed away from religion altogether and instead preserved New Mexican folk culture, but for her there was no female body in the history of New Mexico's Hispano traditions. Instead, repression propelled Cabeza de Baca's

“autobiography,” though there is a silent strain of resistance in Cabeza de Baca’s *Cactus* that she diffused using El Cuate’s voice.

Cabeza de Baca erased her own modern transgressions so as to re-collect New Mexico in the face of modernity. Unlike her Anglo contemporaries, Cabeza de Baca silenced herself in order to maintain at least a semblance of Hispano patriarchal order in a world of modern disorder, including her own class and gender transgressions. Symbolically, Cabeza de Baca committed her own acts of domestic destruction that mirrored Trinity’s transformation of the New Mexican landscape. In this way, Cabeza de Baca prefigured Chicana feminism. But unlike Chicana writers who openly defy middle-class gender conventions, Cabeza de Baca silently assumed a passive resistance, unlike Long who also broke with both religious tradition, but did so as to expand the Southwest. Fray Angélico’s *La Conquistadora* mediates the regional expanse in Long’s *Malinche* and the provincialism of Cabeza de Baca’s *We Fed Them Cactus*, and his Franciscanism is central to this mediation. What is significant about the three texts in this chapter is how the Cabeza de Baca, Fray Angélico, and Long participated in an ongoing war of regional representation in which religion plays an aesthetic role. From this critically regional perspective, Long’s *Malinche* reflects a kind of regional modernism that still reverberates in contemporary Chicana fiction, prose, and criticism. This point has the potential to build a critical trajectory of Southwestern religiosity and regional representation, and ultimately to break down the categories of resistance that diminish the similarities between Anglo Southwesternism and Chicana/o nationalism.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> The idea of transvestite ventriloquism is not my own. I owe a great deal of thanks to Jesse Alemán, my domestic partner in life and intellectual advisor on all things literary.

<sup>2</sup> The most well known examples of early Hispanic women writers are Nina Otero-Warren's *Old Spain in Our Southwest* (1936), Cleofas Jaramillo's *Shadows of the Past* (1942) and *Romance of a Little Village Girl* (1955), Cabeza de Baca's work, as well as the folk collections of Aurora Lucero-White. Elsewhere, in Texas Adina de Zavala, Elena Zamora O'Shea and Jovita González were engaging in similar work. There is a Southwestern critical regional book waiting to be written on the interconnections and contradictions between Texas and New Mexican Hispanic women writers.

<sup>3</sup> John Gould Fletcher to Fray Angélico Chávez, January 7, 1948.

<sup>4</sup> Reed, *A Woman's Place*, 125. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>5</sup> Ponce, *Life and Works of Fabiola Cabeza de Baca*, 140. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>6</sup> Padilla, *My History, Not Yours*, 196.

<sup>7</sup> Goldman, "I Yam What I Yam," 187.

<sup>8</sup> Rebolledo, "Narrative Strategies of Resistance," 135-136.

<sup>9</sup> Cabeza de Baca, "Folklore Group Preserves the Past," CSWR.

<sup>10</sup> Callon, "Las Vegas, New Mexico," n.p.

<sup>11</sup> McShane, "In Pursuit of Regional and Cultural Identity," 196.

<sup>12</sup> Scharff, *Twenty Thousand Roads*, 130. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>13</sup> Cabeza de Baca, *We Fed Them Cactus*, ix. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>14</sup> Rebolledo, intro to *We Fed Them Cactus*, xxiv.

<sup>15</sup> Fabiola married and divorced Carlos Gilbert by the time *We Fed Them Cactus* was published.

Unlike her previous cookbooks, which were published under her married name, *Cactus* was published under her maiden name (Ponce 174). According to Merrihelen Ponce, there is no record of Fabiola's marriage, but "[a]ccording to her niece, they married 'somewhere in Mexico'" (217). Reed provides the most information about Gilbert, a divorcee with children who was an active member in the League of

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United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), a Mexican American organization that promoted assimilation and civil rights.

<sup>16</sup> Leal, “*La Conquistadora* as Fictitious Autobiography,” 37. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>17</sup> Sifuentes-Jáuregui, *Transvestism, Masculinity, and Latin American Literature*, 10. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>18</sup> There is a preponderance of transvestite ventriloquism in New Mexican literature. I talk at length about Fray Angélico and Fabiola Cabeza de Baca, but I also have in mind several other instances in which a sort of drag performance takes place in key New Mexican narratives. In Otero-Warren’s *Old Spain in our Southwest*, for instance, she tells the story of “The Field Crosses of the Farmers” in the voice of her Indian ranch hand. The New Mexico Federal Writer’s Project used a similar strategy of collecting folktales from Spanish-speaking *ancianos* (old timers), but Otero-Warren and Cabeza de Baca draw attention to their own role as listeners and storytellers themselves in way that shores up their transvestite ventriloquies. Another example is Miguel Antonio Otero’s *The Real Billy the Kid* (1936), a biography that combines both written accounts and oral lore about William H. Bonney, aka Billy the Kid. In the last chapter, Otero claims to have met the Kid himself, an interesting autobiographical moment in which the author becomes the subject of the book, too. The Kid’s performance of New Mexican ethnicity throughout the book—he spoke Spanish, he dressed like a *vaquero*, he rode to and from Old Mexico, and he killed Apaches—makes for an interesting commentary on the author himself who appears at the end of the book as ethnographer (outsider) and native (insider).

<sup>19</sup> Fray Angélico, *La Conquistadora*, 3. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>20</sup> Worshiping the statue through its clothing is a local folk practice that is traditionally female-centered, thus the friar crosses gender practices from the very beginning, as the cover photo captures him in the process of changing the statue’s favorite Guatemalan dress for the Oriental one. In a traditional setting, a woman would be changing the statue’s clothing, but the autobiography generates an ambiguous space of gender representation that the friar couches in a multilingual conception of female beauty and, by extension, a critical regional portrait of the Southwest. See also Ellen McCracken’s essay “Residual Signification in Re-Accented Texts” for a discussion of religious symbols in a secular context. McCracken

specifically discusses the statue's Santa Fe Indian Market dress by seamstress Dorothy Trujillo of Cochiti Pueblo. The statue presents a visual signifier, says McCracken, that is "extremely adaptable, allowing for a wide variation in actantial shifting through vestimentary codes" (67). Indeed, it is the statue's adaptability and "vestimentary codes" that enable the autobiography's literary transvestism.

<sup>21</sup> As her name suggests, La Argentina was a flamenco dancer born in Buenos Aires in 1888 to an Andalusian father and a Castilian mother; she performed in Spain, Paris, and North America before passing on in 1936.

<sup>22</sup> In Fray Angélico's article, "La Conquistadora Was a Paisana," he says in a footnote: "The story is connected with the present pedestal. The original one, as related in the statue's history, had been sawn off sometime in the last century in order to fit the image into a niche. This made it look rather squatty. So I asked my father, Don Fabián Chávez, to make a sturdy octagonal pedestal at the Los Alamos shop where he has done fine-type carpentry work since the inception of the Manhattan project. I covered this octagon with bits of old Spanish rococo molding from the Cathedral Museum and covered the entire surface with bronze paint. This manner of acquiring the pedestal was designedly a poetic prayer that La Conquistadora may keep the Satanic horrors of atomic destruction, which originated not far from her throne, firmly suppressed beneath her feet" (306).

<sup>23</sup> Fray Angélico to Fr. Vincent Kroger, February 14, 1952.

<sup>24</sup> Armitage, "Haniel Long," 45.

<sup>25</sup> Burlingame, *Haniel Long and His Work*, 1. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>26</sup> Fletcher, "Atlantides," 368-369.

<sup>27</sup> Fray Angélico, foreword to *Piñon Country*, n.p.

<sup>28</sup> Long, *Malinche*, 8. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>29</sup> Almon, "Woman as Interpreter," 229. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>30</sup> Alarcón, "Traductora, Traditora," 111.

<sup>31</sup> Erna Fergusson Collection, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico.

## Chapter Five: From Critical Regionalism to Regional Nationalism:

### Fray Angélico Chávez's Historical Recovery, 1959-1985

“[F]olklore is the poetry of history.”<sup>1</sup>

In 1948, the editor of *New Mexico Historical Review* Sylvanus Morley published Fray Angélico's three articles about the Spanish colonial statuette La Conquistadora in a small collection entitled *Our Lady of the Conquest*. The book is a historical study and the product of Fray Angélico's interest in New Mexico's religious past. *Our Lady of the Conquest* was the friar's first published history of New Mexico, but it would not be his last. After his return to New Mexico from WWII, Fray Angélico began cataloguing the archives of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe. In March of 1948, as he lay in a St. Vincent Hospital bed suffering from a serious case of the flu, he found time to devote himself to historical research and scholarly writing.<sup>2</sup> Three months before, Fray Angélico wrote to his Father Provincial back in Ohio about being sick, “not so much physically or spiritually, but in the head”; he attributed it to “some sort of ‘delayed reaction’ from the war.”<sup>3</sup> At the time, Fray Angélico was busy researching, writing, and publishing historical articles on New Mexico's Spanish colonial missions and the statuette La Conquistadora for *New Mexico Historical Review*.

Fray Angélico's correspondence with his religious superiors is an interesting archive in and of itself that narrates his shift to historical recovery. As a previous chapter demonstrates, Fray Angélico's ten-year correspondence with poet John Gould Fletcher is central to understanding the friar's poesy. The Fletcher-Fray Angélico correspondence demonstrates that the two poets' sense of regionalism differed in matters of religion.

Fray Angélico's letters to his Franciscan superiors in Ohio are equally important, but they differ from the ones he wrote to Fletcher. These Franciscan letters rest for posterity in the Franciscan Archives in Ohio, and they provide a window into Fray Angélico's day-to-day religious duties. Yet the letters also present another angle from which to read the friar as a man of letters, and particularly his move into historical recovery at the end of the Writer's Era and after WWII.

As the previous chapter shows, *La Conquistadora* is a critical regional history, and *Our Lady of the Conquest* is the autobiography's modern regionalist counterpart. Both texts operated within a regional historical apparatus, but the autobiography also operated within a religious one that extended beyond the region. Both the factual (*Conquest*) and the fictional (*Conquistadora*) accounts of the statuette received Church imprimatur and ecclesiastical support from the Franciscan Order. Archbishop Edwin V. Byrne wrote the introduction to *Our Lady of the Conquest*, a study Fray Angélico compiled from archival fragments in the Archdiocese of Santa Fe. Ronald J. Grimes notes in his study of the Santa Fe fiesta that Archbishop Byrne re-established the confraternity of La Conquistadora in 1956, and Fray Angélico played no small part in this revival. *Our Lady of the Conquest* is a modern regionalist history told from the historical perspective of its author, but *La Conquistadora* is a critical regional history that puts Fray Angélico's history in the voice of the statuette. Having more poetic license than *Our Lady of the Conquest*, the autobiography discloses (dis-clothes) the secrets of New Mexico's Spanish-Catholic past, which include the skeletons in the author's own family closet. Fray Angélico is the "pure" historian in *Our Lady of the Conquest*, but he takes up a feminine persona in *La Conquistadora*. In essence, what the autobiography's "drag"

performance signals is a different mode of regionalism than the friar's preceding historical articles.

