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Brian James Leech. *The City That Ate Itself: Butte, Montana and Its Expanding Berkeley Pit.* Mining and Society Series. Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2018. 376 pp. $39.95, cloth, ISBN 978-1-943859-42-9.

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Part mining history, part urban history, and part meditation on the nature of "place" in an industrial city, Brian Leech's *The City That Ate Itself* is an exhaustively researched and passionate account of the history of Butte, Montana, and its infamous Berkeley Pit. If, as cultural geographer Gray Brechin suggested in his magisterial *Imperial San Francisco: Urban Power, Earthly Ruin* (1999), the Bay City's rising urban form found its subterranean mirror in the mines of the Comstock Lode, Leech traces a similarly complex and fraught relationship between the expanding open pits of the Anaconda Copper Mining Company and the city of Butte, at once dependent on but slowly consumed by large-scale industrial mining. Rooted in extensive archival and oral history sources, Leech's study is a significant addition to the historical literatures on mining, the environment, and the American West.

The history of Butte and the fabled copper mines of the "Richest Hill on Earth" are hardly untilled ground. In addition to a raft of theses, dissertations, and local histories of the Anaconda copper mine and the colorful mining town of Butte, recent studies of Butte's mining history (Tim LeCain's *Mass Destruction: The Men and Giant Mines That Wired America and Scarred the Planet* [2009] and Kent Curtis's *Gambling on Ore: The Nature of Metal Mining in the United States, 1860-1910* [2013]) and social history (Mary Murphy's *Mining Cultures: Men, Women, and Leisure in Butte, 1914-41* [1997]) amply trace the rich veins of Butte's colorful past. Building on and extending these accounts, Leech's study brings welcome attention to the historical geographies of settlement and mineral extraction in Butte and their massive transformation in the era of "mass mining" after World War II.

Early chapters set the scene with an account of the transition from traditional underground mining to new forms of mass mining, including block-caving and surface mining. A series of technological and economic conditions prompted this shift, such as the declining productivity of underground veins, competition from more efficient, open pit producers (including from Anaconda's own properties in Chile), and advances in geology and mining engineering that permitted the exploitation of lower-grade orebodies. Leech deftly shows how these changes reworked not only company production practices but also the relationship between the company and its workforce.

The advent of open-pit mining also reconfigured and disrupted Butte's fine-grained, working-class social geography. The complex neighborhood settlement patterns based on class and ethnicity that had grown up alongside, and often atop of, Butte's underground mines (which Leech

describes in chapter 2) were increasingly threatened as one neighborhood after another became a target for surface mining. While providing some colorful descriptions of Butte's ethnic and cultural geography, this chapter (like the first) serves mainly as a kind of prologue to the principal drama of the book, surface mining's rapid postwar growth and its impact on the city.

The chapters in part 2 explore how the transition to surface mining altered labor relations in Butte, especially those between Butte's famously strong labor unions and the dominant Anaconda Company. Leech demonstrates how the adoption of surface mining mirrored larger trends in the American industrial economy toward mechanization and centralized managerial authority over the workplace. As in other sectors, in the mines these changes provoked resistance to the resulting "technological unemployment" and the erosion of workers' independence that was characteristic of underground mining. Chapter 4 ("Work") is particularly insightful in showing the links between industrial organization, mining technologies, and the changing and contested "workscapes" of the Butte mines. In the face of these changes (and concomitant layoffs), Butte's unions cracked, splintered, and struggled to defend the workplace autonomy and solidarity of mine workers.

Part 3 examines how the growth of the Berkeley and (to a much lesser extent) Alice pits reshaped the urban geography of Butte. Blasting in the pits shook homes, rattled windows and eardrums, and sent debris hurtling into neighboring communities. Local residents complained bitterly about these hazards, and managing damage claims became a major challenge for Anaconda. In addition to altering some of its operations and investigating (and challenging) complaints, the company resorted to a geographical strategy of establishing "buffer zones" around growing pit operations by acquiring land and houses in the vicinity. The resulting displacement and relocation of city residents, Leech shows, undermined the rich social life of Butte's working-class neighborhoods, already under stress from declining employment and fractious labor relations. The massive Berkeley Pit came to be regarded by some observers as a kind of malevolent organism, a "'monster' that was 'devouring'" the city. (p. 243)

As Anaconda's operations reached truly gargantuan proportions, longstanding resistance to the erosion of the urban environment coalesced into increasingly fierce opposition, a story taken up in part 4. Even as the company began to struggle financially in the early 1970s, opposition from environmentalists and urban advocates sought to counter the degradation of Butte's historic districts. Leech usefully connects these debates to wider movements for "urban renewal" in post-industrial urban America, while showing how they played out in the very particular context of a single-industry community with a strong mining identity. From the efforts to resist relocation of Butte's Central Business District (and other neighborhoods) emerged a renewed sense of urban identity and the possibilities for a future beyond mining.

More than a coda, the final chapter traces the relationship between the city and the pit in the years after the cessation of mining in 1983. Here, Leech draws on scholarly debates around heritage, landscape, and the environmental reclamation to frame his exploration of how Butte residents confronted the complex social, economic, and environmental legacies of the Berkeley Pit. Taking a wide view of "reclamation," Leech makes connections between the efforts to address the permanent pollution and landscape degradation associated with the pit and the movements for historical preservation and neighborhood renewal that followed the end of mining. Seeking to avoid an excessively declensionist or celebratory view of these legacies, Leech concludes: "instead of viewing the Berkeley Pit as a symbol of everything that is wrong with America, as many out-

siders still do, or viewing it as a symbol of progress, like so many did during the 1950s, the pit should become a place that people visit to learn more about work and life in one of American's industrial centres" (p. 344). Yet it is also clear that whether cautionary tale or paean to progress, the story told by Butte's mining landscape will be shaped as much by those doing the telling (and the viewing), and readers might have wished Leech to offer a clearer take on what lessons might be learned from the contested history and legacy of this remarkable landscape.

The City That Ate Itself is an important contribution to the historical scholarship on resource extraction and industrial communities in North America, a literature that has grown significantly in size and sophistication in the past twenty years or so. Well written and well illustrated, the book makes novel links between the urban social history of the city (and experiences of its residents) and the "envirotechnical" landscapes of large-scale mineral production. In doing so, this study generates insights relevant to the environmental history and historical geography of mines and their cities well beyond Butte.