



Border Medicine: A Transcultural History of Mexican American Curanderismo (North American Religions)

Brett Hendrickson

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Mexican

American folk and religious healing, often referred to as *curanderismo*, has been a vital part of life in the Mexico-U.S.

border region for centuries. A hybrid tradition made up primarily of indigenous and Iberian Catholic pharmacopeias, rituals, and notions of the self, *curanderismo* treats the sick person with a variety of healing modalities including herbal remedies, intercessory prayer, body massage, and energy manipulation. *Curanderos*, “healers,” embrace a holistic understanding of the patient, including body, soul, and community.

Border Medicine examines the ongoing evolution of Mexican American religious healing from the end of the nineteenth century to the present. Illuminating the ways in which *curanderismo* has had an impact not only on the health and culture of the borderlands but also far beyond, the book tracks its expansion from Mexican American communities to Anglo and multiethnic contexts. While many healers treat Mexican and Mexican American clientele, a significant number of *curanderos* have worked with patients from other ethnic groups as well, especially those involved in North American metaphysical religions like spiritualism, mesmerism, New Thought, New Age, and energy-based alternative medicines. Hendrickson explores this point of contact as an experience of transcultural exchange.

Drawing

on historical archives, colonial-era medical texts and accounts, early ethnographies of the region, newspaper articles, memoirs, and contemporary healing guidebooks as well as interviews with contemporary healers, *Border Medicine* demonstrates the notable

and ongoing influence of Mexican Americans on cultural and religious practices in the United States, especially in the American West.



Instructor's Guide

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