



# **Borderlands Saints: Secular Sanctity in Chicano/a and Mexican Culture (Latinidad: Transnational Cultures in the United States)**

*Desirée A. Martín*

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In *Borderlands Saints*, Desirée A. Martín examines the rise and fall of popular saints and saint-like figures in the borderlands of the United States and Mexico. Focusing specifically on Teresa Urrea (La Santa de Cabora), Pancho Villa, César Chávez, Subcomandante Marcos, and Santa Muerte, she traces the intersections of these figures, their devotees, artistic representations, and dominant institutions with an eye for the ways in which such unofficial saints mirror traditional spiritual practices and serve specific cultural needs.

Popular spirituality of this kind engages the use and exchange of relics, faith healing, pilgrimages, and spirit possession, exemplifying the contradictions between high and popular culture, human and divine, and secular and sacred. Martín focuses upon a wide range of Mexican and Chicano/a cultural works drawn from the nineteenth century to the present, covering such diverse genres as the novel, the communiqué, drama, the essay or crónica, film, and contemporary digital media. She argues that spiritual practice is often represented as narrative, while narrative—whether literary, historical, visual, or oral—may modify or even function as devotional practice.

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