RACE, RELIGION, SUBJECTIVITY, AND REPRESENTATION

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Race, Colonialism, and Social Transformation in Latin America and the Caribbean. Edited by Jerome Branche. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008. Pp. viii + 301. $69.95 cloth. ISBN: 9780813032641.

Searching for Africa in Brazil: Power and Tradition in Candomblé. By Stefania Capone. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010. Pp. xiv + 312. $84.95 cloth. $23.95 paper. ISBN: 9780822346364.

Imperial Subjects: Race and Identity in Colonial Latin America. Edited by Andrew B. Fisher and Matthew D. O'Hara. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009. Pp. xiv + 303. $84.95 cloth. $23.95 paper. ISBN: 9780822344209.

Chica da Silva: A Brazilian Slave of the Eighteenth Century. By Júnia Ferreira Furtado. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009. Pp. xxv + 322. $75.00 cloth. $23.99 paper. ISBN: 978052171155.

Hearing the Mermaid's Song: The Umbanda Religion in Rio de Janeiro. By Lindsay Hale. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2009. Pp. xvi + 192. $26.95 paper. ISBN: 9780826347336.

Race and Classification: The Case of Mexican America. Edited by Ilona Katzew and Susan Deans-Smith. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009. Pp. xxiii + 356. $65.00 cloth. $24.95 paper. ISBN: 9780804761413.

Slavery in Brazil. By Herbert S. Klein and Francisco Vidal Luna. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Pp. xi + 364. $95.00 cloth. $28.99 paper. ISBN: 9780521141925.

Cannibal Democracy: Race and Representation in the Literature of the Americas. By Zita Nunes. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008. Pp. xx + 218. $22.50 paper. ISBN: 9780816648412.

Damned Notions of Liberty: Slavery, Culture, and Power in Colonial Mexico, 1640–1769. By Frank T. Proctor III. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2010. Pp. xiv + 282. $27.95 paper. ISBN: 9780826349668.

Brazil's Living Museum: Race, Reform, and Tradition in Bahia. By Anadelia A. Romo, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010. Pp. xi + 221. $59.95 cloth. $24.95 paper. ISBN: 9780807871157.

Racial identity and its relation to state institutions (whether of transatlantic empires or of nations in formation) remain among the more vibrant fields of study for historians of Latin America. In this cluster of ten recent books, historians, anthropologists, and literary critics focus on racial ideologies but also engage race as

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it intersects with identity formation, religious belief and practice, and intellectual and artistic traditions. Brazil dominates, at least in this group, as the region that has inspired the most vibrant and lively scholarship on such issues. And as in the case of Brazil, it should come as no surprise that the history of racial identity in Mexico and colonial New Spain also continues to inspire scholarly interest among U.S. academics, because it offers a fertile ground to compare the history of race in this country. A few of the chapters in the edited volumes reviewed here also juxtapose Mexico to the United States to examine how race has been conceptualized in these countries in the twentieth century, with particular attention to the self-conceptions and racial labels used to identify persons of Mexican heritage living north of the border. However, for this reviewer, the most memorable and captivating of the ten books under review are the two that employ a highly personalized, biographical or autobiographical methodology. I begin with these two excellent books.

Both Lindsay Hale's *Hearing the Mermaid's Song* and Júnia Ferreira Furtado's *Chica da Silva* present the life experience of a single person and contextualize their subjects with thorough and far-reaching scholarship. For Hale, that individual is himself. He beautifully and emotionally recounts his own experiences in observing and participating in Umbanda in Brazil, starting in the 1980s. Furtado's biography is an extremely different, but equally fascinating, revision of the life and times of a notorious, yet mythologized, eighteenth-century freedwoman from Minas Gerais. Although that is only one minor aspect of her deeply researched study, Furtado's efforts to trace the ups and downs of the myth of Chica da Silva succeed in conveying a great deal about notions of race and nation in Brazil since the early nineteenth century. For teachers looking to draw in their students, the presentation of broader themes and their effect on a particular individual will make these two books most useful in the classroom.