Fray Angélico's Marian histories operated under two regionalisms, both modern and critical. After Fray Angélico "retired" from the Franciscan Order, his historical work operated under an altogether different modality. While certainly a result of Fray Angélico's sudden separation from the Church, the shift is also perhaps a sign that civil rights discourses were influencing even in the friar's work.<sup>4</sup> The discourses of nationalism, which were more militant and exclusive, supplanted the critical regionalism in his work. By the 1980s, Fray Angélico no longer contemplated poetry, atoms, and art. Instead, his later historical works represent a different mode of regional representation that set him apart from his religious Order, and therefore away from his critical regionalism. Instead of putting the Southwest to work toward a religious end, like in his poetry, art, and belles-lettres, Fray Angélico's later historical writings put his religion to work toward a regional end. This dissertation has so far argued that Fray Angélico's religion is what makes his regional work critical, but what happened to his regional work after his break from the Church? While he certainly still saw himself as Franciscan, even *more* Franciscan *after* he left the Order, this made for a real headache for his religious superiors because he showed a complete disregard for authority. Each time Fray Angélico left home, he returned to New Mexico more worldly—and more socially conscious—though his writings became more particular and self-driven as the years rolled on. For instance, the University of New Mexico Press published his magnum opus *My Penitente Land: Reflections on Spanish New Mexico* (1974) just three years following



his separation from the Church, and other local presses published the three historical biographies that followed—all three without Imprimatur.<sup>5</sup>

Fray Angélico's post-retirement works focused on New Mexico's secular diocesan era, a historical time period before, during, and after Mexican Independence. During this time, the Franciscans lost control of New Spain's religious institutions, opening up clerical positions to American-born sons (Creoles) who were educated in Durango, Mexico, as secular or diocesan priests, and not as Franciscans. Literally, Fray Angélico's biographies were separate from the Church, and his place as a regional historian was becoming fully recognized, but this recognition began long before his retirement. By the time he co-translated and co-published *Missions of New Mexico, 1776* with Eleanor Adams in 1956, says Marc Simmons, "Fray Angélico was securely established as a major regional historian."<sup>6</sup> What distinguished between his later historical works and his Marian histories of an earlier era was a regional modality that shifted with the discourses of nationalism. As this chapter will show, *My Penitente Land* was the formative ground on which Fray Angélico made this historical movement in the post-Chicano Movement era.

This chapter evaluates Fray Angélico's historical writing career in three parts so as to demonstrate how it represents three different regional modalities. His research into La Conquistadora and other ancient Madonna relics from New Mexico's Spanish Catholic period received full support from his religious superiors in Ohio, sometimes with the assistance of other Ohio-based Franciscan historians, and mostly published in regional venues. The friar's two histories of La Conquistadora represent two modes of regional representation, modern and critical, and they serve as a pretext to Fray

Angélico's historical thesis on New Mexico's 1680 Pueblo Revolt. Fray Angélico published three pieces in which he lays out his Pueblo Revolt thesis, which consists of two articles and a novel, and these three works comprise the first panel of this chapter's critical triptych. Each piece of his Pueblo Revolt thesis represents a different mode of regional inquiry, as it evolves within and against its social histories. *My Penitente Land* is the central panel in this chapter's critical triptych, for it signals the culmination and the turning point in Fray Angélico's writing. The third panel uses his two post-retirement biographies as examples of his shift to what I characterize as his regional nationalism, a mode of representation that mirrored cultural nationalism taking root across the Southwest but particular to his New Mexican homeland. While this chapter focuses solely on Fray Angélico's work, it nevertheless maintains its triptych cultural critique by fleshing out three modes of regional writing in his historical works: modern regionalist, critical regionalist, and regional nationalist.

### Three Regional Modalities, One Theory: Fray Angélico's Pueblo Revolt, 1959-1967

“From under its froth and flower, and directly from the founts and roots of factual sources, there come these ordinary folk whom conventional history overlooked: obscure aborigines and colonists and soldiers of varied character, friars of obstreperous temperament as well as meek and holy martyrs, a confused Indian warrior with a blood-stained mallet, and, behind it all, a mysterious underground being with memories of darkest Africa simmering in his veins.”<sup>7</sup>

Between 1959 and 1967, Fray Angélico published three separate historical pieces on New Mexico's Pueblo Revolt. The first and the last were *New Mexico Historical Review* articles, while the second was the historical novel *The Lady From Toledo*, originally published in 1960 by the Academy Guild Press out of Fresno, California. *The Lady From Toledo* was to be Fray Angélico's twelfth book but only his first novel. As the novel's title implies, the story is about a small replica statuette from Toledo, Spain, an image of Nuestra Señora de Sagrario. The statuette holds the novel's three narrative blocks: 1) the story of a crippled Spanish girl; 2) the story of a martyred friar and an African-Indian fugitive slave; 3) and the story of a disloyal "indio con calzones" (119). Fray Angélico tells us he pulled these characters from "the founts and roots of factual sources" (7). As a result, the novel is like *La Conquistadora*, a fictional story buttressed by the archival record, but the autobiography is a more intimate genre that better facilitates the statuette's first-person narrative. Raphael Brown in his 1961 review from *The Americas* characterizes the novel as "motionless," mainly because its main protagonist is an inanimate object. Thus, *The Lady From Toledo* is not important as a great piece of literature; rather it is important because it reflects the discursive changes that began to take root in Fray Angélico's historical writings alongside of the Civil Rights era.

The first piece in Fray Angélico's Pueblo Revolt thesis is a 1959 article from *NMHR* about the Toledo statuette called "Nuestra Señora de la Macana." He notes, "Incidentally, I have finished writing the Macana story at greater length in fictional form, as seen through the eyes of the High Sheriff's Daughter and the Black God of Po-he-yemu, in the hope that it will make interesting reading for a wider audience, if the book

happens to find a willing publisher one of these days” (91). The days were not long in passing, for the Academy Guild Press published the book not long after the friar promoted it in the *NMHR*—no doubt in a self-interested attempt to procure support for his literary efforts in the historical realm, particularly in a post-Writer’s Era. The novel and the article demonstrate how Fray Angélico’s Marian writings operate under two forms of regionalism: modern and critical. In 1967, Fray Angélico would add a third piece to his Pueblo Revolt trilogy, a *NMHR* article called “Pohé-yemo’s Representative and the Pueblo Revolt of 1680.”

Major social and political changes took place between the years of 1959 and 1967, the time period spanning the publication of the three pieces to Fray Angélico’s Pueblo Revolt theory. Just a few years prior, the Supreme Court ruled that segregation of public schools was unconstitutional in *Brown v. the Board of Education* (1954), and soon after, it ruled anti-miscegenation laws unconstitutional (1967).<sup>8</sup> In New Mexican courtrooms, land was a central issue, and it was no less racial and just as national as the litigation that stemmed from the South’s racial conflict. Many Pueblo tribes used the US court system to win back trust to state and federal lands. Taos Pueblo in particular won back trust to Blue Lake and the 48,000 acres of forest surrounding it that was then part of the Kit Carson National Forest.<sup>9</sup> Fray Angélico’s theory that the Pueblo Revolt leader hatched all of his rebellious plans disguised as the god Pohé-yemo at Blue Lake offers a veiled revelation of the Taos Pueblo’s successful recovery of Blue Lake. The novel perhaps does not know what it veils, but this is perhaps the power of the political unconscious. Thus, Fray Angélico’s three historical writings on the Pueblo Revolt chart

the transition of the nation's cultural discourses from the era of modern regionalism to the emergence of cultural nationalism.

Fray Angélico's Pueblo Revolt theory should be read as a sign of the friar's political unconscious, and not necessarily as historical truth, and its transformations indicate this. The subject under investigation in Fray Angélico's 1959 article is a replica of Nuestra Señora del Sagrario, aka Nuestra Señora de la Macana, and translated into English as "Our Lady of the Aztec War Club." Accompanied by a 1957 photo of the statuette, the article brings this diminutive religious icon to light. "[F]irst, let us get acquainted with the statue itself," begins Fray Angélico, "as it now exists in the ancient friary church of San Francisco del Convento Grande in Mexico City. It is a very old miniature copy of the famed *Nuestra Señora del Sagrario*, the age-old patronal Madonna of Toledo in Spain" (81-82). Two things stand out about this particular Spanish image. One, it has a cone-shaped body with a carved head and hands, and second it holds a "stylized miniature replica, in wrought copper, of an Aztec *macana*" (82). In the article, Fray Angélico reproduced a translation of a 1755 history of La Macana written by a Fray Felipe Montalvo and discovered by Eleanor B. Adams in the Biblioteca Nacional in Santiago, Chile. Adams procured a photocopy of the document, and as Fray Angélico notes, he re-discovered the document in the Archives of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe and reprinted a translation of it in his 1959 article.

The Macana statuette and its history harken back to a Spanish Catholic era that would befit any Spanish Revival convention, but Fray Angélico's revision of historical documents suggests also a cultural transition was taking place in regional Southwestern discourses. By combining American Southwestern and Spanish Mexican histories of the

Pueblo Revolt, Fray Angélico uses one historical tradition to fill in for the gaps, erasures, or silences of the other. Unlike La Conquistadora, who sits in a special chapel in St. Francis Cathedral in Santa Fe, La Macana reigns in a Mexican friary, its little copper war club a sign of a different regional identity than the Spanish Catholic one it originally replicated. On the surface, La Macana reinforces the state's Spanish image, but beneath the its "froth and flower," so to speak, simmers Fray Angélico's own Pueblo Revolt theory. Perhaps the seed of the friar's own religious (and racial) rebellion a decade or so down the line made this theory brew. The 1959 article speaks in a modern regional register of dualities, pairing Spanish Mexican and Anglo Southwestern documents to tell La Macana's history, and even casting the forthcoming novel in a black/white binary (91). Actually, the novel is written from the perspective of at least four characters, but two characters, in particular, create a dichotomy that not only mirrors modern regionalist discourses, but also plays on the nation's racial imaginary.<sup>10</sup>

In the novel, Fray Angélico imagines the leader of the Pueblo Revolt to be a fugitive African slave, and in his 1967 article, he maintains that the leader is a descendant of the African-Indian Naranjo family.<sup>11</sup> Fray Angélico's Pueblo Revolt theory first appears as a footnote to his 1959 article. He then fictionalizes it in his 1960 novel, and later historicizes it in his 1967 article. In 1967, Fray Angélico traces a genealogical history of the African-Indian leader he says planned and executed the Pueblo Revolt. The theory is not without controversy. In a 1990 *NMHR* article Stefanie Beninato critiques Fray Angélico for his paternalistic approach to Pueblo resistance, but she does not discard the friar's theory altogether. She concedes that "there was a mulatto who was a tactical leader," but she doubts he played the kind of leadership role Fray Angélico

ascribes to him since blood quantum determined religious leadership in traditional Pueblo society.<sup>12</sup> More recently, in a 1998 article from *American Indian Quarterly*, Dedra McDonald disregards Fray Angélico's theory because it employs a "racist argument" by "[c]omparing Puebloans and Africans in words reflective of racist assumptions of the 1950s and 1960s."<sup>13</sup> Indeed, as this chapter has so far demonstrated, Fray Angélico's historical works participated in the modern regionalist discourses of their time. But the evolution of his Pueblo Revolt theory actually marks the emergence of civil rights discourses from the "racist" assumptions of a previous era. The only way to see this emergence is to look at the three pieces of Fray Angélico's theory simultaneously.

