

preface

FEMINIST STUDIES IS PROUD TO PRESENT its first double issue in over three decades of publication with this volume devoted to contemporary Chicana studies. The essays in this issue mark significant new developments in Chicana studies and in feminist studies more generally. Gathered from emerging experts as well as prominent senior scholars, the essays and creative work included here describe a diverse array of Chicana experiences as musicians, artists, philosophers, lawyers, immigrants, and scholars as well as friends, lovers, mothers, and aunts. Together they set forth three fundamental themes: first, the interconnections of spirituality and sexuality, body, and language in Chicana writing and experience; second, an interactive conception of borders as more than geographical lines dividing nation states or disciplines, but rather as dynamic processes deployed for specific purposes—fluctuating, permeable, and rife with possibilities and consequences; and, third, the interrogation and exploration of multiple-subject positions and subjectivities that are critical to much of the work of Chicana cultural activists and theorists in the twenty-first century. Throughout this volume, as feminist scholars have long advised but less often practiced, simple binaries are contested and superseded. Furthermore, this issue is both inter- and transdisciplinary, presenting visual art and original creative writing in addition to scholarly essays.

The volume begins with Leisa D. Meyer's interview with Chicana historian Vicki L. Ruiz, "Ongoing Missionary Labor': Building, Maintaining, and Expanding Chicana Studies/History." Along with Meyer's annotations, the interview traces the development not only of Ruiz's career, but also of the field of Chicana studies/history itself. From graduate school through her early professional career to today, Ruiz reflects on the personal and professional obstacles she encountered, the supports

(especially her *compañeras*) she cherished, and the continuing challenges and new possibilities she sees as critical to the field of Chicana studies/history. Offering comments both on the state of the field of Chicana studies/history and what it has meant to live it, Ruiz speaks of intra-ethnic trials and solidarity, her admiration for colleagues who were on the “frontlines” of movement work, her work with Patricia Zavella to invent new methodologies for excavating the lives of Chicanas, and the energy she derived from sharing this early journey with other Chicana studies scholars and students. In articulating the state of the field, Ruiz sees the current move away from simple binaries to an interrogation and unpacking of conventional dialectics as critical to Chicana studies/history and Chicana feminist theory and activism. Ruiz also speaks passionately of the need for historians to expand their source base by looking to literature, folklore, cultural studies, and ethnography as means not just to “integrate,” but rather to make central the voices and perspectives of the individuals we study from the “standpoint of the people themselves.” Ruiz further welcomes the move in current Chicana studies scholarship to a more transnational approach, noting that “transnationalism doesn’t require travel across vast oceans”; the “Americas” are transnational spaces. In the end she speaks with optimism and hope of the vibrancy and interdisciplinarity of work by emerging scholars and the increasing numbers of Chicanas entering the profession, while also urging the continuation of the “ongoing missionary labor” of engaging and educating to make “where we work a more compassionate, decent place for everyone.”

Inspiring the authors of the early section of this volume is pioneering Chicana theorist and poet Gloria Anzaldúa, whose untimely death in 2004 cut short her evolving philosophy and holistic lesbian feminism. We are privileged to be able to publish several articles explicating her writings that draw from unpublished interviews and manuscripts as well as on her published work.

AnaLouise Keating, Anzaldúa’s long-time friend, collaborator, and editor, begins this section with her essay, “I’m a citizen of the universe’: Gloria Anzaldúa’s Spiritual Activism as Catalyst for Social Change.” According to Keating, this activism “offers a visionary yet experientially

based epistemology and ethics . . . that posits a relational worldview and uses this holistic worldview to transform one's self and one's worlds." Like other scholars in this volume, Keating critiques those academic traditions that marginalize the spiritual as "essentialist, escapist, naive, or in other ways apolitical and backward thinking." On the contrary, she sees these academic views as themselves shortsighted and imprecise, particularly with regard to their limited understanding of Anzaldúa's transformative rhetoric. As Keating explains, Anzaldúa develops a number of concepts useful for all feminists who wish to transform the world, some much discussed in prior scholarship like the "borderlands" and "mestiza consciousness," but others previously neglected. For example, Anzaldúa's concept of "El Mundo Zurdo," the left-handed world, describes a marginality that becomes a center through which lesbians, women of color, and other queer or outcast persons can work for genuine social transformation.