Hale assumes an almost confessional tone in offering his personal experiences while fully acknowledging the subjectivity of his inquiry into Umbanda. Stefania Capone covers some of the same ground in *Searching for Africa in Brazil,* recognizing her personal faith and misconceptions as a novice scholar and devotee of Candomblé. However, Hale's conscious and consistent efforts to insert himself into the study of contemporary religion do more to hold our attention, and thus we learn and retain more about Umbanda. Both Hale and Capone concede that the vantage points of academic researchers offer only a very limited entry into the variety of practices and beliefs in modern Brazilian religions. Because scholars can affiliate themselves with only a limited number of mediums and *terreiros* (centers in which Afro-Brazilian religions are practiced), they can offer only specific observations of Umbanda or Candomblé. It does not help that Umbanda itself has no authoritative cosmology, according to Hale. Instead, it combines nineteenth-century spiritism (Kardecism) with Afro-Brazilian beliefs open to a broad range of interpretations, depending on the medium in charge. The written sources on Umbanda cosmology that Hale located were also self-published and highly esoteric. Nevertheless, because Umbanda lacks some of the stricter hierarchies and systems of apprenticeship prevalent in Candomblé, Hale was able to take part in Umbanda in public charitable festivals, in African-

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influenced terreiros, and under the guidance of mediums working out of private apartments.

To bring to life his experience of Umbanda, Hale offers his impressions of the spirits that he witnessed inhabiting the bodies of mediums. These include *caboclos* (noble and moral Brazilian Indians); *pretos velhos* (old black slaves, a category that Hale initially viewed as offensive and retrograde); *crianzas*, or children (whose childishness also disturbed him); the repentant and enlightened *exus da luz* (spirits of light); and the malevolent *exus das trevas* (spirits of darkness). Although Hale at times finds these spirits unpleasant or even reprehensible in their embodiment of racist attitudes—one spirit preferred to credit the creation of Umbanda to aliens who visited Africa in the distant past rather than accept its African origins—he lauds their perceptiveness in attributing his own emotional issues to reincarnation. One medium told him, while in a trance, that Hale's childhood stuttering derived from a previous incarnation during the French Revolution. Surprisingly, Hale explains in a convincing way how he found certain aspects of this diagnosis to be helpful and insightful, a testament to his own skill as a writer. While valuing the guidance that Umbanda spirits can provide, Hale ultimately interprets them as "artistic creations" or "cultural constructions" based in the context of their time and the experiences and choices of the mediums (84). This allows him to critique the defeatist attitude of pretos velhos and to explain the motivations that mediums had for displaying the prouder, autonomous stance of caboclos. Each performance offers a way to understand or negotiate the pressures of modern Brazilian life.

Hale narrates the twists and turns of fate—a random bus—that brought him to particular mediums and terreiros while providing a historical context for the spiritual development of his subjects. His mediums follow a more or less Africanized version of Umbanda, depending on their backgrounds and personal preferences, a paradigm that parallels fluctuating attitudes toward Afro-Brazilian culture. Umbanda grew out of Macumba—which may loosely be defined as all religions of African origin present in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Rio—and increased in popularity and recognition from the 1960s. As this happened, its middle-class devotees downplayed African aspects such as drumming or animal sacrifice in preference to what they viewed as a more spiritual and less sensual experience.

Both Hale and Capone document competition among mediums and among terreiros, as well as the conscious choices that practitioners make to favor more African or more European elements. Hale explains that practitioners of "white Umbanda" purposefully reject practices that are commonly viewed as African, so as to respect "the ideology of order and progress" (126). Capone instead sees a continuum that stretches from European Kardecism to "white Umbanda," "African Umbanda," and several varieties of Candomblé to reach what she calls "re-Africanized Candomblé," the result of a deliberate effort to reintroduce African beliefs and practices into Brazilian Candomblé (77). In the 1990s, re-Africanization led Candomblé devotees to study the Yoruba language with young exchange students (although the classes turned into more general discussions of culture)

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to abolish syncretic traces of Catholicism and thus enhance the purity of their terreiros.

