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Nicholas A. Robins, Mercury, Mining, and Empire: The Human and Ecological Cost of Colonial Silver Mining in the Andes

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understand the variety and complexity of legal culture. Hispanic law rested on several notions that the Bourbons and later the liberals sought to change. A Spanish species of contractual law bound city residents, which included everyone from Peninsular to slave to the Crown, and gave them the right to consult the king who was obliged to listen. Numerous "nodes," of which gender was only one, determined a person's legal identity. The astute litigant could manipulate her identity depending on the nature of her case, while a woman's ability to enter into legal acts rested on customary law that provided wiggle room and gave them some economic and legal independence. The intent of Bourbon reformers and later liberal statesman was to undo customary law. Bourbon reformers largely failed because customary practices were too ingrained in the popular mind. However, liberals succeeded in defining a citizen as a property-owning male, thus reducing the complexity or confusion of the Habsburg system to simple binaries.

Black uses a rather narrow and specific four-part definition of patriarchy. His intention is to move away from understanding patriarchy as shorthand for male domination and from studies based on "elite prescriptions and legal abstractions," while moving towards a history of "socially constructed practices" (p. 10) found in the documents. A historiographical essay would have been a better vehicle for showcasing the originality of Black's argument and findings about patriarchy. To parcel out elements of a complex issue and the rosters of scholars engaged in the debate in lengthy discursive footnotes is not a satisfactory substitute. This work is recommended for specialists, being too detailed for classes below a graduate-level seminar, as a close reading, inclusive of the footnotes, is required.

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Mercury, Mining, and Empire: The Human and Ecological Cost of Colonial Silver Mining in the Andes. By Nicholas A. Robins. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011. xiv + 298 pp. Maps, glossary, notes, bibliography, index. \$45.00 cloth.)

Nicholas Robins' well-crafted book correlates mining and ecological devastation in Potosí (Bolivia) and Huancavelica (Peru) during the period from 1544 to the first decade of the nineteenth century, when the Wars of Independence ended the Spanish empire in South America. By then, mining in both Potosí and Huancavelica had declined. For these mining centers, Robins shares recent research findings from underused archives, which assist him in constructing unexpected implications. He inventively juxtaposes data to offer actual measurements of toxicity and the effects of mercury poisoning on

humans, and computes rates of mortality due to silicosis. By furnishing "soil samples analyzed by atomic absorption spectrometry that show high concentration of mercury in the environment today" (p. 9), palynology reveals mercury's resilient contamination of the environment. Within the covers of this book, silver amalgamating technicalities and their impacts cohabit with proto-*K'aqcha*-miner consciousness and their subversion of labor discipline within the travails of the social hierarchy of colonial mining in Potosí and Huancavelica.

In Chapter One, Robins outlines the parallel history of the towns of Potosí and Huancavelica, mostly in terms of the historical development of mining and the impact of mining activities and associated technologies. However, the author also begins to reconstruct the communities of indigenous laborers which provided the primary workforce for the mines through the system of the *mita* (compulsory labor draft). In Chapter Two, the historical research is innovative as the author interlocks the noxious ecological and anthropogenic impact of colonial mining by focusing on the history of silver and mercury refining in Huancavelica. Robins illustrates an example of the Wallerstenian world system analysis, interconnecting Potosí and Huancavelica to the socioecology of the silver exports so vital to Spain's "primitive accumulation." In this case, current historical methods compel the researcher to elucidate Braudelian interconnectivities in order to help readers understand that mercury and silver mining were integral and crucial to the world economy and to Spain's imperial age.

In Chapter Three, the fate of the miner again is closely linked to the environment. Focusing on silver mining in Potosí, Robins summarizes a history in which the exhaustion of labor, with high rates of mortality, parallels the long-lasting environmental demise and lethal heritage of colonial mining. In Chapter Four, Robins clearly depicts David Harvey's proposal to understand a process of "accumulation by dispossession": the dispossessed are the Andean communities whose agrarian way of life collapses because of mining, whose labor force is extracted through coercion, and whose biomass is poisoned (pp. 177, 184). In Chapter Five, the author turns to the native communities, from which the indigenous laborers derived, stating that "by the turn of the nineteenth century, the *mita* and the communities that supplied it were in their death throes and subject to ever more pressure" (p. 174). The themes of corrosion and collapse due to silver and mercury production are linked as Robins demonstrates tortuous overlaps that not only join the core and the periphery, but also the human-environmental viscerality provoked by the process of amalgamation. As is often the case in these situations, those who controlled the "doings and un-doings of Empire" were less aware of the detrimental repercussions of their actions or rulings.

Found in the vocabulary of underground mining taking place today, the Quechua term *kupaqira* (trashing liquid) designates the contaminated runoff of chemical substances produced by mining practices. Caustic liquids eat up the clothing and rubber boots worn by miners and harm workers and the

environment alike. Robins offers a link from the present to the past, arguing that the transformation of "nature" into a "resource" parallels five hundred years of Andean mining history. Through toxicokinetics (absorption of chemicals into the body), the book steers readers back to the era of colonial mining, when Potosí first was saturated with silver and Huancavelica with mercury. Anthropologists call this an "off-stage drama," a Malthusian concealed impact of human action on the environment, in this case caused by the process of amalgamation. Robins underscores mining's devastating heritage throughout this well-substantiated work, which will appeal to historians of mining, the economy, and those interested in the effects of global capitalism on the environment.

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Church Life between the Metropolitan and the Local: Parishes, Parishioners, and Parish Priests in Seventeenth-Century Mexico. By Magnus Lundberg. (Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2011. 277 pp. Maps, tables, notes, appendix, bibliography, indexes. \$39.80 paper.)

The study of the Catholic Church and Catholicism in seventeenth-century Mexico remains mostly uncharted territory. Magnus Lundberg's welcome study focuses on the relationship between the Catholic Church and indigenous communities in rural areas of the archbishopric of Mexico and the diocese of Puebla between 1600 and 1650. Lundberg argues that each indigenous community had a local understanding of the Catholic Church and its theological teachings that filtered from the top/metropolitan clerical hierarchies to the local priests and indigenous parishioners. Relying on a vast array of archival research consisting of sources written in Latin, Spanish, and Nahuatl, Lundberg examines themes such as the use of Indian languages in the Catholic ministry, the sacraments, the extirpation of idolatries, priests' behavior in rural parishes, and Indian responses to clerical abuse. As the author points out, the book is not about popular religion represented by devotions such as *cofradías* (Catholic lay brotherhoods), saint's cults, or pilgrimages, but about how the local and diocesan levels of the Catholic Church operated and interacted with Indian communities in rural parishes.

The organization of the book follows the author's metropolitan-to-local approach in a thematically organized chapter outlay. After an informative historiographical introduction and a brief historical overview of the dioceses of Mexico and Puebla, the chapters zoom in to focus on the local level. Two chapters analyze the theoretical imprints of the Council of Trent and its Mexican version, the Third Council of Mexico of 1585, in addition to three bishop pastoral visitations. Lundberg's goal here is to demonstrate how Church