

**Spectacular Wealth:
Power and Participation in the Festivals of Colonial Potosí and Minas Gerais
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In November 1748 Father Manoel da Cruz arrived in Mariana to take up his post as the first bishop of a newly designated diocese in Minas Gerais, Brazil. The discovery of gold and diamonds during the previous half century had led to the arrival of great numbers of fortune-seeking Portuguese and their African slaves in the region known as “General Mines,” and with the population boom came a perceived need for greater ecclesiastical and royal control. To celebrate his arrival and the elevation of Mariana to the category of city and capital of the bishopric, the usual festivities celebrating episcopal entries were organized, with processions involving masked figures in elaborate costumes, two triumphal carriages, and the local nobility, infantry, government officials, clergy, and religious brotherhoods. An anonymous account published in Lisbon in 1749, *Áureo Throno Episcopal* [Golden Episcopal Throne], describes the festive entry, including the performance of another group that did not belong to the local elite. The author reports that the audience was greatly amused by the music and dance performed by a group of “Carijó Indians, or natives of the land,” who were actually represented by “eleven young mulattos” (454). At this and other moments in the entry, the boom town’s racial diversity was part of the festive pageantry, but these performances fit uncomfortably with the entry’s display of ecclesiastical power and elite privilege.

This book project addresses the many different, and often conflicting, agendas behind the organization, performance, and publication of festivals like this one in the colonial mining towns of South America: Potosí in the Spanish Viceroyalty of Peru, and the various municipalities of Minas Gerais, Brazil. These towns enjoyed, for a time, both spectacular wealth and a wealth of spectacles. The rich silver deposits of the Mountain of Potosí were discovered by Spaniards in 1545, and the subsequent rush led to Potosí’s status as one of the world’s most populous cities, at as many as 160,000 inhabitants, by 1611. Portuguese knowledge of Potosí’s treasures led to numerous expeditions searching for another silver mountain in the interior of Brazil, where comparable riches were eventually located after the first significant gold strikes in the 1690s. Gold production in Minas Gerais reached its peak around 1750, about a century after silver production in Potosí had begun to decline. Despite the chronological lag in their development, both areas came to represent—and quite literally provide for—the jewels in the crowns of their respective empires. As a result of the vast mineral wealth, both areas developed an elaborate, Baroque festive and artistic culture that involved the participation of not only those who profited from the mines, but those who were forced to work in them (principally Amerindians in Potosí and blacks in Minas Gerais). Although Potosí and Minas Gerais have received a great deal of individual attention from scholars of Spanish America and Brazil, the comparative study of these two regions has been surprisingly neglected. This book fills that gap by comparing the mining societies of Potosí and Minas Gerais for the first time, through an analysis of the performances and self-representation of their diverse constituent communities in festivals and festival accounts.

Although much of the mineral wealth extracted from Potosí and Minas Gerais wound up in the coffers of the Spanish and Portuguese sovereigns (and even more so, their European creditors), the abundance of silver and gold still permitted the staging of dazzling and costly festivals, like the one organized for the bishop’s entry into Mariana. Indeed, in both of these areas—distant from the viceregal capitals of Lima and Salvador da Bahia, and thus from the civic and religious centers of their respective colonies—public festivals became the main avenue for the display of not only material riches, but cultural, spiritual, and intellectual wealth, as well. These celebrations were

recorded in official and unofficial, published and manuscript accounts, whose authors' and sponsors' objectives in recounting and publicizing the festivities often diverged from those organizing, or being celebrated, in the festival. Thus, for example, while ecclesiastical officials may have viewed the Bishop's entry into Mariana as the extension of the church's authority into remote, uncivilized lands, the anonymous author is more concerned with flaunting, for a European audience, the intellectual and spiritual grandeur of the city's Portuguese residents, as manifested in the poetry recited during the procession and ceremonies. The young mulattos, on the other hand, may be challenging both of these narratives of elite triumph through their own festive participation as "Carijó Indians"—not unlike the modern-day "Mardi Gras Indians" of New Orleans. Rather than demonstrate the supremacy of the Catholic Church or the city's elite Portuguese residents, the "mulatto Carijó" performance may have been meant to honor the local authority and traditions of individuals of African descent, such as the coronation of an African King and Queen as celebrated by the Black Brotherhood of the Rosary in Minas Gerais and elsewhere in Latin America since the colonial period.