As did Hale, Capone began her investigation and involvement in Afro-Brazilian religions in the 1980s. Although longer and denser than Hale's book, her *Searching for Africa in Brazil* also draws on her personal experiences, including negative ones, and was originally published in French in 1999. And like Hale, she discusses the hierarchies of Candomblé and the pressures to assert the purity of more direct access to African practices. In this context, she confesses that her advisers criticized her master's research quite harshly because she purposefully chose to study the Bantu cult of Candomblé, a branch that other scholars held to be degenerate and impure. After this negative reaction and more research, Capone came to understand that claims to purity define the practice of Candomblé, as well as its interpretation by anthropologists during most of the twentieth century. Scholars such as Roger Bastide and Juana Elbein do Santos (the wife of "a high dignitary of Nagô Candomblé" [7]) were led to practitioners who underscored their connection to African traditions, and this reputation for knowledge and purity was, in turn, solidified by the works these scholars subsequently published.

Capone points out that leaders of Candomblé make a conscious effort to study scholarly literature on Afro-Brazilian religions, as well as reports by colonial ethnographers in regard to the beliefs of African slaves, to learn about supposedly authentic rituals. This cycle of scholarship and practice further reinforces the legitimacy of only certain forms of practice, and even of specific leaders. As well, the distinction between scholar and practitioner is very blurry, because anthropologists generally believe that they cannot learn about Candomblé without serious involvement and faith, which, Capone explains, entail financial patronage in the case of men and possession in the case of women. Capone herself followed this path.

As Capone portrays in great detail, claims to purity fall to the side when rituals actually begin. Indeed, she shows that the genealogies of religious leaders inform their interpretations of Candomblé. And, as does Hale, she ties the adaptations that guaranteed the survival and popularity of Candomblé and Umbanda to political events in the twentieth century. She also presents interesting evidence of the day-to-day negotiations that, with great difficulty, allow married women to become powerful in Candomblé. These women insist that spirits control nearly every important action done in their marital and sexual lives.

A survey of key figures in Brazilian intellectual history, and of U.S. scholars of Brazil, is at the heart of Anadelia A. Romo's *Brazil's Living Museum.* Like Capone, Romo questions and complicates the idea of pure African cultural heritage in Brazil, focusing on Salvador da Bahia's "claim to tradition and especially to an authentic Afro-Brazilian cultural tradition" (5). Romo describes various moments in the twentieth century when Bahian and foreign scholars promoted this reputation for the city, and she criticizes their efforts as completely neglectful of the economic, racial, and social inequalities that plague Bahia to the present. In effect, their static vision of the past, though beneficial for tourism, denies modern Afro-Bahians access to reforms in education, public works, political advocacy, and even

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vibrant international youth movements. As well, the "massive and violent rezoning effort" that has occurred in Bahia (and in Rio in preparation for the World Cup and Olympics) ignores the interests of existing neighborhoods (153).

Romo offers, in essence, an overview of intellectual understandings of Bahia, its history, and its racial heritage. She starts with medical reformers in the late nineteenth century, emphasizing not their racist pronouncements but their optimistic proposals to reform education and sanitation to improve the health and intellectual development of all Bahians. Unfortunately, early hopes for higher standards of living for freed slaves were shattered in 1889, when a reformist state governor was ousted after only a few weeks in office. Traditionalist and repressive attitudes prevented any dramatic social progress in the lives of ex-slaves, despite the efforts of Nina Rodrigues (who also believed in racial determinism) as editor of the *Gazeta Médica*. Conditions changed in the 1930s with the first Afro-Brazilian conferences. Under the influence of Edison Carneiro, these brought together devotees of Candomblé and scholars, thus forging the link between the practices of religion and anthropology that Capone stresses. Carneiro established Bahia as the center of Afro-Brazilian culture, dismissing theories of racial determinism in favor of explanations rooted in the social causes of poverty and insufficient education. Romo closely examines the dialogues and debates that took place among scholars at these conferences before turning to the combative and even slightly deceptive intellectual practices that Ruth Landes, Donald Pierson, and other scholars in the United States found in Bahia, especially when they attempted to question the myth of racial democracy. Romo's book is best characterized as a study of how ideas about race in Bahia were made to fit Brazilian nationalism. As intellectual history, it does not deeply explore actual experiences of Afro-Bahians, despite the central assertion that Bahia's reputation as "Brazil's living museum" stands in the way of improving individual lives.

