
Curanderismo: Border Crossing, Healing, and Transformation

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Abstract

This paper takes seriously Anzaldúa's assertion that, "All of [her] work, including fiction and poetry are healing trabajos" a declaration whereby Anzaldúa marks herself as a figurative folk healer—or Curandera. Hence, I return to Gloria Anzaldúa's fountainhead work for a close reading of her poem, "La Curandera" which details the story of a community in peril and in need of healing at the hands of a Curandera (folk healer). I begin here to establish just how early Anzaldúa gestured to the importance of border crossing, the figure of the folk healer, and the significance of folk healing itself as a central mediator of communal well-being. I then explore how other post-Chicano Movement writers such as Helena Maria Viramontes, and Irene Lara Silva are in metaphoric conversation with one another and are themselves, further developing Chicana feminist writing by aestheticizing the importance of Curanderismo (Mexican folk healing practices) through the trope of the Curandera figure. These writers continue to suggest that folk healing practices and folk healers can provide radical strategies that can help us heal from the ongoing effects of gendered and radicalized abuses.

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