

***La Santa Muerte in Mexico: History, Devotion, and Society.*** Edited by Wil G. Pansters. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2019. xiv + 230 pp. \$65.00 cloth.

Wil Panster's edited volume *La Santa Muerte in Mexico: History, Devotion, and Society* provides context for the popular veneration of La Santa Muerte, a Mexican devotional figure whose growth in recent years has garnered popular and scholarly attention. La Santa Muerte is typically depicted as a female skeleton (see images in Anne Huffschmid's as well as Judith Perdigón Castañeda and Bernardo Robles Aguirre's essays) and represents, in Panster's view, "the personification or sanctification of death itself" (29). She is not sanctioned by the Catholic Church, and yet the rituals, prayers, altars, and body art relating to her—which are documented in this book—flourish. Although lacking the type of formal organization that would encourage her veneration, La Santa Muerte devotees are increasingly diverse; Mexican anthropologist Claudio Lomnitz notes, "The Santa Muerte cult is no longer relegated to prisons, prostitutes, and the criminal world, but rather touches on sectors of society whose livelihood can be characterized as precarious" (183).

The seven essays comprising *La Santa Muerte in Mexico* position the scholarly conversation anthropologically, seeking to situate La Santa Muerte and her followers in frameworks that historicize her popular emergence (Benjamin T. Smith); explain her partaking in the "cultural patrimonialization of death" prevalent in Latin America (Juan Antonio Flores Martos, 85); and articulate a type of familial socialization intrinsic to the beliefs and practices associated with her (Regnar Kristensen). In considering La Santa Muerte's emergence in the Tepito neighborhood of Mexico City, and comparing her with other secular devotional individuals popular in Mexico (such as Juan Soldado, Jesús Malverde, and el Niño Fidencio), the book asks the "why" behind La Santa Muerte, returning to the hypothesis that "many of the petitions and demands [presented] to dead 'saints' could be attended to and resolved by a competent state, and it is surprising that the people who approach these figures plead reiteratively for safekeeping and protection regarding the most basic of issues, exposing, quite literally, a profile of abandonment by state and government institutions" (106). *La Santa Muerte in Mexico* contributes a valuable analytical perspective to the ongoing scholarly conversation regarding this enigmatic figure.

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***The Letters of Henry Martyn, East India Company Chaplain.*** Edited by Scott D. Ayler. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2019. xvi + 596 pp. £95.00, \$165.00 cloth.

This volume is divided into two parts of unequal length but of equal interest. The main part consists of over 500 pages of the transcribed letters of Henry Martyn (1781—1812)