

PREFACE

This study represents my journey to becoming a Chicana intellectual, which has taken me far but still finds me in the place where I was born and raised, where I raised my two kids, and where I recently witnessed the birth of my granddaughter: a new generation, beautiful and scary. When I first conceived of this study, I planned to move southward toward the US-Mexico borderlands, but instead I ventured northward to the Denver Public Library (DPL) where I became conscious of Carlota d.Z. EspinoZa's *The Three Mexican Heroes* and *Pasado, Presente, Futuro*. The Friends for the DPL commissioned EspinoZa's second mural, a bicentennial project with a similar commission as the Kenneth Adams and Jesús Guerrero Galván murals at my home institution, which President James F. Zimmerman endorsed during the New Deal era. At the same time, *Pasado, Presente, Futuro* looks like many of the street murals across the greater Mexican American Southwest. EspinoZa's two murals illustrate the aesthetics of gender and place at the heart of my study, and I want to thank her for granting me permission to use her work. Most importantly, I want to acknowledge our newfound friendship.

This study connects the literature of the inter-war period (1916–1941) and the Mexican American generation (1945–1965) to the Chicana/o Renaissance (1965–1975) and contemporary Chicana/o literary and cultural studies. When referring to the period before the Chicana/o Renaissance, the study uses the designation Mexican American but often refers to more specific uses of local identity.

The term Chicana/o refers to the ethnic consciousness, literature and art that formed during and after the Civil Rights period in the Southwest through the dual themes of *indigenismo* and nationalism. Chicano in isolation refers specifically to a male-defined literary tradition, while Chicana alone refers to a specifically female-centered tradition. The study designates between Chicano nationalism and Chicana feminism to emphasize the overlap and distinction between the two and their differences from Chicana/o critical regionalism. The Mexican American Southwest refers to the geographical expanse of the study, from South Texas to California and New Mexico to Colorado. Chicana/o critical regionalism refers to the aesthetics and culture of the greater Mexican American region, and as a concept it adds to the already rich and fruitful discussion of Chicana/o literary and cultural studies.

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Finally, I must thank my best pal and soul mate. *Por ahora y por siempre.*

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