The historical veracity of the friar-poet's theory is not of interest here. Rather, the present discussion argues that the social, political, and cultural shifts taking place locally, nationally, and globally allow Fray Angélico's hypothesis to surface in the Anglo Southwestern historical imaginary in the first place. His theory is a slippery one because he bases it on folklore and not necessarily on fact, and he uses the 1959 article as its antecedent, in which he argues that "even the most outlandish legendary parts have a basis in factual history; in fact, we find the legend filling out historical gaps and throwing new light on the events of the Rebellion of 1680" (84). Fray Angélico specifically refers to Governor Otermín's Pueblo Revolt *autos* as proof for his controversial thesis, wherein many Pueblo warriors "reported that this Indian lieutenant of Po-he-yemu was very tall, black, and had very large yellow eyes, and that everyone feared him greatly" (Hackett and Shelby 4-5).<sup>14</sup> In a footnote, he says, "This infernal giant is the really fantastic feature of the Macana legend. . . The Spaniards dismissed it as pure myth; it so angered Otermín that he had 47 prisoners shot for insisting on this story, instead of revealing a

real human instigator” (94). Nevertheless, he continues, “this *teniente* had marks of a real person. . . Previous readings of old manuscripts had left snatches of such an individual in my mind, and I looked them up. And there emerged in the person of Diego de Santiago, or Naranjo, a mulatto from New Spain” (94).

By 1967, Fray Angélico’s theory was no longer a brewing footnote but a full-blown thesis that put his genealogical studies to the test. His theory gives little agency to the Pueblo people, who the friar characterizes as incapable of violent upheaval without the aid of “hybrid leaders” who resented the “prevailing caste system.”<sup>15</sup> The characterization of the Pueblos as “passive” and Naranjo as “active” is not a historical truth, but a position that mirrors the friar’s (imperialist) sense of the nature of the Pueblos. Fray Angélico’s Franciscan sensibility put him in an ambivalent location of culture, for it reinforced old discourses while at the same time it brought forth a different ethnographic perspective of Pueblo religious belief and ideology. This ethnographic perspective is especially apparent in Fray Angélico’s use of the Spanish term *teniente*, which refers to military rank, but that becomes a way to characterize Pueblo religious belief and the role he says Naranjo played in the Pueblo Revolt. “I shall translate *teniente* as ‘representative’ from now on,” explains Fray Angélico in the 1967 article. “It expresses more fully the double function of someone ‘taking the place of’ and ‘assuming the person’ of Pohé-yemo” (88). Indeed, I read Naranjo as a representative of the friar’s political unconscious that pushes itself to the surface in different ways and at different stages.

In historical terms, Naranjo represents what McDonald calls the intimacy between Indians and Africans in Spanish colonial New Mexico, but as a cultural figuration,



Naranjo represents Fray Angélico's political unconscious. His theory demonstrates that Southwestern regional discourses underwent a radical shift during the Civil Rights era as a result of the Black Power Movement and its call for international solidarity with colonized peoples around the globe. In this way, his theory changes from a regional perspective to an international one that expands even the cultural nationalism that was taking root within Chicana/o communities in the Southwest. *The Lady From Toledo* explains Pueblo Revolt history as the work of "ordinary folk whom conventional history overlooked." The theory that a *mulato* planned the Pueblo Revolt sheds light on New Mexico and the greater Southwest's racial and inter-racial past, but it also highlights the nation's racial fears in the past and in the present. In 1959, Fray Angélico kept those fears under modern regionalist wraps, but by 1967, the discourses of cultural nationalism and black internationalism allowed his Pueblo Revolt thesis to branch out, literally. The novel mediates the two articles and their regional discourses. Like his art, poetry, and short fiction, the novel used the triptych as a literary technique that brings together at least two contradictory regionalisms byway of a religious art form.

No doubt some of the novel's characters are based on factual sources, but they are also allegorical figures whose cultural work says something about the regional discourses under which Fray Angélico's work operated. As the novel's primary allegory, the statuette maintains its (slow) pace and links the three stories. Otherwise, the stories act independently of one another, each one taking the perspective of a minor character from a different social station and racial caste: a crippled Creole girl, a Franciscan priest, an African-Indian fugitive slave, and a conflicted Pueblo warrior. The first story sheds light on the fabled María Romero, the sheriff's daughter who was born paralyzed in Santa Fe,

and then miraculously healed when her family's replica Toledo statue appeared to her and prophesized the Pueblo Revolt. Fray José de Trujillo and Diego Naranjo are the two main characters in the second story, which begins with Padre Trujillo's reveries as a young boy in Spain, and then as a young friar seeking martyrdom in the Orient. The story culminates with Fray de Trujillo getting word of María's miracle and sitting down to compose a letter to the Convento Grande in Mexico City. The story then shifts to Naranjo's memories of Mexico City. Both characters are signatures of Fray Angélico himself, but they represent two factions of the Pueblo Revolt, which the third story brings together in a tragic way that reinforces dominant racial narratives and rearranges modern regional ones.

Fray Angélico's novelistic sense of history is both regional and trans-Atlantic, and the first and second stories juxtapose this duality while the third one resolves them—no doubt, in the racist trappings of its time. María embodies New Mexico's regional provincialism, Trujillo and Naranjo give the novel an international sensibility, and the third character mediates these local and global modalities. Juan el Tano is the novel's tragic hybrid, "*un indio con calzones*, an Indian living the white man's ways," who in the end must betray his Galisteo people but also his adopted Spanish culture (119).<sup>16</sup> During the siege of Santa Fe at the end of the novel, Juan enters the battlefield dressed as a mounted Spanish soldier, but he is eventually thrown from his horse where "he found himself once more a primitive Indian, in spite of his uniform and sash, fighting for his very life with the *macana* of a fallen comrade" (130). While in this "primitive" state, Juan decapitates the Toledo image, but his Christian senses come back to him. He then picks up the pieces and returns them to the Spanish military, instructing a soldier to return

them to María. The Pueblo shamans then order Naranjo to hang Juan from a tree, and his lynched body becomes a public display of brutality, betrayal, and retribution. In Fray Angélico's narrative at least, Juan's fate is just punishment for any subject tempted by racial rebellion. Yet there is another layer to this public retribution that makes it an ambivalent sign, and the ambivalence rests in María's allegorical body.

The novel blames Naranjo and punishes Juan for the Pueblo Revolt, but Juan is the necessary link between María and Naranjo, and the key figure who literally breaks apart and brings together the novel's central image: the beheaded statuette. After all, without Juan and his sacrilegious betrayal, there would be no prophecy of María's recovery. In the end, Juan becomes the novel's ultimate martyr, and much to Raphael Brown's critical dismay, since Fray Angélico completely omits the 21 Franciscan friars who were historically martyred during the Pueblo Revolt. This goes to show that what fuels the novel is not history, but a political unconscious that emerges in 1967. The novel closes at the San Lorenzo colony near what is today the US-Mexico border. There, María meets a Third Order layman (Buenaventura), relays her story, and sends the decapitated Toledo statue back to Mexico City where it takes on a hemispheric identity.<sup>17</sup> Juan's sacrilegious act ironically sanctifies the statue, affirms the virgin's prophecy, and enables María to walk again, a literal if not symbolic revival of New Mexico's Spanish body politic. But María's movement is not the same as the statuette's movement, for María stays behind in an ambivalent location of culture that represents the book itself: no longer a crippled Creole child of the Spanish Revival Era, but a revived border-woman with the gift of language.

Though marginal in the overall structure of the novel's triptych, Juan el Tano's tragedy is central to María as allegory, for her transformation is a culmination of Fray Angélico's work. The novel combines art, poetry, short fiction, and historical fiction in excessive amounts that slow down the narrative. Yet Fray Angélico's drawings provide an immediate and unwritten (or folk) document of the historical novel. The first and the third images especially connote the transformation that takes place in the novel, since they both depict female figures. In the first image, a Spanish doña stands within an adobe structure and against what appears to be the San Miguel Church in Santa Fe. The last image, however, represents a much younger-looking female figure standing on an unpopulated mesa with her body facing the audience, but her head turned away as she looks into the distance. One hand touches her heart while the other holds another handkerchief at her side, suggesting that she is in the act of bidding a farewell to someone or something, presumably Santa Fe, or even her virgin statuette. In-between the first and third images is an illustration of Taos Pueblo's famous multi-storied architecture. While the female figure in the third drawing is ostensibly María, the Spanish lady in the first image corresponds to María's grandaunt, Ana Robledo, who at the start of the novel tells María stories about the family's Toledo statuette.<sup>18</sup> By the end, María is the one storytelling.

The first illustration draws on the iconography of the Spanish Revival era, but the last one suggests a kind of farewell to this cultural iconography. Fray Angélico's Taos image is central to the transformation that takes place in the images and in the novel. The first and the second images draw on Santa Fe and Taos architecture, but the third drawing erases architecture altogether and suggests that, at the symbolic level, the drawings

illustrate the novel's break from regionalist structures. Taos Pueblo stages the novel's story of rebellion, but it also signals the novel's own cultural movement at the dawn of the Civil Rights era. The novel performs this movement using feminine symbols that are both religious (the statuette) and regional (María), or critically regional, but the two diverge at the site of the present-day US-Mexico border. Like his early work as an artist, poet, and fictional writer, *The Lady From Toledo* takes as its subject a Catholic Marian image. But the statuette's decapitated head is a socially symbolic sign that in some ways prophesizes the friar's own break from regionalist discourses. Although the novel is similar to his other "visual-verbal" works, as McCracken argues, the three stories and three illustrations bend and break away from the friar-poet's religious triptychs. *The Lady From Toledo* de-centers the friar-poet-artist's aesthetic triptych by introducing the tragic hybrid. In the end, the novel prophesizes Fray Angélico's own religious breakdown and future break from regionalist discourses. *My Penitente Land* is a key text in the friar-poet's historical break, for it not only coincides with his retirement, but it also turns his triptych aesthetic toward a more regional, tri-cultural one.

