

Triptych Cultural Critique: Fray Angelico Chavez and Southwestern Critical Regionalism, 1939-2004



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Publication Date

6-28-2010

Abstract

Fray Angelico Chavez was a Franciscan priest and man of letters whose published writings span most of the twentieth century. The dissertation is a critical biography of Fray Angelico'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. I argue Fray Angelico's Franciscanism fosters a mode of Southwestern critical regionalism in his writing. The main objective of this dissertation is to build and apply a comparative methodology that I call triptych cultural critique to understand better the different modes of regional writing about the Southwest. Fray Angelico 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 Angelico'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.

Project Sponsors

Center for Regional Studies, University of New Mexico
Office of Graduate Studies, University of New Mexico

Language

English

Keywords

Southwestern history, Cultural studies, Regional literature, Fray Angelico Chavez, Chicana/o Studies, US Hispanic literature, Comparative literature of the American Southwest

Document Type

Dissertation

Degree Name

American Studies

Level of Degree

Doctoral

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Recommended Citation

Vizcaino-Aleman, Melina. "Triptych Cultural Critique: Fray Angelico Chavez and Southwestern Critical Regionalism, 1939-2004." (2010).

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