

sively with the scarcely translatable words *honor* and *honra*, the use of *don* and *doña*, the colonial meaning of *limpieza de sangre*, and the “rites of violence.” The book definitely captivates the reader, whether or not a specialist in the history of Hispanic America. With her writer’s talent, Undurraga Schüler highlights the subtle moves of a colonial society and translates them in light of the judicial records of the inhabitants of what was then a remote overseas territory.

As the author states, individuals themselves define their personal conflicts and identities when they resort to various “horizons of possibilities” in honor-based proceedings: slanders, assaults, calumnies, injuries, and homicides. Through these judicial instances, the notion of honor appears more a subjective, dynamic, and negotiated process than a mandatory and unchanging precept. The author’s precise and valuable investigation of several identities recorded in the documents aims at disclosing the constraints and movements of these communities and individuals, and becomes a central point of the book. Besides, Undurraga Schüler’s work shows that honor is a transversal issue in the colonial society of the General Captaincy of Chile and its capital city. The notion appears as a shared phenomenon at stake in each community. Albeit questionable, this standpoint proves of peculiar interest to the historian when categorizing, from a rather unnamed etic point of view, the different communities that integrated the society of the past.

Nonetheless, in selecting the prism of honor to study the process of construction of colonial identities, Undurraga Schüler seems to bind her analysis to a definitions of a social self and to the weight of collective behaviors in the enforcement of individual actions. Notwithstanding her approach in considering terms of masculinity in, for instance, the social management of honor, or the precise descriptions and interpretations of different circumstances of violence, the author gives almost no tribute to post-colonial studies. She barely explores the place of intimate sensibilities in the display of colonial sexual identities, or in the personal experiences of desire. I think attention to these aspects would have brought more originality to this dense volume.

However, in spite of leaving significant elements of emotional receptivity out of her full consideration, Undurraga Schüler’s interesting and generous work highly stimulates an already opened reflection about the intimacy in the colonial legacy in the present-day language of Chile and the nature of violence and expressions of feelings there. It brings a notable contribution to the history of justice in Chile.

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AUDE ARGOUSE

Distance and Documents at the Spanish Empire’s Periphery. By Sylvia Sellers-García. Stanford. Stanford University Press, 2014. Pp. xiii, 257. Figures. Maps. Tables. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$60.00 cloth.

“The workings of empire,” asserts Sylvia Sellers-García at the outset of this captivating monograph, “depended on the flow of paper.” Her fundamental argument, succinctly put, is that “documents were an essential tool in the workings of empire, and particu-

larly long-distance empire.” The composition of documents, the means by which they were dispatched, and how (after being read, acted upon, or ignored) they were eventually filed and stored “therefore reveal much about how distance was mediated, if not always overcome” (p. 16). Colonial Spanish America is the orbit of Sellers-García’s embrace, and the part of it that interests her most is the region governed as the Audiencia de Guatemala. A “periphery of empire” (p. 5) in the global Hispanic scheme of things, the Audiencia de Guatemala was certainly not imperial Spain’s most lucrative asset, nor the largest territory it administered. However, stretching as it did (in present-day geography) from the Mexican state of Chiapas in the north and west to the border between Costa Rica and Panama in the south and east, the Audiencia de Guatemala was most decidedly far-flung, thus affording Sellers-García ample space to advance her case, which she does to striking effect.

The book has three parts that consider (in turn) “the creation, movement, and storage of documents” (p. 19). Chapter 1 concerns document genres, with Chapter 2 showcasing Sellers-García at her very best: analyzing the jewel of colonial Guatemalan historiography, the “geographic-moral description” (the title is inspired by the genius of Immanuel Kant) penned and mapped by Archbishop Pedro Cortés y Larraz (1712–1786). Chapter 3 examines how the mail system operated. In 1599, a typical letter sent by the Audiencia of Guatemala to Spain, took about a year to arrive (p. 81). Chapter 4 invokes the lives and livelihoods of the intrepid *correos*, often of ill repute, “who covered hundreds of leagues on foot and on horseback” (p. 103), carrying mail from one remote corner of the Audiencia to another. Sellers-García offers insightful reflection on what constituted a league, which could be either a temporal measure (“the distance walked in an hour,” p. 95) or a spatial one, “in most of the empire ... roughly 2.6 miles” (p. 96). Chapters 5 and 6, assiduously undertaken but somewhat less riveting than the chapters preceding them, discuss the role of the diligent officials (*escribanos*) whose “methods of organizing document storage echoed methods of organizing document travel” and show how the inventories made by them proved “essential organizational tools for document preservation” (p. 21) when former colonies became independent republics during the second quarter of the nineteenth century.