In all ten books under review, there is only one chapter concerned with the daily life of Afro-Brazilians. This is Gislene Aparecida dos Santos's chapter in *Race, Colonialism, and Social Transformation in Latin America and the Caribbean*, a volume based on a symposium held at the University of Pittsburgh in 2004 and edited by Jerome Branche. With a cultural studies approach common to the other contributions to this collection, Santos focuses on the masks worn in Brazil as the myth of racial democracy lives on, even among racially mixed high school students. These students voice a distrust of racial quotas for university enrollment, even though these might assist them to further their education. Santos believes that professors also do little to help this program of quotas succeed. As a whole, Branche's collection proposes to bring together a range of essays with the ambitious goal of "a recuperation of black and indigenous agency" (3).

Zita Nunes also focuses on the literary representation of race in her *Cannibal Democracy*. This work is a welcome companion to Romo's book on Bahia because of its deeper exploration of the exchange of ideas on race between Brazil and the United States. Nunes provokes curiosity on this topic by looking at the fascinating life of James Bertram Clarke, or José Clarana Gil, a West Indian who graduated from Cornell in 1912, moved to Brazil, and wrote in Portuguese about the lack of racism in Brazil. Clarke's impressions resonate with the sense of racial free-

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dom found in Mexico a few decades later by another African American, Virgil Richardson.[1]

Nunes's central metaphor of cannibalism derives from Oswald de Andrade's "Manifesto Antropófago" (1928), an essay on Brazilian modernism. Using examples from the literary and journalistic dialogue between Brazil and the United States, Nunes argues that democracy leaves behind a residue made up of those who remain unassimilated. In Brazil, these remainders might be perceived as those who do not or cannot discard the racial designation of "black," a very small segment of modern Brazilians, despite Romo's discussion of efforts to focus on Afro-Brazilian history as a critical facet of Brazilian nationalism. In her introduction, Nunes observes that predictions from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that blacks would disappear from Brazil have come true because, in a 1996 census, only 5 percent of the population "self-identified as black" (7). This reluctance of Brazilians to designate themselves as black makes sense when one considers the complex racial labels that the students interviewed by Santos gave to themselves. Nunes also provides further insights into the disagreements and conflicts between Brazilian and U.S. scholars regarding racial attitudes in Brazil. For example, on one occasion, pronouncements on racial democracy by visiting U.S. scholars provoked a strong reaction in the Afro-Brazilian press, despite efforts by Brazilian scholars to promote this myth.

The group of books under review also includes innovative efforts to bring to life colonial experiences of racial ideologies. For the English translation of her biography of Chica da Silva (originally published in Portuguese in 2003), Furtado has added introductory information about Minas Gerais and the mythography of her subject, who, in 1975, was famously depicted in film as a woman able to dominate powerful white men and inspire them to acts of bizarre decadence with her extraordinary sexuality. To correct this myth, Furtado deploys the archival methods of social history to flesh out Silva's life—from her birth into slavery in the 1730s until her dignified death in 1796—as well as the fascinating fates of her children and grandchildren (some of whom passed into relative obscurity and others who ascended to distinction in Portugal). Furtado's thorough use of archival sources in essence charts Silva's progression from a thatched hut to burial in the elite (in theory, white-only) chapel of the Brotherhood of the Third Order of St. Francis.