#### A Tri-Cultural Allegory: Fray Angélico's *My Penitente Land*, 1971-1975

*My Penitente Land* was Fray Angélico's seventeenth book, but it was his first publication as a layman and not a cleric. Between 1971-1975 Fray Angélico's official status in his Order was ambiguous, mainly because the padre refused to make an official request for laicization. Shortly after leaving his mission in Peña Blanca, Fray Angélico wrote to a fellow priest: "Disgusted and confused by the reactionary spirit of the Church since Vatican II, and more so by the confusion in our Order and Province regarding

Franciscanism—I was going nuts. To save my mind, I took the present course.” Further, he explained he had no “formal desire for secularization, laicization—or getting married!—none of which I want—just to get away from it all, and let the Lord take care of me whether as heretic, apostate, or what have you.”<sup>19</sup> Almost a year later, Fray Angelico composed a formal letter to his Minister Provincial Fr. Roger Huser in Cincinnati, Ohio, humbly begging to be “completely separated from the Order, province, etcetera.”<sup>20</sup> Fr. Roger in his own humble reply asked Fray Angélico to make a formal request for laicization (June 12, 1972), but the lesser friar’s retort was anything but humble (June 16, 1972). Fray Angélico’s unofficial status stirred up a debate over Canon Law, and it also created a small scandal over his public behavior with women. Upon investigation into the matter in 1975, Fr. Roger begged—and this time not so humbly—the Procurator General to grant Fray Angélico a dispensation after learning that “twice he has proposed marriage: on one occasion even the date was set, with a very young girl, who ‘at the last moment’ called it off.”<sup>21</sup>

Separation from the Church was a culminating moment in the life of Fray Angélico Chávez, and letters dated between 1971 and 1975 in the Franciscan Archive demonstrate that he was no meek friar. Correspondence amongst the many people in Fray Angélico’s dispensation from the Order include a couple of Minister Provincials, an Archbishop, and the cranky, 61 year-old friar. The correspondence includes letters, depositions, phone calls, and interviews that lasted for four years. While his ministerial officials pleaded to Fray Angélico to make an official request for laicization or secularization, the obstinate friar refused, creating a canonical dilemma for his Church superiors. Letters regarding the matter demonstrate that, by all accounts, Fray Angélico

still saw himself as a Franciscan, even after his request for a “separation.” What most unnerved Fr. Roger about Fray Angélico’s refusal to follow Canon Law was his popularity as “a well-known public figure in New Mexico: author, artist, historian, lecturer.” Fr. Roger concluded that Fray Angélico’s behavior alone was evidence that he desired a formal laicization, and if Rome would not grant it, then “scandal would be greater than it already is! . . . by his present living outside religious house and acting a kind of ‘double character’: priest (he uses the term ‘Fray’) religious, and still layman.”<sup>22</sup>

While *My Penitente Land* does not completely separate from the order of Fray Angélico’s previous histories, it does mediate his break away from the Order and from his regionalisms. *The Lady From Toledo* signals the friar’s shift from poetry to historical recovery, but *My Penitente Land* signals a break away from his critical regionalism. Though Fray Angélico identified with an earlier generation of Hispano identity than the Chicano nationalists that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, he nevertheless put to use the social discourses of the time in his rationale for leaving the Order. This is especially apparent in his first letter informing Fr. Roger of his decision, which he reasoned was a “dogmatic Scriptural problem [that] is further compounded by a basic moral issue.” Fray Angélico explained, “the ethnic minority to which I belong has been considered an inferior one by hierarchy and clergy.” Moreover, the friar used his historical research as evidence of “how they [Church hierarchy] have looked on us as inferior people,” and he added his own personal experiences over the last 34 years as further evidence of what he termed “ecclesiastical colonialism.”<sup>23</sup>

Fray Angélico’s superiors could not understand his *ethnic* rationale for leaving, and so it was easier to believe he was suffering from a mental breakdown. Even Fray

Angélico himself alluded to “going nuts” in his letters, but the cause of it was not a crisis in faith, for he complained of being sick “in the head” long before his rebellion. Perhaps a split personality was forming in the friar years before his separation from the Church, and the “double character” Fr. Roger identified was not the source of a problem, but the result of Fray Angélico’s experiences as an “ethnic minority” in his religious order. Ethnic discrimination and perhaps even a small case of post-war trauma at first caused mental anguish for the friar, and he split from his Franciscan Order for similar reasons. This is probably why his religious superiors could not understand the friar’s parting, and though they acted out of Franciscan humility, they also enacted a kind of “ecclesiastical colonialism” that drove Fray Angélico to split in the first place. Fray Angélico composed *My Penitente Land* during this tumultuous turn of events in his religious life, so Fr. Roger’s characterization of Fray Angélico as a “double” is a useful way to read *My Penitente Land* and its inscription of the friar’s dual religious personality.

*My Penitente Land* is a pivotal text because it coincides with Fray Angélico’s break from the Church, so it records his double personality as a poet-priest and a lay-historian. Mario T. García calls *My Penitente Land* an “oppositional historical narrative,” as well as “Fray Angélico’s most autobiographical historical text.”<sup>24</sup> Ironically, Fray Angélico did not identify with the Penitentes, but he used their religious bodies to inscribe his religious faith as independent of the Catholic Church. Fray Angélico was ambivalent about the Penitentes, as evident by the Prologue to *My Penitente Land*, which begins with an anecdote about the author and his companion as young boys spying on the village cobbler who belonged to the Penitentes. Staring into a back window, as Fray Angélico tells it, “my mate and I stuck our heads through the open window and burst out



singing an insulting parody we had learned from the older youths in town. Even the melody mocked the ‘flamenco’ nasal wail of the brotherhood’s own *alabados*.’<sup>25</sup> By repeating the childhood hymn in Spanish and English, the friar reinforces the memory and its construction of the cobbler as a voiceless subject. Ten year-old Manuel’s mother reprimands her son for disrespecting the Penitentes, and she explains that “only mean and uncouth people tried to spy on their penitential processions, or mocked them as I had just done” (x). His mother’s words undercut the ethnographic gaze and sensational representation of the Penitentes in Anglo American writings and the national media, but the memory itself introduces the author’s own autobiographical voice and ethnographic gaze, both of which distance him from the Penitentes.

In a 1954 *NMHR* article, “The Penitentes of New Mexico,” Fray Angélico debunks the theory that the religious brotherhood was once a branch of the Franciscan Third Order, a misconception that nineteenth-century religious leaders made in their assessments of New Mexico and that Anglo American writers later perpetuated. Alberto López Pulido says that the Third Order theory “is at the crux of the debate” over the penitent society’s origins, with “three competing theories.”<sup>26</sup> One theory relates that the Penitentes descended from another penitent society (Hermandad de la Sangre de Cristo) independent of the Third Order; another maintains that the Penitentes of New Mexico are a continuation of the Third Order; and Fray Angélico argues that they emerged during the Secular Period. Also a religious leader, Fray Angélico had more than just a historical investment in tracing the “true” origins of the brotherhood. He began reforming the Penitentes as a commissary for the Third Order, a process of institutionalization that the American Catholic Church began implementing in the nineteenth century, and that Fray

Angélico maintained in the twentieth century. In the nineteenth century, the newly appointed bishop and later archbishop of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, French-born John B. Lamy, tried and failed to abolish the brotherhood. As Fray Angélico puts it, “most of these people were good men, sincerely and deeply Catholic in their own simple faith, who believed that they were carrying on an old Spanish Catholic heritage.”<sup>27</sup> The characterization recalls the cobbler at the outset of *My Penitente Land*, and in the book the friar reiterates his position on the Third Order that he makes in his article.

Although the friar impetuously argues that the Penitentes were not members of the medieval Third Order, he maintains that the spirit of New Mexico’s Penitentes extends back to “a Spanish soul that colonized the New World from Patagonia to New Mexico” (114). *My Penitente Land* calls on a different religious body, the Penitentes, than Fray Angélico’s previous historical work, and he in the process weaves together, not a religious triptych, but a tri-cultural allegory of the state and of the author himself. The Penitentes’ medieval “Spanish soul” is the foundation for *My Penitente Land*, and the substance of what Phillip B. Gonzales calls Fray Angélico’s “striking eco-Christian allegory.”<sup>28</sup> As Gonzales argues, *My Penitente Land* “resuscitate[s] the organic Spanish American intellectual” in the context of the 1960s, especially Fray Angélico’s notion of “*castizo* consciousness,” which became the foundation for his Spanish American nationalism in the context of the Chicano Movement (279-80). This is to say that while Fray Angélico left the Church, he did not abandon his faith, and he called on a different religious body and secular discourse than his early work. While his early writings turned the (regional) tri-cultural model into a (religious) triptych structure, his post-retirement work was rooted in the regional, tri-cultural Southwest. *My Penitente Land* addresses

New Mexico's religious brotherhood, but not in the interest of Fray Angélico's religion. Instead, Fray Angélico re-dresses the Penitentes in order to stage his own religious split and, by extension, his break away from Southwestern critical regionalism. In this way, I expand Gonzales' notion of an "eco-Christian allegory" to argue that *My Penitente Land* expresses a particularly New Mexican regional nationalism through a tri-cultural allegory.

Fray Angélico positions himself outside of the Penitente brotherhood at the outset of *My Penitente Land*, an ambivalent location that cryptically inscribes his separation from the Franciscan Order. By comparing New Mexico to Spain and Palestine, Fray Angélico transforms the state's regional landscape into a Holy Land that emphasizes his Spanish American homeland and draws on the territorial nationalism tied to the Chicano Movement. There is both a national spirit and a regional focus in *My Penitente Land*, which is dedicated "To All the Diverse Peoples / of Our Other Forty-Nine States." In a section called "*Anima Hispánica*," Fray Angélico develops the notion of *castizo* consciousness. He begins with a travel narrative in which he and a fellow priest from Spain are driving near the Sangre de Cristo Mountain range—"into so-called Penitente country" (121)—during the Lenten season "more than three decades ago" (119). The memory serves as an entryway into Fray Angélico's discussion of the "Hispanic soul," or the "*españa castiza*," and it creates two priestly personas. Symbolically, the friar's memory gives us two images of himself, one in the present and one in the past, one ethnographic and the other autobiographical, one Spanish and one American. This dual identity forms the medieval Spanish soul that inhabits the indigenous Penitente body of Fray Angélico's biblical homeland.