Although Keating admits that some passages in *Borderlands/La Frontera* "seem to romanticize indigeneity," a deeper analysis indicates Anzaldúa's current revisions of old myths. Citing an e-mail interview with Anzaldúa from 2004, Keating quotes her as saying, "the past cannot be captured, but it must be remembered." This is not nostalgia, Keating suggests, but a new, more activist interpretation of memory as a tool for contemporary activism. Anzaldúa's "metaphysics of interconnectedness," according to Keating, is indeed paradoxical, with the writer fully inhabiting all sides of the contradictions she poses between "personal agency and structural determinacy." Anzaldúa's "flexible, context-specific perspectives" allow her to work toward coalitions based on common goals and interests, ones that can avoid the traps of identity politics, whereas such identity politics can only reinstate existing histories and support unjust social frameworks. Even more damaging, "these tainted categories restrict our imaginations and thus limit our visions of social change."

One chapter of Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera*, entitled "Entering into the Serpent," is the focus of Anthony Lioi's essay, "The Best-Loved Bones: Spirit and History in Anzaldúa's 'Entering into the Serpent,'" dedicated to delineating her "Chicana phenomenology of spirit." Lioi holds that Anzaldúa uses "a logic of spectral analysis" that can understand spirits and ghosts as well as the Mesoamerican goddesses incorporated into

Mexican Catholicism. Rather than emphasizing the indigenous elements of Anzaldúa's spirituality, however, Lioi argues for understanding Anzaldúa as a Catholic author, albeit a heretical one, whose work demands a serious engagement with her spiritual faith. Her synthesis of languages, he claims, mirrors her synthesis of spiritual traditions in efforts at "cultural repair." In particular, he shows how her stories featuring snakes—even from such lowly places as the outhouse of her childhood—insert themselves into a long tradition that includes pagan, Christian, and Freudian symbols as well as Jungian archetypes. According to Lioi, the very forms of Anzaldúa's writing reflect "the conflict and syncretism she finds" in the figure of the Virgin of Guadalupe, which evokes pre-Christian religious traditions from the ancient Near East as well as from Mesoamerica. Not all these evocations are positive: Anzaldúa represents the splits within Chicana culture that her writings seek to mend, splits between "public pride and defiance, private self-hatred, and the quest to find the lost and the future." Unlike most Second Wave feminists, Lioi asserts, Anzaldúa makes "the political depend squarely on the spiritual" rather than the reverse. Paradoxically, her writings thus allow the apparently negative characteristics of "fragmentation and marginality" to mark the Chicana as both powerful and normative.

Like other authors in this journal issue, Irene Lara, in "Goddess of the Américas in the Decolonial Imaginary: Beyond the Virtuous *Virgen*/ Pagan *Put*a Dichotomy," demonstrates that the *virgen/puta* dichotomy has been superseded in the work of contemporary Chicana creative writers by more nuanced, non-dualistic models of spirituality. Indicating a close community of Chicana scholars, Lara, like Keating, references personal conversations with Anzaldúa as among her sources, but she also discusses parallel themes in the work of other contemporary Chicana writers, including Liliana Valenzuela, Sandra Cisneros, and Cherríe Moraga, all of whom deploy variations on the story of the "Goddess of the Americas." Lara argues that contemporary Chicana authors "advance a non-dichotomizing 'decolonial imaginary'" that rejects a sexual divide between virtue and sinfulness and rejects the Catholic church's "disciplining of sexuality" and isolation of sexuality from spirituality. One example Lara gives of Church misogyny is the "friction-loving vulva," an authority attributed to power-

ful native women by colonial officials. This maligning of indigenous spiritual figures, Lara contends, “transposes to the maligning of actual Nahua women, particularly healers, midwives, and ‘harlots’”—a process that, while recalling the misogyny of European witchcraft persecutions, was in the New World always racialized as well as gendered.