Furtado almost entirely desexualizes her subject, stressing Silva's long-term commitment to João Fernandes de Oliveira, one of the most important and wealthy judicial functionaries and diamond contractors in the region of Tejuco, Minas Gerais. For sixteen years, from her purchase in 1754 until Oliveira's return to Portugal in 1770, Silva maintained a sexual relationship with this one man, as evidenced by the thirteen children whom he eventually recognized as legitimate heirs. Oliveira also helped Silva's first son (by a previous master) when he moved to Portugal and sought membership in the Order of Christ in 1779. Although Furtado deemphasizes Silva's eroticism, she also provides examples of

1. See Ben Vinson III, *Flight: The Story of Virgil Richardson, a Tuskegee Airman in Mexico* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

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numerous other freedwomen who achieved respectable, modest upward mobility and financial independence through sexual alliances with Portuguese men. As readers of this book absorb Chica da Silva's life story, they learn a great deal about race in Brazil along the way, especially in the context of the eighteenth-century mining boom.

Furtado also explores the development of the myth of Chica da Silva, a topic that will intrigue anyone interested in nineteenth- and twentieth-century racial discourses in Brazil. Silva might not have become a Brazilian icon if not for a mid-nineteenth-century lawsuit involving her grandchildren. The lawyer for her heirs included her story in a chronicle of the colonial era that was published in a newspaper. In this early account, and in accord with attitudes toward enslaved women common in the mid-nineteenth century, Silva became a hideously unattractive man-eater who subjugated her lover (possibly through love magic), earning her the sobriquet "Chica-que-manda." In the early twentieth century, newly popular ideas of romantic love beautified Silva, but fears and misunderstandings of her inexplicable, even evil, power over men continued. The desire to celebrate the bravery of slave rebels such as Zumbi, the seventeenth-century leader of the Palmares *quilombo*, led to a more sympathetic portrayal in the 1960s, but sex and sensuality predominate in Silva's cinematic image.

Arguably, historians of Latin American history do not recognize biography as the highest form of scholarly analysis and usually rank it below other modes of presenting archival research. Furtado's book certainly contradicts this prejudice. Some might object to placing a single person at the center of historical events, but this method gives structure and purpose to a diffuse body of information. There is an inherent value in viewing an individual in his or her historical context to explore the limits of personal choice and agency. Frank T. Proctor's *Damned Notions of Liberty* follows a more traditional format while proposing novel ways to understand slavery and freedom in New Spain. Proctor draws on familiar sources for the study of Afro-Mexican colonial experiences, including marriage and Inquisition records, which Herman L. Bennett and Joan Cameron Bristol used intensively.[2] Because of this, although Proctor's conclusions reveal active and penetrating thinking, they tread well-known ground. More innovative methodologies or new archival materials are needed to bring life to the study of Africans and their descendants in New Spain.

Proctor does, however, present several fresh interpretations of his sources by questioning the customary historiographic practice of viewing the agency of early modern slaves through the lens of eighteenth-century ideologies of liberty and personal freedom. In this, he counters several familiar and perhaps lazy assumptions, beginning with the idea that the number of slaves in New Spain declined sharply in the seventeenth century. Instead, his data show that slaves reproduced

2. Herman L. Bennett, *Africans in Colonial Mexico: Absolutism, Christianity, and Afro-Creole Consciousness, 1570–1640* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003) and *Colonial Blackness: A History of Afro-Mexico* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009); Joan Cameron Bristol, *Christians, Blasphemers, and Witches: Afro-Mexican Ritual Practice in the Seventeenth Century* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2007).

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at a high rate in urban areas into the eighteenth century. His chapter on marriage similarly asserts that slaves did not seek lighter-skinned partners, thus contradicting the ideal of whitening that some Latin American nations embraced in the late nineteenth century and that continued as a basis for analyzing marriage patterns into the twenty-first century. Proctor also rethinks the common statistical practice of calling marriages exogamous when the spouses are designated as *negros* or *mulatos.* This practice emphasizes the creation of Afro-Mexican culture and society.