The Penitente indigenous body forms the biblical landscape of the book, but its regional soul is *castizo*, two pieces to the tri-cultural allegory in *My Penitente Land*. Anglo America serves as a sort of phantom identity in the narrative, an “absent cause,” to recall Fredric Jameson’s words, at the head of the book’s tri-cultural allegory. One childhood memory in particular shores up the ideological location of Anglo American culture in the book:

Across the street from us lived an English-named physician and his wife who liked me to play with their one little son, some years younger than I. He had all kinds of expensive erector sets with which I enjoyed making odd objects for the tot’s delight. While he was busy entertaining himself with my creations, I took advantage of his father’s bookshelves loaded with encyclopedias, scores of issues of National Geographic magazine, and many illustrated medical tomes. Anyway, despite anyone’s natural curiosity about male and female anatomy, it was the photographs in the other books of landscapes, structures, and peoples in all parts of the world which fascinated me the most. (168)

The physician’s library opens up a world of imagination for the young Manuel, as an old Fray Angélico recalls, “through a chain of hindsight going far back, that even at that early age I had begun to notice how much the scenery of Palestine and Spain resembled the one of my own homeland” (168). In this *National Geographic* memory, Fray Angélico uses Anglo American cultural production to transcend time and space. At the allegorical level, the memory reveals what lay at the head of Fray Angélico’s penitente land and *castizo* soul.

Anglo American culture is like a ghostly body without a soul in *My Penitente Land*, an absent presence in the book whose significance is central to Fray Angélico's allegorical homeland. The friar's Spanish-Palestinian-New Mexican landscape, as it turns out, emerged from the pages of *National Geographic Magazine*, the ideological piece to Fray Angélico's tri-cultural allegory, which comes together in the memory of his English neighbor's library. Along with the two other memories—the Penitente cobbler, the Spanish priest, and the English physician—these recollections form a regional trio with biblical proportions. Fray Angélico creates an “eco-Christian” landscape that appropriates the Penitente body and sustains the *castizo* soul, but his tri-cultural allegory comes full circle with the memory of his English neighbor's library, itself an allegory of the book and its cultural work. Previously, the triptych structured the friar's work, a religious apparatus that put the tri-cultural Southwest to work toward a religious end. But in *My Penitente Land*, Fray Angélico weaves together a tri-cultural allegory that puts his religion to work toward an alternative, regional end. That is, the biblical homeland in *My Penitente Land* is composed of an Indian body, a Spanish soul, and an Anglo American head.

That Fray Angélico created this tri-cultural allegory when he did reflects a shift, not only in the autobiographical representation of his own self, but also in his representation of the Southwest. In the 1980s, Fray Angélico's religious work focused on the Secular Period in New Mexico history, the time period in which he argues the Penitentes originated. As opposed to his early historical work, which focused on the state's Spanish Catholic history and folk icons, his writings after *My Penitente Land* focus instead on the political history of New Mexico's Catholic Church. In *My Penitente*

*Land*, the “Mexican interlude” is important historically because it marks the “transition into the more prosaic modern scene from the halcyon days” of Spanish colonial New Mexico (228). Symbolically, though, the “interlude” represents a break from Fray Angélico’s Southwestern critical regionalism. His tri-cultural regional allegory in *My Penitente Land* signals the culmination of and break away from his Southwestern critical regionalism. In essence, *My Penitente Land* stages the split that his two post-dispensation historical biographies embody.

#### Fray Angélico’s Auto-Biographies and the Politics of Religion, 1981-1985

“[M]ore recent writers attributed Protestant ideas to Padre Martínez. . . [W]hile he came to appreciate and approve of religious freedom as practiced in the United States, [he] never for a moment wavered from the faith in which he had been born and nurtured.”<sup>29</sup>

Fray Angélico’s post-Civil Rights writings reflect the temper of their day.

Although technically published in the “Decade of the Hispanic,” which co-opted the radical discourses of Chicana/o identity, Fray Angélico penned at least two of his three biographies in the context of the Civil Rights era. Social conditions at the time allowed for a shift in Fray Angélico’s historical discourses, and this is especially evident in Fray Angélico’s historical biographies, *But Time and Chance: The Story of Padre Martínez of Taos, 1793-1867* (1983) and *Très Macho—He Said: Padre Gallegos of Albuquerque, New Mexico’s First Congressman* (1985). The biographies embody Fray Angélico’s separation from the Church, for they not only focus on New Mexico’s Secular Period, but all three were published without Imprimatur. Santa Fe Sunstone Press published the first

biography in 1983, and the private press of William Gannon in Santa Fe published the second four years later. In 2004 the LCD Press in Albuquerque published a third biography, *Wake for a Fat Vicar: Father Juan Felipe Ortiz, Archbishop Lamy, and the New Mexican Catholic Church*, co-written with Fray Angélico's nephew, Thomas E. Chávez. This last publication appeared eight years after the friar's passing in 1996, attesting to his still significant contributions to Southwestern Hispanic history.

The voice of Fray Angélico's last biography is not his own, and perhaps predictably, but this chapter has so far argued that the mutation of his voice signals the discursive shifts taking place in the backdrop of his historical writings. While the scope and breadth of the third biography is similar to the first two, there is not the same historical specificity and authorial spunk in the co-authored text. *Wake For a Fat Vicar* tones down the friar-historian's petulant rhetoric, and it reads more for a general audience or student of Southwestern history. In this sense, the final installment completes the friar-historian's transition from religious to secular history in a seamless way. Fray Angélico's two posthumous publications, *Wake for a Fat Vicar* and *Cantares: Canticles and Songs of Youth, 1925-1932* (2001), together represent the friar's two dominant personalities: one a poet-priest and the other a lay historian. While Fray Angélico's religion opened up another angle from which to view Southwestern regionalism, breaking from his religion created a "Mexican interlude," so to speak, in his own body of writings. Fray Angélico's two religious personalities—a priest religious and a layman—created a dilemma for his Church superiors, and a close reading of his first two biographies record the friar's embattled dualism.

Fray Angélico composed the Padre Martínez and Padre Gallegos biographies back-to-back, and he personally fundraised to get both published.<sup>30</sup> In 1985, upon publication of *Très Macho* (Gallegos), Fray Angélico explained in a letter, “The regular publishers declined to print the book mostly because I contradict a famous author like Paul Horgan.” Fray Angélico’s politician-brother “got a rich man to contribute \$8,000.00 for a private printing by a local publisher, who got the big check discreetly.”<sup>31</sup> While Fray Angélico may have felt more Franciscan in retirement, he certainly was not practicing a Franciscan lifestyle, as the concerns of his superiors demonstrate. Both Padre Gallegos and Padre Martínez were secular priests, and their life histories, as Fray Angélico tells them, mirror and refract his own post-dispensation experiences.

Padre Gallegos and Padre Martínez were Mexican nationals who received their education in the state of Durango as secular priests. Both priests witnessed the US-Mexico War; both became US citizens during the American Occupation; and both participated in the first provisional Territorial Assembly. Neither priest contested or resisted American Occupation, though the events that followed the Catholic Church’s transition from Mexican to American rule misconstrued their loyalty. Mario García argues that the two biographies “were to a large degree a response to the racism expressed toward Hispanos in the American period of New Mexico” (30). Nineteenth-century Anglo American writers “portrayed Hispanos as immoral, unscrupulous, and without honor or virtue,” and twentieth-century ones like Charles Lummis and Willa Cather carried on the tradition (García 30). Cather’s 1927 novel *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, for instance, is a fictional account of territorial New Mexico in which the French Bishop Lamy is the hero and Padre Martínez the villain. Yet Fray Angélico



critiques both Anglo and Hispano writers for their portrayals of the Taos padre, including Martínez's own 1838 memoir and Pedro Sánchez's 1903 memoir. Fray Angélico comes to the same conclusion about Cather and Sánchez when he says, "Whichever one might be authentic or false, they both fall within the province of legend and not history" (1983 158). Although Fray Angélico recognized that American newcomers "looked down on their fellow citizens of Hispanic or Mexican descent, and most especially their clergy, as low-down Catholic Mexicans" (90), he nevertheless maintains that both Martínez and Gallegos were loyal American citizens and clergymen.

The major difference between Fray Angélico and his nineteenth-century brethren was the difference between secular and Franciscan religious training. Padre Martínez arrived in Durango during Mexican Independence from Spain, at a time when the republicanism of secular priest Don José Miguel Hidalgo was stirring up social consciousness. "By the time Martínez was in the midst of his studies in Durango," Fray Angélico explains, "Hidalgo now stood high above all subsequent revolutionary leaders as the Father of his Country. Whatever Padre Martínez afterward proposed or tried to carry out as a self-designated priest-politician in his own homeland can be traced directly to his unbounded admiration for this man" (24). Padre Martínez established a preparatory school in Taos where the much younger Gallegos became a pupil before leaving to Durango where he graduated and became an ordained priest. Shortly afterward, the US relinquished control of New Mexico's Catholic Church, so that by 1924 Fray Angélico headed East to Ohio and entered the Franciscan seminary, a move that reflected the Catholic Church's political transition following the US-Mexico War. This transition is the subject of Fray Angélico's three biographies. In the context of his

separation from the Church, we can safely assume that the discourses of cultural nationalism informed Fray Angélico's first two biographies, and that he directed his regional biographies against the ethnic bigotry of his very own religion and within his own regional homeland, both historically in the nineteenth century, and more directly in his own experience as a twentieth-century Franciscan priest.

Fray Angélico's nationalism was particular to the regional Southwest and his New Mexican homeland, as is evident by the specificity of his historical biographies. The first biography set the stage for the rest, for Padre Martínez's life spanned the New Mexico's three historical eras: Spanish colonial, Mexican national, and American Southwestern. In Fray Angélico estimation, Padre Martínez's "long identification as the Padre of Taos dims the memory of all the padres of that historic valley [of New Mexico] centuries before his day or since" (n.p.). The second (Gallegos) and third (Ortiz) biographies meant to fill this historical void, but there is an element of jealousy in the friar-historian's account of Padre Martínez's life, a feeling far from the humility of his Franciscan personality. García maintains that Padre Martínez was a "role model" and a "hero" for Fray Angélico's, but Martínez is more an anti-hero in Fray Angélico's hands, a man whose personality crossed "the thin membrane between genius and madness" (134). After Fray Angélico broke away from the Franciscan Order, his Franciscan personality got stronger, creating a dilemma for his Church superiors. His post-dispensation historical works embody this split personality, and it especially manifested itself in the mental breakdown Fray Angélico attributes to Padre Martínez. How much truth supports the friar-historian's supposition is relative to the facts he presents and the interpretations

he gives, but Padre Martínez, and Padre Gallegos after him, are best read as projections of the his own autobiographical self.

