

of the collection as whole: the emphasis on transatlantic crossings and religious modifications which take the reader beyond the simple idea of a transplanted monolithic version of Christianity. For example, Rubial García reveals the presence of indigenous agency in the acceptance and adaptation of Christian saints; Nesvig shows how the singular early dominance of the mendicant orders helped to impart a particular New World flavour to the Mexican Church; and several authors – Eire, Rubial García, Osowski – address the dialectical appropriation of pagan symbols and the early Church by both indigenous worshippers and Catholic officials to achieve resonance with the specificity of the Mexican environment as late as the eighteenth century.

Less strong is the attention paid to the conjunction of identity politics and popular religion. While the contributions offer information on many different demographic groups, some important factors seem to lack nuance and cohesion. Osowski's essay offers a fascinating account of the role of female alms collectors among the Nahua and provides a wealth of archival information, but I would have liked to have seen him draw some more concrete conclusions regarding the gender of alms collectors. The same applies to the essays of Nicole von Germeten and Brian Larkin, who make reference to the existence of female confraternity members but do not specifically discuss whether gender affected their participation. The other identity problem, for me, comes up in the issue of Afro-Mexican popular practices. Neither the Introduction nor the two framing essays substantively address the issue of African practices, and the authors of these pieces (Nicole von Germeten and Javier Villa-Flores) do not engage in dialogue with the theories outlined in the essays by Eire and Christian. The contributions themselves are illuminating and, taken together, offer very different, and important, windows onto Afro-Mexican religion and culture. Von Germeten details how confraternities gave Afro-Mexicans the socio-economic power to negotiate the hierarchies of colonial society, while Villa-Flores describes how slaves manipulated the Inquisition's attention to blasphemy to attempt escape from the horrors of the *obrajes*. I believe that the editor might have incorporated them more fluidly into the volume as a whole, however, and this crucial area of study for popular religion therefore appears to be something of an afterthought in this collection.

In conclusion, the volume offers a wonderful contribution to the growing field of religion and cultural history within colonial Latin American studies. It strikes a fruitful balance between theory and practice and offers a fascinating view of the multifaceted popular practices contained within the more general rubric of Mexican Catholicism.

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J. Lat. Amer. Stud. 42 (2010). doi:10.1017/S0022216X10000155

Carlos Aguirre, *Dénde duro que no siente: poder y transgresión en el Perú republicano* (Lima: Fondo Editorial del Pedagógico San Marcos, 2008), pp. 318, pb.

In 1844 Ramona, a 12-year-old Indian girl who worked as a domestic servant in one of Lima's households was accused of stealing twelve *reales*. Her master decided to punish her, and over seven long hours she was beaten to death. While Ramona was being beaten, the master's wife instructed the slaves who executed the punishment with the words 'Hit her harshly; she doesn't feel it', and later she explained that

'*cholos* must be punished this way'. Ramona's story is perhaps extreme in its cruelty and brutality, but as Aguirre stresses (p. 44), many of its features were hardly exceptional in republican Peru. The 11 articles collected in this book, most of them previously published in other locations, combine various themes of Peruvian social history – slavery and domestic servitude, representations of crime and its construction as a social problem, and the constant use of official and informal (or semi-formal) institutions of penal repression – commencing with the early decades of the republic and continuing up to the first third of the twentieth century. For the most part Aguirre approaches these issues by focusing on the history of Lima, but in some of the articles the history and historiography of these topics are examined from a wider Latin American comparative perspective. Undoubtedly the articles in this collection open a window on important areas of encounter and disencounter between state and society, as well as on daily social practices of power relations, which enrich our understanding of Peruvian social history and of Latin American society at large.