Lara retrieves the indigenous roots in the mother figure Tonantzin as one of the sources of the Virgin of Guadalupe, although she argues that indigenous figures should not be considered either as demons or as goddesses, but rather “as honored elements of nature or sacred energies representing creation and/or destruction, sexuality, and motherhood within a Nahua religious cosmology.” Like their indigenous predecessors, Lara argues, today’s Chicana writers construct a “decolonial imaginary” that heals the *virgen/puta* split through “decolonial resistance” against racist discursive violence. For instance, Lara quotes Cherríe Moraga as saying that “sexuality and spirituality,” previously “combined for our repression,” now need to be “combined for our liberation.” These combinations are present, Lara contends, in such evocative figures as the mermaid or Serena figure in Valenzuela’s short fiction and in Cisneros’s call to write from the “panocha,” reversing the denigration of Eve and playfully combining maternity and sexuality.

The mermaid and the Virgin of Guadalupe also appear in Alma López’s art, featured on this issue’s cover and discussed by Guisela Latorre in her essay, “Icons of Love and Devotion: Alma López’s Art.” López, too, reconceptualizes traditional Mexican iconography like the familiar images on the *lotería* cards or devotional representations of the Virgin of Guadalupe. Instead of a set of nationalist images of heroes with big hats and ammunition belts, López’s work, Latorre explains, “places women at the center of discourses on emancipation and decolonization,” producing a “Chicana queer aesthetic” in which the Virgin can embrace a mermaid. Women-loving women are silhouetted against background landscapes of a divided Los Angeles in which undocumented immigrants are constantly fleeing the surveillance of the *migra*, or U.S. immigration authorities. Like other artists and authors featured here, López cannot be pigeonholed as either traditional or contemporary. Her artwork combines familiar iconography with digital media and advanced technologies, producing

distinctive artistry that remains responsive to a community of activists and designed to advance public discussion about issues that affect “Chicana/o/ Latina/o and queer communities of color.” Deliberately controversial, López’s art ties together conventional Catholic iconography, kitsch representations of Mexican legends, and newly created traditions like that of Juan Soldado, the “unofficial patron saint of border crossers.” Like Anzaldúa’s multivoiced prose, López’s art reflects her ideology. As Latorre explains, “the complex layering of her digital montages speaks of the equally complex layering of identities and subjectivities defined by gender, class, race, and sexuality.”

In addition to Lopez’s art, this issue welcomes the variations on Chicana symbols and images in the political art of Favianna Rodriguez. Rodriguez is based in Oakland, California, and her art, in her own words taken from her Web site, uses “high-contrast colors and vivid figures” to “reflect literal and imaginative migration, global community, and interdependence.” In this volume, Rodriguez’s subjects include Chicana activists (“Xicana Power”), cultural activists (“Decolonizing Creativity”), mothers of disappeared women in Juarez, Mexico (“Femicidio! The Women of Juarez Demand Justice”), women resisting U.S. imperialism (“We Resist Colonization!”), and immigrant day laborers in the United States (“Legalization Ahora!”). Favianna Rodriguez attends to both the local and the global in her art and suggests compelling creative possibilities for building bridges between cultures and coalitions among disparate individuals, entities, and agendas.

In her review essay, “*Sin Vergüenza: Chicana Feminist Theorizing*,” Karen Mary Davalos reminds us of the possibilities and necessity of including ourselves and our subject positions in the research we do and scholarship we author. It is through such inclusion that we might more fully recognize the multiple subject positions we and our subjects occupy. She frames the works she reviews with the assertion of the continuing “centrality of a method that draws on personal experience, private memory, *testimonio*, life history, or creative nonfiction.” Reminding us of Ruiz’s invocation of learning the history of Chicanas and their struggles from the voices of her mother and grandmother, Davalos similarly highlights the significance of Chicana feminist methodologies that draw on the knowledge of men-

tors, incorporating the autobiographical voice. She sees the “crossing and untying of disciplinary boundaries” that she characterizes as “transdisciplinary” as a critical marker of contemporary Chicana feminist thought. Davalos suggests the need for a self-conscious positioning of Chicana feminist scholarship within the context of U.S. Third World feminism to more fully recognize the capacities of such scholarship to align diverse “theoretical domains.” Davalos references Emma Pérez’s concept of “third space feminism” and Chela Sandoval’s “oppositional consciousness” as two examples of the possibility of “locating agency” through a cross-genre/cross-disciplinary approach and transdisciplinary method.

