



# The Borders Within: Encounters Between Mexico and the U.S.

*Douglas Monroy*

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## **The Borders Within: Encounters Between Mexico and the U.S.** Douglas Monroy

Throughout its history, the nation that is now called the United States has been inextricably entwined with the nation now called Mexico. Indeed, their indigenous peoples interacted long before borders of any kind were established. Today, though, the border between the two nations is so prominent that it is front-page news in both countries. Douglas Monroy, a noted Mexican American historian, has for many years pondered the historical and cultural intertwinings of the two nations. Here, in beautifully crafted essays, he reflects on some of the many ways in which the citizens of the two countries have misunderstood each other. Putting himself—and his own quest for understanding—directly into his work, he contemplates the missions of California; the differences between “liberal” and “traditional” societies; the meanings of words like Mexican, Chicano, and Latino; and even the significance of avocados and bathing suits. In thought-provoking chapters, he considers why Native Americans didn’t embrace Catholicism, why NAFTA isn’t working the way it was supposed to, and why Mexicans and their neighbors to the north tell themselves different versions of the same historical events. In his own thoughtful way, Monroy is an explorer. Rather than trying to conquer new lands, however, his goal is to gain new insights. He wants to comprehend two cultures that are bound to each other without fully recognizing their bonds. Along with Monroy, readers will discover that borders, when we stop and really think about it, are drawn more deeply in our minds than on any maps.

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