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The Other Side: Journeys in Baja California

Judy Goldstein Botello
Sunbelt Publications (September 1998)
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In just 175 pages, Judy Goldstein Botello (*Adventures with Kids in San Diego*, *Sunbelt*) traces the gestation and birth of her 15-year love affair with the peoples and cultures along the Mexican border near her San Diego home. Botello's collection of 10 essays, collected here for the first time, is a travel memoir for those interested in the expanding and contracting perimeters of cultural regionalism and the subjective journey, not only measured in a reference of miles, but also in terms of personal transition and enlightenment.

The Other Side is the story of Botello's two journeys: The outer trek explores the length, breadth and depth of the hauntingly beautiful region of southern California and northern Mexico with its vibrant and diverse people and distinct, yet endangered societies. The inner journey moves through a convoluted and treacherous border world where clans and traditions clash and merge, and where an encounter with another way of life can illuminate the undiscovered landscape of the soul.

Starting with the essay "Tijuana," Botello relates an account of going into Mexico for the first time to have an aged guitar maker build an instrument for her and being forced to confront her own prejudice and fears of Mexican culture.

In subsequent chapters, we follow Botello, a San Diego pediatrician, through a myriad of encounters with the contradictions of her perceptions and her burgeoning cultural appreciation. It is a fine and harrowing trip and Botello's confessional writing style lends itself well to the admissions and discoveries she experiences.
RAY NARGIS (June 15, 1998)

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