García argues that Fray Angélico saw “much of himself in Martínez,” and “likewise observed that Martínez was a conflicted individual with his own contradictions” (31-32). Indeed, the Martínez biography reflects Fray Angélico’s religious personality, but it is best to read the reflection as a projection of himself rather than as self-identification. While he acknowledges Padre Martínez’s “genius,” the qualities Fray Angélico assigns to the padre are far from admirable, particularly his “latent schizophrenia” (135). The friar-historian suggests that the seeds of such schizophrenia lay in the padre’s arrogant personality, and that the transition from a Catholic-Mexican to a Protestant-American government facilitated his madness. As the opening quote to this section stipulates, Padre Martínez did not espouse Protestant ideas, but Fray Angélico maintains that the padre’s greatest downfall was his misapplication of American doctrines to internal Church affairs. Padre Martínez did not separate Church and State, unlike the much younger Padre Gallegos, who Fray Angélico characterizes as “New Mexico’s first Congressman.” The misapplication of American ideals in many ways led to the Taos padre’s madness, at least in Fray Angélico’s version, for Padre Martínez did not transition into the American system as seamlessly as his former student Gallegos, at least not from Fray Angélico’s perspective. After all, both priests were excommunicated, but Gallegos moved into the political realm, while Martínez continued to address himself as a priest and perform ecclesiastical duties. Padre Martínez misconstrued American law to wage his own war against Padre Ortiz, who the Padre of Taos envied for his high position as vicar of Santa Fe (87). Padre Martínez’s high regard

for his own self and his duplicitous personality festered into his split personality, but the same can be said of Fray Angélico himself whose two biographies provide two different portraits of the author.

Padre Martínez's biography provides an intimate window into Fray Angélico's own split personality, which Fr. Roger noted in his plea to the Holy See. His words about Martínez resonate when he says, "The Martínez personality had been splitting down the middle, and one side of it was hardly aware of what the other side was doing. One of the personalities was José Sanistéban writing to the *Gazette*, the other was Antonio José Martínez writing, *pbro.*, addressing himself to his bishop" (135). Fray Angélico identifies two Martínez personalities—one outside and critical of the Church (Sanistéban), the other a loyal priest (Martínez). Padre Martínez's pen names and his writings manifest the padre's "latent schizophrenia," but they also project the friar's own split personality. Genaro Padilla's concept of "socio-discursive schizophrenia" (*My History, Not Yours* 1993) is useful here for what it suggests about Fray Angélico's cultural work. "Socio-discursive schizophrenia" is different from "latent schizophrenia" because, as Padilla has it, the former represents a cultural condition between the US and Mexico and not so much the mental condition of the latter (73). Fray Angélico maintains that Padre Martínez flew off his rocker, but at rock bottom of this conclusion and the friar's historical biographies is the conflicted friar himself. Indeed, Fray Angélico is the "latent" part of Padre Martínez's "schizophrenia."

There are many similarities between Fray Angélico and Padre Martínez, both of whom left to become priests and returned to their homeland bearing a different name and religious identity. Moreover, both participated as chaplains of war; both served their

countrymen as religious leaders; and both were men of letters. At one point in the year 1856, Fray Angélico speculates, “Martínez had reached his 63<sup>rd</sup> birthday on January 17, [and] he must have taken serious stock of his life and past achievements, as well as his failures and disappointments” (129). What stands out about this passage is the fact that Fray Angélico also turned 63 in 1973, two years after he left the Church and ostensibly around the same time that he decided to write the Martínez biography. Thus, Fray Angélico’s own split informs his biography as much as—and perhaps even more than—the Church documents he draws on and the historical record he contests.

By the time Fray Angélico published his second (auto) biography he was an official layman, so the split personality that informs Padre Martínez’s biography is not present in the Gallegos biography. Put the two biographies together, however, and they too tell the story of Fray Angélico’s split subjectivity and the emergence of his New Mexican regional nationalism. Fray Angélico claims an ancestral connection to Padre Gallegos through a maternal and a paternal grandmother. As the lay-friar explains, “for that matter, both of my parents share in the same Roybal and Archeveque ancestry besides the Chaves line, and this is brought in to show how so many of us Hispanic New Mexicans have the same forebears one way or another.”<sup>32</sup> Of course, he makes no similar claim to Martínez, not literally or figuratively, despite the fact Martínez and Gallegos were “cousins of sorts” (3). Padre Martínez is considered New Mexico’s premier man of letters, after all, with the credit of bringing the first printing press to the isolated province—a claim Fray Angélico shoots down as myth. Fray Angélico has more historical freedom with Padre Gallegos because no myths overdetermine his character. Literally, Fray Angélico imagines and brings to life a young Gallegos from the small

fragments of history that document him, including the only existing photo of him late in life. Fray Angélico used it to illustrate an image of the padre as a young man, an act of historical recovery that also inscribes the author's own plight as a New Mexican priest and intellectual escaping the shadow of Padre Martínez and Mexico.

The Gallegos biography maintains the same historical and religious context as the first, particularly the ethnic bigotry of the American clergy and the sexual perversion of Bishop Lamy's "vicar and bosom friend, Joseph P. Machebeuf" (vii). Fray Angélico argues that the conflict between Mexican and American clergy was, beneath the ethnic one, also a sexual one. Machebeuf especially targeted Padre Gallegos and his suspected affair with his maid, Jesusita. In fact, the title of the book itself comes from Machebeuf's *interpellato*, or trial before the Vatican, in response to charges of mistreating the native New Mexican clergy (vii and 85). Fray Angélico suspects that it was Gallegos himself who drew up the congressional document to the Pope (77), but ironically Machebeuf's comments before the Vatican about Gallegos' alleged affair with "a woman of evil" would tinge the padre's reputation forever (86). It is no secret that Martínez fathered children before and during his priesthood, and much to Fray Angélico's dismay, since "a slew of individuals began claiming their descent from the subsequently 'famous' Padre Martínez, as folks do elsewhere in similar situations when they have nothing else to crow about" (1983 40). Yet Gallegos, says Fray Angélico, "never sired any children. . . . Moreover, in sharp contrast with the case of Padre Martínez of Taos, no one has ever claimed any descent from him" (1985 101). Whether this is true or not, in-between the difference between the two padres emerges a self-portrait of Fray Angélico himself, who

also came under suspicion for his “scandalous” interaction with women, but who, as far as it is known, did not sire any children.

Fr. Roger noted the scandalous marriage proposals the insubordinate friar had made while still officially a Franciscan cleric, but like Gallegos, these allegations were never proven. Gallegos married much later in life, reveals Fray Angélico, “at the ripe age of fifty-three” and through the Episcopal Church (99-102). While Fray Angélico’s public persona and religious inclinations mirrored the “famous” Padre Martínez—as the “first” native priest, man of letters, and loyal Catholic—his private life reflected the much younger Padre Gallegos. Padre Gallegos was also more handsome and charming, qualities that the aging lay-friar perhaps ascribed to himself in a manner that was uncharacteristic of Franciscan humility, but nonetheless par for Fray Angélico who apparently made a scandalous display of his worldly pleasures. Lamy suspended both Martínez and Gallegos, but the younger padre split from the Church and became a full-time politician who not only embraced Protestant ideals but married into its Church. Eventually, Lamy excommunicated Padre Martínez, though the mad padre continued to see himself as a priest, even after his excommunication, much like Fray Angélico who continued to address himself as a Franciscan even after his dispensation. Padre Gallegos, on the other hand, “had already given up all hopes of his being re-instated in his priesthood,” and he instead turned to politics full-time “whereby to get even with Bishop Lamy as well as Machebeuf” (58). It seems as though Fray Angélico staged a similar rebellion in his historical biographies, which in the process tell an autobiographical story of his split religious personality.

Fray Angélico's two historical biographies are grounded in the history and archives of New Mexico, but they also tell a free-floating narrative that veils the author's own split personality and sense of self. This is to say that the auto in Fray Angélico's biographies is grounded regionally, but confused religiously, creating a de-centered and unmediated sense of self. Personality was always a dominant theme in Fray Angélico's work, but it was more Franciscan-oriented before *My Penitente Land*, a book that reverses the aesthetic work of his poetry, but still mediates religion and regionalism in a Southwestern critical regional way. Not so in Fray Angélico's biographies, which focus on the "Mexican Interlude" in New Mexico and the Catholic Church's transition from Mexican to American rule. In the process, the biographies narrate the author's own religious break and split personality. *My Penitente Land* weaves together a tri-cultural regional allegory that yields his historical trilogy, and this trajectory—from triptych, to tri-culturalism, to trilogy—marks a shift in the friar-historian's work that mirrors his break away from religion and, at least symbolically, enacts a sort of decapitation that transforms the body and de-centers the mind of his regional writings.



## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Fray Angélico, “Nuestra Señora de la Macana,” 89. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>2</sup> Fray Angélico to Fr. Romuald Mollaun, March 10, 1948. The hospital stay quite literally allowed for the time Fray Angélico needed to engage in serious historical studies. The result was his first published book in the historical realm in 1948, *Our Lady of the Conquest*, and a slew of historical works that would follow, including *Origins of New Mexico Families* published in 1954, which began as a by-product of Fray Angélico’s research into La Conquistadora and was published by UNM Press alongside of the statuette’s autobiography.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, December 9, 1947. The letter mentions the La Conquistadora article, as well as an Assumption painting, and a wood specimen he sent to a fellow priest in Ohio for identification.

<sup>4</sup> Fray Angélico did not support the Chicano Movement. In 1970, he denounced New Mexico’s most visible and militant Civil Rights leader, Réies López Tijerina, who founded the Alianza Federal de Mercedes, a land grant movement centered in Northern New Mexico. Fray Angélico called Tijerina a “demagogue,” and he characterized Tijerina’s followers as “poor descendants of Genízaros who still hold grudges from long ago, or some few people of recent Mexican origin who now live in the northern part of the state (And let us not forget the Anglo instigators)” (December 18, 1970 A-5). In a previous article, I argue that Fray Angélico’s novel is a veiled critique of the impending Civil Rights era using Fredric Jameson’s notion of the “political unconscious.” In the case of *The Lady From Toledo*, Fray Angélico revises the Pueblo Revolt as a way to resolve the emergent Civil Rights era and discourses, which come to fruition in his 1967 article. See Vizcaíno-Alemán, “New Mexican Triptychs.”

<sup>5</sup> Fray Angélico to Fr. Vincent Kroger, August 23, 1953. Fray Angélico asked for papal approval of *Origins of New Mexico Families*, even though, as he put it, “it does not touch on subjects enumerated by Canon Law. . . Still, to keep the peace, I will also refer the manuscript to the Ordinary for his approval.”

<sup>6</sup> Simmons, “Fray Angélico Chávez,” 20.

<sup>7</sup> Fray Angélico Chávez, *The Lady From Toledo*, 7. Hereafter cited in text.

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<sup>8</sup> These two pieces of legislation are formative events in the history of the Civil Rights era, and in the intellectual paradigms that took root afterwards. Most notably, David Roediger's work and the emergence of whiteness studies; Henry Louis Gates' work and African American literary studies; Michael Omi and Howard Winant's work in racial formations; and bell hooks' work on race and feminism. More recently, Paul Spickard and G. Reginald Daniel's critical anthology *Racial Thinking in the United States* (2004) exemplifies how critical race theory has evolved into issues of slavery, colonialism, whiteness, inter-racialism, and *mestizaje*.

<sup>9</sup> Rodríguez, "Art, Tourism, and Race Relations in Taos," 96.