My rationale for singling out what Sellers-García has to say about the pastoral tour of inspection conducted between 1768 and 1770 by Cortés y Larraz is not mere subjective preference. Although the archbishop’s depictions are detailed in Chapter 2, these valuable records inform the entire text. To his “notion of distance as pejorative” Sellers-García returns time and again to emphasize or throw into relief the prelate’s visceral antipathy toward the un-Christian anarchy of Maya life all over Guatemala: “the great burden of his concerns for the archdiocese’s spiritual and moral health hanging over him” (p. 75). Distraught and perplexed, Cortés y Larraz throws up his hands in despair. “It causes one horror,” he writes, “to even contemplate having to penetrate such a great gathering of mountains” (p. 62). The mindset with which the prelate ghosted through town after town the length and breadth of his domain, shocked if not repelled by what he encountered, contrasts with how statesman and writer Antonio José de Irisarri (1786–1868) perceived matters. Whereas the former saw “scandals”

and “perilous distance at the end of difficult routes” plagued by misery and hardship, the latter beheld “in all those places a liveliness, activity, and progress,” especially on the part of Indians “who were industrious, intelligent, capable, awake to their circumstances, well-built, robust, and earnestly dedicated to agriculture, commerce, and the arts” (p. 75). Sellers-García plays the two men off against each other quite brilliantly.

A historical geographer’s delight, this book warrants the attention of all scholars of Spanish America, especially those whose research interests lie primarily in Central America, a region where illuminating the nature of colonial experiences is still a work in progress.

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LATINO/BORDER STUDIES

Riding Lucifer’s Line: Ranger Deaths along the Texas-Mexican Border. By Bob Alexander. Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2013. Pp. xxvi, 404. Photographs. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$29.95 cloth.

Bob Alexander’s *Riding Lucifer’s Line* is a well-researched collection of 25 sketches about Texas Rangers who died by gunshot in the performance of their duties along the Texas-Mexican border in the years 1875–1921. Writing from the knowledgeable perspective of a retired U. S. Department of the Treasury officer, Alexander undertakes the formidable task of piecing together the often-obscure and many times incomplete life stories of these selected lawmen. Historical records relating to Texas Rangers are frequently spotty and incomplete for a variety of reasons. Some were lost to fire or other calamity, while others curiously vanished somehow from state archives, county courthouses and other repositories. The Rangers themselves commonly moved from job to job inside and outside law enforcement, seldom staying in one location or position for long periods. Pay was low, hardship plentiful, and life-threatening danger a constant factor.

Alexander’s Rangers met death in a variety of ways ranging from accident to ambush, with a surprising number of deaths resulting from inexperience and the absence of modern tactical training. Early-day Rangers had to learn law enforcement mostly by performing the job, and sometimes this in itself proved deadly, particularly on the Texas-Mexican border. An example was the 1890 death of Texas Ranger Private John H. Gravis in Presidio County. Gravis had been a Ranger for about five months when he and a deputy sheriff got into a gunfight in the rowdy silver mining town of Shafter. The young Ranger lost his life after being shot in the head. While conflicting accounts cloud the details, Alexander pointedly sums up the tragedy: “On the Texas/Mexican border rookies were but the raw meat of the devil.” Another example is the death of Ranger Robert E. Doaty some two years later. Doaty had been a Ranger for only 22 days when he met death in another border shoot-out. The same is true for Eugene B. Hulen, killed in Presidio County in 1915 after 57 days as a Ranger.