Proctor also attempts to debunk popular assumptions about Afro-Mexican dealings with the Inquisition. Like Bristol, he does not see African and Creole healers as consciously resisting Spanish domination, nor does he believe that the Holy Office actively targeted Afro-Mexican healers in an attempt to weaken them collectively. He disagrees with scholars who view blasphemy as a form of purposeful resistance and instead contends that it was an emotional reaction to mistreatment in the constant struggle for better living conditions. To disprove that slaves in New Spain valued freedom above all else, Proctor examines famous rebellions as well as the less notorious cases of runaways and bigamists. Arguing that slaves rebelled to protest mistreatment and to negotiate improvements, without the radical goal of freeing themselves, he cautions historians not to view slaves with the framework of our post-Enlightenment world but to locate their actions and agency in the context of their own time and place. In this vein, he interprets court cases over manumission to be motivated by failed contractual obligations (e.g., unfulfilled testamentary bequests), not by the fundamental value of freedom. Proctor's book is certainly provocative and raises the level of scholarship and analysis in the field of Afro-Mexican studies.

The final two collections in this group of recent books seek to complicate the application of modern ideas of race and identity to colonial Spanish and Portuguese America. The overview of this topic and its historiography that Andrew B. Fisher and Matthew D. O'Hara provide in the introduction to *Imperial Subjects* should be required reading for graduate students entering the field of colonial Latin American history. Although some of the chapters that follow continue on the same high level—notably the precisely argued pieces on the negotiation of indigenous identity in the Andes by Jeremy Mumford and Jane E. Mangan—others, such as Sergio Serulnikov's work on an eighteenth-century rebellion in Charcas, seem disconnected from the main concerns of the volume, ranging more into narrative history.

Inspired by an exhibition of *casta* paintings at the Los Angles County Museum of Art in 2004, the essays collected by Ilona Katzew and Susan Deans-Smith in *Race and Classification* span various centuries from medieval Spain to the present. The provocative preface by William B. Taylor puts colonial perceptions of race into dialogue with concerns and vocabulary from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In addition to focusing on art history, contributors juxtapose ideas about race from across the Mexico-U.S. border, what the editors refer to as Greater Mexico (formerly New Spain). María Elena Martínez clarifies the medieval Spanish origins of the word *raza* and explores why *casta* became the colonial term of choice. Race and colonial art intersect in a fresh way in Susan Deans-Smith's essay

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about the painters' guild of Mexico City, although a deeper look into the fascinating life of the half-African baroque master Juan Correa would have enhanced this discussion. Ilona Katzew and Jaime Cuadriello examine different aspects of the portrayal of indigenous Mexicans. Katzew focuses on examples from the broader Atlantic Enlightenment, whereas Cuadriello treats the history of paintings and illustrations of Moctezuma and what these say about Mexico through the centuries. The wide range of topics found in this collection—including a highly readable discussion of Chicano film by Adriana Katzew and an interview with the photographer and performance artist Guillermo Gómez-Peña—engages the reader, as every chapter addresses a new subject with a distinct, invigorating, analytical approach.

The books by Hale, Capone, Romo, and Nunes will provide students and professors with a depth and breadth of knowledge about intellectual and religious trends critical to the study of twentieth-century Brazil. Furtado's biography of Chica da Silva expands this understanding with fundamental background on the mining boom of Brazil's eighteenth century, as well as valuable insights into social and racial forces at work in the colonial era. A survey course on the history of Africans and their descendants would also benefit from the textbook *Slavery in Brazil,* cowritten by Herbert S. Klein and Francisco Vidal Luna. Although intended as a comprehensive overview, the work draws on unpublished theses from Brazil, thus allowing nonspecialists access to recent, innovative scholarship. Although Klein and Luna begin by asserting that "it was the lack of ties to family, kin, and the community that finally distinguished slaves from all other workers" (3), they in fact devote an entire chapter to family, kinship, and community. This set of books about Brazil should inspire students in the United States to even greater interest by continuing the long-running exchange of ideas on race between the two countries. The remaining volumes outside of Brazilian studies are instead distinguished by innovative interpretations of familiar sources or by their wider-ranging disciplinary focus. However, all these books and chapters only sporadically succeed in bridging the divide among scholarly, literary, and artistic presentations of race and day-to-day experiences.

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