<sup>10</sup> As I noted earlier, Fray Angélico characterizes the novel as being told from the perspective of the High Sheriff's Daughter and the Black God of Po-he-yemu (1959 91). The two characters create a binary between a white colonial daughter and a black colonized slave, a relationship that signifies the racial fears in the US imaginary, as Martha Hodes' historical study *White Women, Black Men* makes evident.

<sup>11</sup> Fray Angélico traces five Naranjo generations back to one "free mulatto who did come in the expedition of 1600 as a squire to a minor officer, Juan Bautista Ruano" (96). Though Ruano did not stay in New Mexico, this freed slave did due to the terms of his freedom papers, "[h]ence he must have entered the service of another soldier who settled in the new land" (97). Clearly from the start, Fray Angélico's thesis is based as much on conjecture as on historical documents, since official documentation only indirectly records the marginal subjects of Spanish colonial New Mexico who nonetheless contributed majorly to the making of colonial settlement and native resistance.

<sup>12</sup> Beninato, "Popé, Pose-yemu, and Naranjo," 435.

<sup>13</sup> McDonald, "Intimacy and Empire," 6.

<sup>14</sup> These *autos* were first-hand reports of the Pueblo Revolt documented by Governor Otermín's officials. See Hackett and Shelby's *Revolt of the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico*.

<sup>15</sup> Fray Angélico, "Pohé-yemo's Representative," 86. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>16</sup> Whether or not Juan el Tagno from the historical record is the same Indian who decapitated the Toledo statue is not the issue here. What Fray Angélico accomplishes with his version of Juan el Tano's role in the Pueblo Revolt is best understood at the symbolic level.

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<sup>17</sup> The Postlude informs the audience that in Tlalnepantla near Mexico City, Aztec neophytes fashioned a copper *macana* for the statuette and renamed it “Nuestra Señora de la Macana” in commemoration of the Pueblo Revolt and its legendary Indian rebellion.

<sup>18</sup> This Ana Robledo is the same female progenitor in Fray Angélico’s genealogy in *La Conquistadora*, a Spanish Catholic colonist married to the convert Francisco Gómez.

<sup>19</sup> Fray Angélico to unidentified recipient, July 19, 1971.

<sup>20</sup> Fray Angélico to Fr. Roger Huser, May 31, 1972.

<sup>21</sup> Fr. Roger Huser, January 28, 1975.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Fray Angélico to Fr. Roger Huser, no date.

<sup>24</sup> García, “Fray Angélico Chávez,” 25 and 27. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>25</sup> Fray Angélico, *My Penitente Land*, ix. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>26</sup> Pulido, *The Sacred World of the Penitentes*, 53.

<sup>27</sup> Fray Angélico, “The Penitentes of New Mexico,” 99. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>28</sup> Gonzalez, “Whither the *Nuevomexicano*,” 280. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>29</sup> Fray Angélico, *But Time and Chance*, 33. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>30</sup> Simmons, “Fray Angélico Chávez,” 20.

<sup>31</sup> Fray Angélico Chávez to Fr. Jeremy, September 21, 1985.

<sup>32</sup> Fray Angélico, *Très Macho*, 5. Hereafter cited in text.

## Epilogue: Cultural Warfare, Religious Representation, and the Postmodern Significance of Santa Fe's Marian Images

The main contention of this dissertation is that religion defines regionalism, and specifically for Fray Angélico, that Franciscanism gives meaning to his Southwestern critical regionalism. Following this logic, Fray Angélico's regionalism shifted in accordance to his religious faith and the discourses under which it operated. By the time of his retirement from the Franciscan Order, Fray Angélico's regionalism was no longer critical but nationalist, for his later historical work emphasizes an exclusive New Mexican regional homeland. Logically, Chicano scholar Mario T. García argues that Fray Angélico's historical work is oppositional and proto-Chicano, and García is not entirely inaccurate. At the same time, Clark Colohan argues his short fiction represents New Mexico's "noble Spanish soul," but I have to agree with Fr. Jack Clark Robinson's assertion that Fray Angélico was, first and foremost, a Franciscan writer. In response to his retirement and the Chicano Movement, his Franciscanism shifted from a critical regional sensibility to a New Mexican regional nationalism that reflected his religious conflicts and destabilized sense of self. This short epilogue returns to Fray Angélico's critical regional writings to contemplate the ongoing debates over regional representation and religious expression, particularly as they relate to Chicana Marian art.

Fray Angélico wrote about and represented many of the same cultural and historical icons as Chicana artists, most notably the Virgin of Guadalupe in "The Hunchback Madonna." Recall that Ellen McCracken argues the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Fray Angélico's short story is an example of "a protofeminist

reconfiguration of predominant ideals of female beauty. . .in much the same way that [Chicana artist] Yolanda López recasts herself and others as contemporary Guadalupes” (2001 83-85). As I point out earlier, Fray Angélico’s representation is not proto-feminist because it signifies a colonial imaginary that Chicana histories ostensibly de-colonize. Instead, Fray Angélico’s hunchback image is a critical regional representation that reinforces his religion and refigures the region in the context of modernity. Chicana artists, by contrast, break away from the religious conventions that Fray Angélico’s Franciscanism represents. Nevertheless, Fray Angélico’s religion is critical because it suggests a revision of Chicana Marian art and feminist politics. In this way, I reverse McCracken’s approach by arguing that Fray Angélico’s Marianism inspires an alternative way of thinking about Chicana feminism and Southwestern regionalism.

There is a formative shift in Fray Angélico’s cultural body from the female-feminine subjects of his poetry, belles lettres, and short fiction during what Charles Montgomery calls the Spanish Revival and what Marta Weigle and Kyle Fiore call the Writer’s Era, to his post-Civil Rights, male-dominated histories and cultural body. This shift reverses the gendering of the Chicana Southwest and its recovery of Spanish-Mexican women in the American Southwest. In this sense, María from Fray Angélico’s historical novel *The Lady from Toledo* is a border woman whose facelessness suggests that her history is yet to be written from the annals of the American Southwest. Not even Fray Angélico would write this history. Instead, much in vogue with the cultural nationalism of the post-Chicano Movement Southwest, he focused his writing on the politics of religion in his biographical trilogy about the New Mexican priesthood following the US-Mexico War. For this reason, Fray Angélico is *not* a proto-Chicana

feminist, since he moved away from the female-feminine complex of his Spanish Revival work, while his critical regional work balanced religion, regionalism, and modernity instead of breaking from religion. In the vein of the triptych, Fray Angélico's pre-Chicano Movement writings, and particularly his Marian representations, are not binary or dualistic, as most Chicano scholars (including McCracken) read them, but a triple-voiced body of cultural work.

Third space Chicana histories critically intervene in *both* dominant Anglo-American and Spanish-Mexican narratives about women, language, and land in what is now the American Southwest. In *Refusing the Favor: The Spanish-Mexican Women of Santa Fe, 1820-1880*, for instance, Deena J. González describes the job of a Chicana historian as the work of disidentification, a term José Esteban Muñoz calls “a survival strategy that works within and outside the dominant public sphere simultaneously.”<sup>1</sup> Disidentification signifies a dual strategy that produces a “third mode of dealing with dominant ideology, one that neither opts to assimilate within such a structure nor strictly opposes it; rather, disidentification is a strategy that works on and against dominant ideology” (Muñoz 11). La Malinche, Hernán Cortés' mistress and translator, is a paradigmatic figure for Chicana feminism because she signifies both the possibilities and the limitations of using the colonizer's language. As I note in Chapter Four, Haniel Long's *Malinche (Doña Marina)* is an unlikely precursor to Chicana revisionist histories because Long breaks from historical and religious tradition in much the same way Chicana feminists challenge Mexican national and Spanish Catholic myths about women's roles in history. “For women who remain faceless despite their consistent presence in documents,” says González, “this business of acquiring identity is the basis

for living and for life, is the basis of the struggle for selfhood—in our (Chicana) present but also in ‘their’ (Aztec/Native or mestizo) pasts.”<sup>2</sup> Fray Angélico’s faceless María standing on what is now the El Paso/Juárez border three decades before the appearance of Chicana historiography seems almost prophetic, but he leaves her faceless, suggesting that María is a dis-identified historical subject whose history remains unwritten, despite her gift of language.

María is as an alternative to La Malinche and to the Mexican and Chicano national myths that Malinche inspires because she signifies a different mode of regional representation than Chicana historian, artists, and feminists. Instead, María emerges from Fray Angélico’s Southwestern critical regionalism, much like *La Conquistadora*, a text in which the Marian statue speaks from the first-person perspective. Yet unlike María who remains faceless, despite her historical presence, *La Conquistadora* is an active participant in the making of Southwestern history and modernity. On the surface, the statuette’s autobiography sustains modern regionalist discourses, but the narrative addresses, redresses, and even undresses multiple histories that reveal a critical regional New Mexico. As subject to (and of) Fray Angélico’s pen, the statuette’s wooden body literally and symbolically wears the layers of New Mexican colonial and modern histories, and the 1975 republication of *La Conquistadora* with an added postscript demonstrates to what extent the autobiography positions the statuette in New Mexico’s historical present, and not simply in the colonial past. Republished in the same year as *La Conquistadora*’s 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration in Santa Fe, the postscript also informs the audience of the statue’s 1973 theft from the St. Francis Cathedral.<sup>3</sup> The event was a formative one, not only for its reinforcement of Spanish traditions at a time when

Chicano nationalism was displacing them, but also for how it set the tone for modern-day discourses of theft and religious representation in the City of Faith.

On the evening of March 18, 1973, La Conquistadora was stolen from St. Francis Cathedral without a trace of her captors or their motives for stealing the historic icon. The next day, the theft was reported as an act of religious and cultural “sacrilege” against the Santa Fe public. *The Santa Fe New Mexican* ran two separate articles headlining the theft and displaying the three-foot religious statue on one cover mirrored by the investigation of the crime scene on another cover. In the initial stages of the state investigation, the editorial column in *The Santa Fe New Mexican* disclosed a \$500 reward for “information about the location or the identity of the faithless thief” and assured readers that “[t]his reward is expected to grow, but in no way could it ever represent what the statue means to the city.”<sup>4</sup> Three days later, the reward amount rose to \$1,100 with the gracious and desperate donations from the Santa Fe public, which pleaded for the safe return of the venerated statue. On April 15, 1973, three weeks after the theft, the icon again appeared on the front cover of the local newspaper, accompanied by Detective Paul Baca and Santa Fe Police investigator Mike Montoya, with the headline announcing, “La Conquistadora recovered.”<sup>5</sup> In the article, journalist Ronald Gallegos revealed the identity of only one suspect, Arthur McCombs, and named the second thief a “juvenile.” The article described McCombs as a “faithless” Anglo American culprit, an ethno-cultural “outsider” whose crime mirrored the “rapacious new black market for religious folk art” that plagued Santa Fe in the early 1970s.