The “hybrid-critical-creative” approach on which Davalos focuses is also identified by Deborah R. Vargas in “Borderland *Bolerista*: The Licentious Lyricism of Chelo Silva” as a central means through which Chicanas and other women of color have articulated their subjectivities. While several scholars have pointed to the *corrido* music form as one such “mode of articulation” that is underused as a source for investigating Mexican, Mexican American, and Chicana/o subjectivities and sexualities, Vargas draws our attention to the *bolero* as an equally significant resource, especially on Chicana sexualities, thus providing a much-needed feminist intervention in Tejano music scholarship and, more broadly, in Chicana/o cultural studies. Vargas specifically interrogates the distinct modes of “cultural and knowledge production in the borderlands” represented by the *bolero* and *corrido* form and interrupts previous emphases on the *corrido* by focusing on work produced by Mexican American female interpreters of the *bolero* forms. In doing so Vargas persuasively argues that Silva’s renditions of the *bolero* “provide a subject that disrupts the celebration of male sexual agency, and resistance in Texas-Mexican *corrido* and folklore studies.” In her study Vargas reads not only the musical style and lyrics of the *bolero*, but also Silva’s “performing body” as narratives that each challenged conventional gender and sexual norms. Thus, Vargas provocatively theorizes the *bolero* as a “transformative discursive apparatus” for nonnormative gendered and sexualized subjects and offers compelling new ways of retrieving the silenced histories, musical voices, and subjectivities of Chicana cultural producers.

The subjectivities of Chicana cultural producers are also the focus of Ana Patricia Rodríguez's article, "The Fiction of Solidarity: *Transfronterista* Feminisms and Anti-Imperialist Struggles in Central American Transnational Narratives"; however, writing from a differently located Central American subjectivity, she challenges us to reconsider not only the subjectivities of Chicana feminist cultural activists, but also their efforts to construct a new *transfronterista*, or cross-border, subjectivity. Rodríguez begins her article by recognizing (and applauding) Chicanas' "discursive interventions" during the 1980s and 1990s, especially in the critiques they offered of U.S. intervention and imperialism in Central America. Rodríguez goes on to note, however, that these activists carried out such interventions by producing "solidarity fiction" in which Chicana/Latina border feminists engage "common" issues and create "cross-border social identities aligned with trans/national struggles," thus assimilating Central American anti-imperialist struggles into their own border wars. Based on her analysis of films, articles, plays, and novels produced by Chicana/Latina cultural activists, including especially the film *After the Earthquake/ Después del Terremoto* and the novel *Mother Tongue*, Rodríguez argues that these writers and filmmakers often depicted Chicanas as "protagonists and agents . . . saving Central Americans, asserting thus their solidarity agency." Invoking the work of Dalia Kandiyoti, Rodríguez reminds us that "solidarity discourses and practices are problematic at best because they are shaped by structures of power that often elide or blur 'specific context and differences.'" She critiques these cultural products as eliding the specific location and circumstances of the Central Americans who are their ostensible focus and highlighting instead the personal drama of Chicana/o protagonists. Central American histories are thus lost—made subject to the telling of the larger feminist narratives of protest, resistance, and resilience. She concludes with a call for the transformation of what has been a "U.S.-based, Chicano-centered anti-colonial struggle" into "hemispheric transnational, *transfronterista* Latina/o alliances, embracing Central Americans in its fold."