This project examines the performance of different cultural identities and strategies of self-representation and -promotion in the festivals of colonial mining towns, as well as in the writing and publication of festival texts. Although European festivals and their accounts have received extensive scholarly attention from a variety of disciplinary perspectives for several decades, their transplantation and transformation in the Americas have more recently come into academic focus. Books dedicated to festivals in colonial Cuzco, Peru (Dean, 1999), Brazil (Jancsó and Kantor, 2001), Chile (Valenzuela Márquez, 2001), and Mexico City (Curcio-Nagy, 2004) challenge D. A. Brading's claim, in 2004, that the "systematic study of festivals [...] has yet to begin in Spanish America" (350). However, the *comparative* study of colonial festivals in Latin America may indeed be yet to begin. And what such a comparative study of mining towns, in particular, offers is a way to move beyond the emphasis on the political instrumentality of festivals in consolidating and communicating religious and secular authority, a line of inquiry initiated by Roy Strong and Edward Muir in the study of Renaissance European festivals, and José Antonio Maravall and Antonio Bonet Correa with respect to Spanish Baroque celebrations. Scholarship on festivals in the colonial Americas has tended to follow this line, since in the New World context public ceremonies could help to ensure the submission and indoctrination of Amerindians, Africans, and even creoles (Americans of European descent) with suspect allegiances. While the festivals of colonial mining towns certainly evince this use, their very geographic marginality and cultural heterogeneity allow the diverse and conflicting agendas of those participating in and publicizing festivals to come into focus more sharply than in those festivals planned and performed at the center of viceregal power (Mexico City, Lima, or Salvador da Bahia). Furthermore, the comparative approach widens the range of sources that can be used to investigate—and appreciate the differences between—these conflicting agendas. Thus whereas Bartolomé Arzáns de Orsúa y Vela's *Historia de la Villa Imperial de Potosí* (finished 1737 and unpublished in his lifetime) offers extraordinarily detailed descriptions of indigenous participation in Potosí's festivals over two centuries, Simão Ferreira Machado's *Triunfo Eucarístico* (1733) affords other ways of thinking about subaltern involvement in festivals, for it was the Black Brotherhood of the Rosary in Vila Rica do Ouro Preto, Minas Gerais, that sponsored the account's publication. My interest lies not only in interpreting and contextualizing the festivals that the texts describe, but also in understanding the agendas of the texts and their producers.

I have worked on these and other festival accounts in one forthcoming and two published articles, which I wrote concurrently with my first book, *Writing Captivity in the Early Modern Atlantic: Circulations of Knowledge and Authority in the Iberian and English Imperial Worlds* (University of North

Carolina Press, 2009). The research conducted for my first book (in Spain, Portugal, and Chile, as well as at the Newberry Library, for which I received a Newberry-awarded NEH Fellowship in 2002-2003) led me to numerous news pamphlets known in Spanish and Portuguese as “true relations,” and among these were many accounts describing public festivals. Whereas my first book examines the circulation of individuals and texts across national and linguistic borders in the early modern period—a multi-directional exchange that demonstrates the flexibility of religious, national, and cultural identities in the Atlantic world—this project focuses on two specific places within the Spanish and Portuguese empires, but where intercultural contact and exchange is just as evident. The motivation is, in part, the same: to bring out the hitherto neglected commonalities and connections that cross the Luso-Hispanic border dividing both the colonial territories and modern scholarship.

In July-August 2010 I participated in an NEH Institute at the Folger Shakespeare Library on “Ritual and Ceremony from late Medieval Europe to Early America,” where the interdisciplinary scholarly exchange, the expertise of the visiting faculty, and the wide-ranging yet focused readings helped me to appreciate this project’s contribution to the broader field of festival studies, which lies in its attention to cultural diversity and subaltern agency. In Autumn and Winter quarters of 2010-11—in which I have administrative but not teaching responsibilities—I plan to draft the Introduction and to revise my already published work on festivals in Potosí and Minas Gerais into two separate chapters. Chapter One, focused on the defense and promotion of creole (American-born Spaniard) identity in colonial festivals in Potosí, is based on material found in “Spectacular Wealth: Baroque Festivals and Creole Consciousness in Colonial Mining Towns of Brazil and Peru,” published in the volume *Creole Subjects in the Colonial Americas: Empires, Texts, Identities* (2009), and “Creole Patriotism in Festival Accounts of Lima and Potosí,” published in *Romance Notes* (2005). Chapter Two is devoted to a similar phenomenon in Minas Gerais: the use of festival accounts to defend Portuguese residents of the mining region against accusations of greed and impiety made by their peninsular counterparts. Portions of this chapter have been developed in “Spectacular Wealth” and “Imperial Celebrations, Local Triumphs: Festival Accounts in the Portuguese Empire,” forthcoming in *Hispanic Review*.

The NEH Summer Stipend would allow me to conduct the research necessary to complete two new chapters. Chapters Three and Four will focus on indigenous and black participation in festivals, in part through the performance of non-European sovereignty, from the processions of Incan emperors in Potosí to the coronation of African kings on feast days of Our Lady of the Rosary in Minas Gerais. I have written several conference papers and lectures on these topics, but further research in archives in Iberia and Latin America is necessary in order to account for the organization and funding of such performances; of particular interest to me is documentation on the Black Brotherhood of the Rosary in Minas Gerais and their involvement in the festival described in *Triunfo Eucarístico*, including their sponsorship of the text’s publication. I would use the two months funded by the NEH Summer Stipend to conduct this research in the Archivo Nacional de Bolivia in Sucre, Bolivia, and the Arquivo Público Mineiro in Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais, as well as to travel to the locales of my study—Potosí, Mariana, and Ouro Preto—in order to attend some of the religious festivals that continue to be performed there. With the NEH Summer Stipend, I would be able to conduct essential on-site research that would allow me to complete two new chapters, and thus to finish a draft of a book manuscript that will be of interest to scholars in the fields of colonial Latin American literature, history, and culture and to those who work on festivals in the early modern world more broadly.

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