The discourse surrounding the 1973 theft of La Conquistadora and subsequent coverage of the three-week investigation discursively framed the incident as a “sacrilege



to centuries and centuries of persons who have venerated her in her chapel in St. Francis Cathedral.”<sup>6</sup> Nearly thirty years later, the 2001 *Cyber Arte Exhibit: Where Tradition Meets Technology* at the Museum of International Folk Art in Santa Fe drew public protesting of L.A.-based artist Alma López’s “Our Lady” piece, and media coverage of the event reproduced the 1973 discourses of theft, sacrilege, and native versus outsider. The exhibit featured the digital artwork of Alma López, and the works of three New Mexican Chicana artists, Marion Martínez, Teresa Archuleta-Sagel, and Elena Baca. Initially, the exhibit received positive reviews, but public opinion drastically shifted in a short period of time, forcing the exhibit to close six months early. The main opposition of Catholic authorities and the Church’s faithful female followers was López’s image of Our Lady of Guadalupe “in a bikini.” Supporters cited first amendment rights to freedom of expression, while traditionalists criticized MOIFA for neglecting the needs of the community, ignoring the fact the exhibit featured three local Chicana artists and its curator, Tey Marianna Nunn, was also a native New Mexican. Nevertheless, The *Cyber Arte Exhibit* drew on the historical discourses of theft and sacrilege in Santa Fe, and it generated a debate between Hispano tradition and Chicana resistance.

While Chicana artists and activists argued that *Cyber Arte* exemplified the ongoing transformation of Our Lady of Guadalupe, traditionalists called on the “authentic” image to challenge and cover up the sexualized body of Our Lady. One particular “Readers Speak Out” column in *The Santa Fe New Mexican* expressed both sides of the debate. “It is time our museums work for our culture and communities and not against them,” said Gloria Mendoza. “It is time for our museums to start training and hiring local, native people in positions of authority.”<sup>7</sup> Another local resident, Paul

Lynch, called the “Church’s stance hypocritical” and implicated La Conquistadora as a symbol “of a long, unprovoked [Spanish] military invasion marked by war crimes.”<sup>8</sup> In a June 30, 2001 column, local historian Pedro Ribera-Ortega responded to Lynch’s “misunderstanding and insensitivity” with “good background information and a little bit of Santa Fe and Hispanic history.”<sup>9</sup> Lynch’s references to La Conquistadora as “Our Lady of Military Defeat” and “Our Lady of Unwanted Imperial Invasion,” said Ribera-Ortega, are “as horribly offensive as Alma López’s ‘Our Lady’ at MOIFA.” Both sides of the debate balanced the fine line of sanctity and sacrilege, and they battled over the meaning of religion and Marian representation in such a way that suggests this kind of cultural warfare is not a remnant of the colonial past, but an active battlefield in the postmodern present.<sup>10</sup>

In the aftermath of the 2001 *Cyber Arte* exhibit, López reflected on the event in an autobiographical essay, “Silencing ‘Our Lady’: La Respuesta de Alma.” In López’s words, “Before an Inquisition organized by the man, the priest, and the archbishop, Alma’s Respuesta is as follows.”<sup>11</sup> She especially took issue with Santa Fe Archbishop Michael Sheehan’s official comment that the image looked like a “tart.” This comment fueled sensational media coverage of the debate, and it has since fueled Chicana resistance to patriarchal religious conventions, evident by López’s most recent oil on canvas painting entitled “Our Lady of Controversy.”<sup>12</sup> Luz Calvo argues that López’s digital art reflects a Chicana and queer feminist *rasquachismo*, a working-class folk aesthetic that unsettles bourgeois sensibilities and dominant conceptions of female sexuality and beauty. Undoubtedly, it is López’s queer aesthetic that ruffled the undergarments of New Mexico’s religious men and its faithful female followers alike, but

her characterization of the protestors as “primarily men, priests, and older women who were transported via buses from the local churches” is paradoxical because López herself silences women (253). Chicana feminist artists, scholars, and cultural workers either underestimate or overlook the Hispanic women who momentarily overturned Santa Fe’s Anglo-dominant museum space to voice their resistance. Ironically, Chicana feminists characterize the female protestors as passive followers of the Catholic Church without understanding how the many faces of collective female action and resistance.

Calvo calls López’s art a kind of mapmaking, though “not that of the rational, imperialist cartographer but rather the layered space of the unconscious, where past and present, here and there, can exist in one image.”<sup>13</sup> One can say the same thing about Fray Angélico’s *La Conquistadora*, a layered representation of the statue, of the state, and of the author himself. Fray Angélico’s autobiography of the ancient statuette is instructive for its Southwestern critical regional dialogue between the colonial past and the modern American Southwest, much in the same way Hispanic female protestors who made public appearances in Santa Fe’s Anglo-dominated museum space demonstrated that the Virgin Mary enables multiple acts of resistance. Chicana feminists do not recognize the kind of resistance that Hispanic women enacted, and media coverage of the protesting characterized it as a dualistic debate using a similar discourse as when the statue was literally stolen in 1973. Of course, the 2001 “theft” was figurative while the 1973 theft was actual, but both events shore up the very real debates over cultural meaning, religious belonging, and Marian representation in the Southwest. Protestors emphasized that López was non-native, newspapers echoed this sentiment, and the whole debacle forced the museum to close the exhibit two months early. Yet, Fray Angélico’s autobiography

performs a similar sacrilege as the “Our Lady” piece. The difference between the two is a mode of religious (and, by extension, regional) representation that manifests in the flesh of one image (López) and the dress of another (Fray Angélico).

Beneath the surface of the dualistic discourses of theft, sanctity, and sacrilege in Santa Fe is a more complex history of Marian representations that extend into the postmodern present. As *La Conquistadora* makes evident, Marian representations signify multiple histories that oftentimes contradict each other. Fray Angélico’s *Our Lady of the Conquest* and *La Conquistadora* represent two modes of regional history, one modern and one critical. While Fray Angélico’s critical regionalism mediates the historical contradictions of religion and modernity, López’s art brings them to the forefront. The source of their difference is a religious one and, by extension, a matter of regional representation that comes to bear on the Virgin Mary’s body. Indeed, Hispanic traditionalists may find that Fray Angélico’s 1948 historical narrative speaks to their religious views, but the autobiography gestures toward contemporary Chicana cultural production. “When I see *la Virgen de Guadalupe*,” Sandra Cisneros writes in the article the inspired López’s “Our Lady,” “I want to lift her dress as I did my dolls’ and look to see if she comes with *chones*, and does her *panocha* look like mine, and does she have dark nipples, too?”<sup>14</sup> Symbolically, at least, Fray Angélico was wondering and enacting the same thing in the autobiography, which may in fact point to how Cisneros—and, by extension, Chicana feminists—reproduce religious representations of women and the Virgin Mary. Recall, López characterized female protestors as passive followers of the male-dominated Catholic Church in a way that silences women, and ironically in an essay that challenges the censorship of female sexuality. López’s image, Cisneros’

imagination, and Fray Angélico's autobiography all point to how sexuality is always/already implicit in the ritualized act of clothing and undressing. Of course, La Conquistadora insists that she was "not touched from the waist down," but the autobiography nevertheless exposes her literal body and her symbolic body politic, revealing that even before the 1973 theft of the statue and the 2001 cultural theft of the *Cyber Arte* exhibit, cultural warfare over the meaning of the Virgin Mary mired the discourses of regional representation in New Mexico, across the Southwest, and in an expanding global world.

The dissertation's triptych cultural critique refocuses the meaning of religion in at least three different modes of regional representation, but it also opens up regional study to the significance of Marian representations across time and space. It challenges the characterization of Fray Angélico as a proto-Chicano and a proto-feminist, because these characterizations overlook how his religion (and regionalism) changes over time. In short, Fray Angélico was not the same person writing poetry as he was writing historical biographies. At the same time, his mode of regional representation differs from Chicana feminism because his critical regionalism mediates religion and modernity. By contrast, Chicanas break away from religious tradition, thus they represent a different kind of regionalism than Fray Angélico's own. Nevertheless, his work reminds us that religion is still a central mode of expression in the discourses of regionalism, and it provides a new method of analysis for understanding regional discourses as modes of modernity. There are more than three modes of regional representation in the history of Southwestern regional writing, but this study has focused on three to suggest an alternative methodology for reading Southwestern and U.S. Hispanic literature. Modern

regionalism, critical regionalism, and regional modernism are all modes of modernity that represent the region differently, depending on the caliber of religious expression, and the discourses of regional writing. The dissertation's methodology fosters a comparative discussion of Southwestern regional writing, and it is informed by Chicana/o cultural production and criticism, as well as recent trends in post-nationalist American Studies. For these reasons, triptych cultural critique has the potential to engage in the post-nationalist discourses and postmodernist modes of representation that prevail in contemporary art, cultural studies, and literature. In the end, the dissertation hopes that its critical methodology leads to these scholarly discussions.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Muñoz, *Disidentifications*, 5. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>2</sup> González, “Surfing Identity,” 121.

<sup>3</sup> I refer to the 1983 Sunstone Press edition of Fray Angélico Chávez’s *La Conquistadora*, which is currently still in print.

<sup>4</sup> “Fiesta Without ‘La Conquistadora,’” *SFNM*, March 21, 1973, 2.

<sup>5</sup> Gallegos, “‘La Conquistadora Recovered,’” April 15, 1973, A1.

<sup>6</sup> Gallegos, “‘La Conquistadora’ Stolen From Cathedral,” March 21, 1973, A-1.

<sup>7</sup> Mendoza, “Time for change,” June 23, 2001, A9.

<sup>8</sup> Lynch, “Another View of Virgin,” *SFNM*, June 23, 2001, A9.

<sup>9</sup> Ribera-Ortega, “Historical Perspective Put to ‘La Conquistadora,’” *SFNM*, June 30, 2001, A11.

<sup>10</sup> The Tey Diana Rebolledo Papers, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico, contains a box of newspaper clippings, which document the “Our Lady” controversy, as well as letters against and in support of the artist. See also Rebolledo, “The Archbishop Sees the Body of the Virgin.”

<sup>11</sup> López, “Silencing ‘Our Lady,’” 249. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>12</sup> Between January and March of 2009, downtown Albuquerque hosted an art exhibit entitled *Chicana Badgirls: Las Hociconas*, featuring a multi-media mix of contemporary Chicana art, including Alma López’s “Our Lady of Controversy,” the artist’s re-presentation of the original “Our Lady” piece in oil on canvas. “Our Lady of Controversy” maintains all the original features of the “Our Lady” image, but the artist’s choice of colors in the oil painting are much bolder, as are the contours of the female body in the likeness of a dark and muscular female boxer.

<sup>13</sup> Calvo, “Art Comes for the Archbishop,” 218.

<sup>14</sup> Cisneros, “Guadalupe the Sex Goddess,” 51.

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