Ana Patricia Rodríguez suggests the possibilities and problems of creating coalitions across multiple subject positions and particularly critiques the "undifferentiated" ethnic position offered in Chicana narra-

tives engaging Central America. The multiple subjectivities Rodríguez illuminates *between* diverse groups are joined by the focus of Gladys García-López and Denise A. Segura's investigation of a new generation of Chicana attorneys caught in contradictions of their own, expected to be helpful daughters to their clients and rarely recognized as authoritative figures in Anglo courtrooms. In their essay, "They Are Testing You All the Time': Negotiating Dual Femininities among Chicana Attorneys," García-López and Segura address both the continuing hegemonic heterosexual masculinity of the legal profession and the particular experiences of Chicanas as racial and gender "others" within this system. They draw our attention to the strategies developed by fifteen successful Chicana attorneys to negotiate the myriad expectations that frame their work lives. The authors explain that the "dual femininities" strategy developed by these attorneys engages, negotiates, and "performs" to varying degrees the heterosexual white middle-class femininity that serves as *the* model for the "acceptable" role and behavior of women in the profession as well as the cultural gendered expectations of their own Latino/Chicano communities. These norms of acceptable behavior constrain women, especially female professionals. Chicana attorneys walk thin lines between their own community's expectations, those of the profession of which they are a part, and those of the gendered racial-ethnic communities where they grew up and often reside that form the backdrop for many of their clients. Also, like Ruiz, most see their efforts as concerned with how to create social change within the larger society and also within their own communities and cultures as well as seeing themselves as accountable to their own communities.

Even in the art of Alma López, with all its nontraditional, heretical imagery, the border crosser is a young man, a heroic figure fording the Rio Grande or trekking through a hostile desert in search of a better life. Anita Ortiz Maddali's essay, "Sophia's Choice: Problems Faced by Female Asylum-Seekers and Their U.S.-Citizen Children," reveals significant complexities in this apparently familiar narrative. Based on her work at the Children and Family Justice Center at Northwestern University Law School in Chicago, Ortiz Maddali reports on the narrow options that the U.S. immigration service opens to asylum-seeking immigrant mothers

with U.S.-born children. Ortiz Maddali creates composite portraits to show the obstacles obstructing women seeking asylum in the United States who flee countries in upheaval and transition and/or problems including domestic abuse, ethnic discrimination, and civil war. She questions the facile notion of “anchor babies,” whose mothers supposedly birth them on U.S. soil as an easy way to achieve their own citizenship. Instead, she seeks to expose “the difficult choices engendered by U.S. immigration policy” and to complicate popular discourses about citizenship, nationality, immigration, and legitimacy. She notes that over three million U.S.-citizen children have undocumented parents, including economic migrants as well as asylum-seekers. Her essay highlights the slight regard U.S. policy gives to the bonds between mothers and their children and suggests remedies through reforming immigration laws.

The menacing border appears in the rich supply of creative writing in this issue as well as in the scholarly essays. In Verónica Reyes’s short story, children play with delight and terror the game of “Chopper! Chopper! Run! The migra is after us” as they imitate the border policing that keeps them in its panoptic sight. In a poem by Diana García, the terrors of the border and dislocated lives are reflected in places where “travelers rise from ground, / from mist, from centuries-old lakes, / ancient harmonic vibrations.” “None of us belongs here or we all belong.” In another of García’s poems, children’s play in a barrio, not along the border, again forecasts an ominous future as bold boys grow only into “drug deals/and prison.”

Other creative writing in this issue describes varied scenes of Chicano/a life and balances a pleasure in languages, both English and Spanish, with the pleasures of connection and sorrows of loss. Eddi Salado details the “Landscape of a Marriage” in which a couple watches a war that surrounds them and divides them. In another transposition of traditional Chicana iconography, Norma Elia Cantú’s poem describes a weeping mother whose children have been lost, *La Llorona*—this time not crying but smiling at the author’s poems to lovely tortillas. On the other hand, Laura A. Guerrero’s poem attacks the unhelpful child protective services and neglectful legislators responsible for the “Babies Under the House” that grimly represent “hope decomposing in a couple of plastic bags.”

Aurora Reynoso describes a “Wedding Feast” that becomes a brawl, until the couple runs away “hand in hand, out the back door.” In another of her poems, older people are sympathetically described both in their losses and brave pleasures, whether they are the stylish older woman “shimmering / in a yellow pantsuit” in spring or the woman in a wheelchair who enjoys a forbidden cigarette in “the vanishing intimacy of smoke” with a younger companion.

