

fall silent or speculation is necessary. The author notes, for instance, an unspoken paradox that feels instinctively true in relation to women's political role: conservatives and clergy desired that women act politically *only* in defence of religion, whereas Mexican liberals desired that they be free to act *except* if this meant defending religion.

A third major contribution of the book is to create a new periodisation for Mexican laywomen's action. It is well known, for instance, that twentieth-century women Catholics were among the Church's most reliable defenders in Mexico, not least in the the 1920s Cristero War. Historians often tag this to the nineteenth-century 'feminisation' of religion when the Church is said to have resisted secularisation, nationalism and liberalism by developing a Catholic-style romanticism in order to mobilise women. Reading *Catholic Women*, however, it is apparent that the history of women and Catholic modernity in Mexico has been squeezed into a rather Eurocentric debate: in contrast, the book sets out a new, Mexico-centric reading or genealogy that shows how deeply rooted women's religious participation was in the corporate piety of colonial Mexico. In so doing, *Catholic Women* side-steps a tradition of older feminist scholarship that sees women's religious participation in Mexico as a default, least-worse option. The author disagrees, bringing women's participation *qua* Catholics vividly to life, and revealing its potential to impact the Church as a community of faith. *Catholic Women* is a major work that provides a new, deep-seated account of why the power of the Church in Mexico is, and for centuries has been, the power of churchwomen.

doi:10.1017/S0022216X23001074

Diego Armus (ed.), *Sanadores, parteras, curanderos y médicas: Las artes de curar en la Argentina moderna*

Fondo de Cultura Económica de Argentina, 2022, 376 pp.

Katherine E. Bliss

Center for Strategic and International Studies

The essays in this Spanish-language volume *Sanadores, parteras, curanderos y médicas* focus on the diverse social roles played by healers, curanderos and other men and women practising outside, or alongside, the formal medical professions in Argentina, from the late nineteenth century to the present. Editor Diego Armus has assembled an exemplary set of analyses by Argentine historians, social scientists and health practitioners that elucidate a 'gray zone' between conventional biomedicine and other healing arts. Each author examines the controversy surrounding a particular healer, or healing practice, placing the case study, whether in Buenos Aires, Santa Fe, Jujuy or further afield, within political, social and cultural context. Considered on their own, the essays offer insightful perspectives on male and female healers' approaches to such folk maladies as 'empacho',

'*susto*', or '*mal de ojo*' and help explain why people frequently turned to traditional healers over licensed doctors during health crises. Taken together, the essays show that, despite the efforts of licensed medical professionals to cast doubt on the legitimacy of curanderos and other practitioners of the healing arts, popular healers have had a persistent influence on views about well-being in Argentina.

In an introductory essay, Armus places the studies of healers within the broader historiography of medicine, public health and the medical professions in the country. He argues that popular healers, and others dedicated to 'alternative' therapeutic approaches, have been overlooked within most studies of health in Argentina. Armus notes that this is, in part, because the licensed professionals who wrote many of the earlier histories of medicine considered popular healers to be outside the realm of proper studies of health. At the same time, studies of popular medicine, which have largely focused on the figure of the curandero, have not paid sufficient attention to the male and female healers who do not fit easily into that stereotype. Armus argues, however, that the popularity of healers, spiritists, curanderos and others sheds light on how people managed a complex array of physical or mental afflictions and that analysing the appeal of popular healers during specific periods helps explain peoples' beliefs about health, their expectations of public institutions, and the changing role of individuals in managing their health.

The essays are organised chronologically, with the first set focused on specific healers who captured public attention during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, a period of intense migration, periodic cholera outbreaks, high rates of infant mortality, and a scarcity of trained medical professionals. In this context, spiritists, hypnotists and female curanderas offered homemade remedies for such ailments as '*empacho*', a digestive disorder believed to afflict children, providing some relief for families who could not afford or access formal medical care. Because they frequently described their therapies as spiritually based, many healers did not seek compensation for their services. The success of some healers in improving child health nevertheless led medical professionals to occasionally seek their advice and reconsider their value during this period.

A second set of analyses considers the ways in which ideas about healing – and the practice of healing – began to change in the early twentieth century. The essays suggest that, as in earlier eras, healing practices in Argentina still integrated a selective mix of Hispanic Catholic beliefs, indigenous herbal remedies, and medical science; however, during the first decades of the twentieth century, practitioners, who were often immigrants themselves, also began to incorporate healing approaches from Italy, the eastern Mediterranean and other places of origin of their clients. During this period, male and female healers could be relied on for advice regarding stigmatised conditions, such as sexually transmitted infections, or provide services considered to be illegal, such as abortions. As it became more common for healers to charge fees for their treatments, they also began to market their services directly to the public.

A third group of chapters considers the period from the 1960s to the present, with authors reflecting on the increasing influence of Chinese medicine and Eastern therapeutic approaches, such as meditation and yoga, as well as efforts to integrate the practices of homeopathy and reflexology into more mainstream clinical care. Several essays in this section emphasise the influence of popular 'self-improvement' programmes in refining the view that individuals can shape

their own health destinies. In a final reflection, Armus reconsiders the idea of the 'gray zone' with respect to the healing arts, emphasising the influence of 'alternative' or non-traditional healing within Argentine approaches to health and well-being over the course of three centuries.

Because many of the essays focus on controversies associated with popular healers, including accusations that they practised medicine without a licence, the authors are able to draw on a wealth of archival material from legal cases to support their arguments. Testimony from witnesses complements opinions from medical review boards to offer insights regarding tensions around professional medical standards, the role of the state in regulating healing, and the perspectives of patients and clients regarding health services rendered. The authors also draw on media coverage of high-profile cases, demonstrating the important role played by the mainstream and popular press in disseminating information and shaping public opinion about healers over the period of study. As healers became more comfortable accepting money for their services, many became prolific writers and self-promoters, marketing products and services directly to the public and reinforcing the idea that individuals could take charge of their health without the intervention of a licensed medical professional.

The orientation of most chapters around specific case studies makes for an engaging set of readings which are consistent in their approach and perspective. The volume certainly complements recent English-language publications, such as *The Gray Zones in Medicine: Healers and History in Latin America* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2021), edited by Armus and Pablo F. Gómez. Yet while the essays do situate the healers analysed within relevant geographic and historical context, there is often not quite enough information about the local political or social situation to help the reader gain a sense of how ideas about healing were similar or differed from place to place. This may make the volume's appeal limited for those analysing the role of popular healers in other regions or countries. Students of the history of health and well-being in Argentina, however, will want to consider this volume an essential contribution to the field.

doi:10.1017/S0022216X23001086

Yael Mabat, *Sacrifice and Regeneration: Seventh-Day Adventism and Religious Transformation in the Andes*

Nebraska University Press, 2022, xxv + 289 pp.

Ricardo Cubas Ramacciotti

Universidad de los Andes, Chile

Professor Yael Mabat's book *Sacrifice and Regeneration* delves in an insightful and informed way into the history of Adventist missions among the Indigenous populations around Lake Titicaca in Puno (Peru) during the first three decades of the twentieth century. Despite the significant documentary gaps in the local historical