



Healing Dramas: Divination and Magic in Modern Puerto Rico

Raquel Romberg

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In this intimate ethnography, Raquel Romberg seeks to illuminate the performative significance of healing rituals and magic works, their embodied nature, and their effectiveness in transforming the states of participants by focusing on the visible, albeit mostly obscure, ways in which healing and magic rituals proceed. The questions posed by Romberg emerge directly from the particular pragmatics of Puerto Rican bruja (witch-healing), shaped by the eclecticism of its rituals, the heterogeneous character of its participants, and the heterodoxy of its moral economy. What, if any, is the role of belief in magic and healing rituals? How do past discourses on possession enter into the performative experience of ritual in the here and now? Where does belief stop, and where do memories of the flesh begin? While these are questions that philosophers and anthropologists of religion ponder, they acquire a different meaning when asked from an ethnographic perspective.

Written in an evocative, empathetic style, with theoretical ruminations about performance, the senses, and imagination woven into stories that highlight the drama and humanity of consultations, this book is an important contribution to the cross-cultural understanding of our capacity to experience the transcendental in corporeal ways.



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