Pat Mora’s poem remembers an aunt whose laugh “resists the permanence / assigned your bones and dust.” In the prose memoir “Remembering Las Cartoneras,” Ana Castillo, too, recalls a favorite aunt and the vibrant working-class community in which she had been a boxmaker. The mother of five and grandmother of eighteen children, tía Flora shows how her erotic zest for dancing and flirting, despite the confines of a traditional marriage, could be enjoyed on a wonderful night out to hear the super *salsera* Celia Cruz (a reminder, of the power of music also celebrated in Vargas’s essay on Silva).

By focusing on the themes of spirituality and eroticism, the reinterpretation of borders, and Chicana diversity and subjectivities, this special issue of *Feminist Studies* heeds the call to place women of colors at the center of feminist analysis and so to expand the conceptual tools available to all women’s studies.

We conclude this issue with a number of timely essays focusing on recent feminist activism around the globe. In her essay, “Mobilizing Motherhood (and Fatherhood): Civic Empowerment in the Quake Zones of China,” Rebecca Lee comments on the widespread and visible protests following the earthquakes in the Sichuan province of China. Lee draws a parallel between this example of parental activism in the face of an unresponsive state to that of Argentine mothers (*Madres de la Plaza de Mayo*) who challenged the governmental regime responsible for “disappearing” their children. Lee details how, in the wake of the deaths of 17,000 children, the politicization of bodies (and gender), which is central to the logic of state authority in China and Argentina, was appropriated by mothers (and fathers in China) who used their position as parents to demand state accountability. Lee describes Chinese mothers’ (and fathers’) vigorous

challenge to the one-child rule as embodying a type of “civic empowerment” previously unheard of in China.

Kathryn Kish Sklar in turn ponders the “race,” “woman,” and “gender” questions that explicitly informed the Democratic primary campaign of Hillary Rodham Clinton and argues that historical precedents for race and gender conflict in American politics can help us better understand the failures of Clinton’s primary candidacy. Commenting on what Sklar calls the “masculine mystique” that has become a “staple” of American presidential campaigns and political discourse, she writes that Hillary Clinton “campaigned as a woman, but she consistently made passing the masculinity test her top priority.” Sklar notes that Clinton could not make a “gender” speech that might parallel Obama’s “race” speech “because she was herself playing a game of gender deception.” Placing Clinton’s campaign in historical perspective, Sklar suggests that we would be better served in drawing on the past by casting our gaze to the late 1830s antislavery conventions of the antebellum United States rather than invoking the oft-cited split between “woman” suffrage organizations in 1869 over the fifteenth Amendment’s brief enfranchisement of African American men, but not women. She characterizes the competing white, middle-class suffrage organizations of 1869 as concerned with mainstream social change and juxtaposes these efforts to the “revolutionary” moment in 1837 when the first antislavery conventions both asserted women’s rights and condemned racism. Sklar holds that this call for an end to sexism *and* racism might be a better basis for future campaigns for the highest national office by women.

Karla Mantilla, *Feminist Studies*’ Managing Editor, interviewed Daisy Hernández, the editor of *ColorLines* magazine, who speaks to several of the issues addressed by many of the essays in this volume—the multiple subject positions of women of color, the struggle for gender and racial justice, and the importance of challenging the false binaries of gender or race. Hernández comments on how these issues especially play out in popular print culture media, specifically in the “real magazine industry” for an “independent progressive” publication and makes a compelling argument for the importance of coalitions in our attempts to achieve social and cultural transformation.

Another example of women's activism, in this case protesting existing government policies, is brought to our attention through Iranian feminist Nahid Keshavarz's interview with sister activist Jelve Javaheri. The interview, conducted in 2007, was translated into English and sent to us to make known Javaheri's political activism, for which she was imprisoned. Addressing the issue of women's fluctuating status in Iran over the past two decades and reflecting on the gendered relations of power in her own life, Javaheri speaks on the macro and micro levels about women's access to social and political power in Iran. Keshavarz and Javaheri highlight the One Million Signature Campaign as one example of the types of activism engaged in by Iranian feminists since the 1970s. The goal of this campaign is to collect one million signatures to advocate for an end to discriminatory laws against women, including laws on marriage, divorce, and employment.

Judith Kegan Gardiner and Leisa D. Meyer,
for the editorial collective