As many of these articles reveal, physical violence has been used continuously as a legitimate form of punishment in a range of social interactions throughout the history of republican Peru. This was true not only in spheres of informal justice, such as domestic servitude in nineteenth-century Lima, discussed in chap. 1 – as Aguirre skilfully demonstrates, corporal punishment has been perceived as an effective instrument to enforce discipline and obedience in both the private and public domains, whether schools and prisons, the penitentiary of Lima (chap. 4), or various institutions that were supposedly meant to reform and 'correct' young delinquents (chap. 7). Another aspect of Ramona's story which frequently reappears in this book lies in the ways in which notions and practices of penal repression were formed by and, in turn, informed class relations, racial hierarchies and well-established authoritarian perceptions. As Aguirre shows in chap. 2, the use of bakeries as institutions of punishment in which intractable slaves were confined and forced to work was an old colonial practice that continued to exist in Lima during the early decades of the republic and that served to reinforce social demarcations between slaves and free populations. In chap. 5 Aguirre argues that in the second half of the nineteenth century the demand to treat criminals with a stronger hand and to increase social and labour control over some 'problematic populations' reflected the intellectual and political construction of crime as a serious social problem, strongly related to certain classes and ethnic groups, to their social and cultural practices, and generally to their lack of morality. Criminals were supposedly part of an 'underworld', whose system of values differed from that of 'decent people'. Accordingly, a clear distinction was made, often in the law as well, between the 'irrational low-class violence' and forms of legitimate upper-class violence, such as the duels of honour that were practised in various places in Latin America at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth (for the social constructions of crime and honour in Mexico City, see Pablo Piccato's *City of Suspects*, 2001). In contrast to this construction of crime, Aguirre persuasively shows, both in *The Criminals of Lima and their Worlds* (2005) and in chap. 8 of this volume (which both discuss the duel between Carita and Tirifilo, two black *faites* from the margins of Lima society), that criminals and prisoners often shared the same morals and values (honour, courage and virility) that dominated society at large. For this reason, in certain cases they were also regarded with an admiration that crossed social and racial boundaries: to Ciro Alegría's story, 'Duelo de caballeros', discussed

in chap. 8, one could also add, for example, López Albújar's book, *Los caballeros del delito* (1936).

Some of the chapters demonstrate what Aguirre calls 'the disregard for the lives of those who fell into the clutches of the state legal system' (p. 23). However, as becomes evident in other parts of the book, and in line with new legal history, law was also an arena of struggle and negotiation in which subaltern groups sometimes turned to state justice, seeking its legal protection in an attempt to curb the power of the dominant elites. In chap. 10, in which Aguirre calls for a re-examination of the traditional division between the history of crime and the history of labour in Latin America, he also stresses that throughout the history of this continent widespread use of legal litigation was made by slaves and Indians, by urban and rural workers, in order to claim some of their rights and to improve their conditions of life and work. Legal litigation was one of the strategies of resistance available to Peruvian slaves, and according to Aguirre (chap. 3) it played an important role in the struggle to abolish slavery in Peru. He also mentions that protective legislation and the work of legal defenders of slaves contributed to making this strategy possible. A similar argument might have been extended to the later legal struggles of both Indians and *indigenistas*, whose ideas were reflected in Peruvian legislation after the 1920s.

This indicates that the legal system, and especially the judicial arena, played an intricate role in the reproduction and reshaping of power relations, in making distinctions between the use and abuse of power, in reflecting authoritarian perceptions and, at the same time, creating a culture of litigation. Thus our understanding of what Aguirre calls 'the mechanisms of power and transgression' deployed throughout the history of republican Peru (p. 23) could be enhanced by directing further scholarly attention to the ways in which the Peruvian legal system exercised those roles. Indeed, as many of the articles in this book convincingly show, legal files are important sources for illuminating the history of subaltern groups – but they can be further explored to shed light on other actors and institutions in the legal arena, including courts, judges, attorneys and defenders, allowing for a better understanding of these players' specific contributions to the patterns and practices of power relations and acts of transgression elaborated in this book.

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J. Lat. Amer. Stud. 42 (2010). doi:10.1017/S0022216X10000167

Sol Serrano, *¿Qué hacer con Dios en la República? Política y secularización en Chile, 1845–1885* (Santiago: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2008), pp. 375, \$13.20, pb.

Sol Serrano's latest book will have a profound impact on Chilean and Latin American historiography. It demonstrates the significance of religion and the Catholic Church for understanding the transition from monarchical to republican rule in nineteenth-century Chile. Serrano poses the series of questions that guided her research in various national and international archives, and in the Chilean press and congressional debates. Is it possible to write a history of secularisation? Is it possible to study religion from a standpoint that is neither liberal nor conservative, neither anti-clerical nor ultramontane? Is it possible to study secularisation as a process and not as progress, as liberals would have it? Is it possible to study secularisation, from a religious standpoint, no longer as a disaster but simply as historical change? These are all pertinent questions, especially considering the partisan nature of the historiography on the subject.