
RESEÑAS DE LIBROS / BOOK REVIEWS

TOMÁS PÉREZ VEJO Y PABLO YANKELEVICH (COORDS.): *Raza y política en Hispanoamérica*. Ciudad de México: El Colegio de México / Bonilla Artigas, 2016.

This is a welcome addition to the Spanish-language literature on the history of the intersections of race and nation in Latin America. Its scope is broader than that of “Hispanic America,” as referred to in the title, since Brazil receives treatment in a chapter by Jeffrey Lesser and is included as part of the “South,” as discussed by Patricia Funes who compares Brazil, Argentina, and Bolivia. The treatment is historical—the authors are historians, with the exception of Rodolfo Stavenhagen (*que en paz descanse*) and Marta Elena Casaús Arzú—and the coverage is broad, with discussions of Cuba, Puerto Rico, Mexico (three times), Brazil (twice), Argentina (twice), Bolivia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Colombia. Spain also figures, as does, somewhat unexpectedly, Morocco, which appears in Joshua Goode’s chapter on the concept of *hispanidad* in early twentieth-century Cuba and Spain, and in Spain’s colonial relations with North Africa. The authors are specialists in their field, but the book does not assume an expert reader: the chapters are highly readable and most would be accessible for advanced undergraduates.

The book highlights the conundrum facing Latin American elites after independence, as they strove to build distinctive nations that would be fit to grace the global stage, using as their main human resources indigenous, African-descent, and mixed-race populations categorized as inferior by the dominant powers and their scientists. To solve the problem, national elites adopted approaches that combined, in varying degrees, diverse elements: a) an attempt to “whiten” their countries with mass immigration from Europe; b) an attempt to improve the biopolitical quality of the population by implementing social hygiene measures; c) the marginalization of black and indigenous populations; d) the rejection of European scientists’ biological racism; e) a positive revalorization of the race mixture that these scientists had disqualified as degenerative; and f) a glorification, through *indigenismo*, of selected aspects of (past) indigenous cultures. The reader who knows the literature on race and nation in Latin America will find this familiar. Speaking as such a reader, I nevertheless enjoyed the book. Knowing a bit about Mexico and having read FitzGerald and Cook-Martín’s *Culling the Masses: The Democratic Origins of Racist Immigration Policy in the Americas*

(Harvard University Press, 2014), I was still engrossed by Pablo Yankelevich's discussion of immigration policy in Mexico and his perspicacious and incisive analysis of the contradictions that beset the state's denial of racism and racial hierarchies, alongside of its adherence to an idea of the Mexican people as a mestizo *raza*, one which should not be contaminated by the immigration of blacks, Asians, Jews, and other peoples who were deemed as incapable of "assimilating" and, therefore, as potentially damaging to Mexico's "embryonic nationality." In 1935, Manuel Gamio even said that Jews were not desirable because their cultural level was too high (343)! Meanwhile, businesses with labour needs lobbied government to admit black Belizeans to work in the tropical forests of Quintana Roo, and, as Pérez Vejo notes in his chapter, the government itself proposed the establishment of colonies of black immigrants on the coasts near Tepic, Tabasco, and Tampico.

Despite knowing about Colombia, I also admired Marta Saade's account of the country's racialized "moral order" in the early twentieth century. She provided a persuasive account of "race" as a flexible, mercurial concept, which can carry multiple meanings – what George Mosse refers to as its "scavenger" character. She demonstrates this strikingly with an analysis of newspaper coverage of El Día de la Raza (the October 12 anniversary of Columbus' "discovery" of the Americas), in which writers spoke in heartfelt fashion about the "soul" and "spirit" of the *raza*-nation as a "feeling," while also displaying a eugenic social hygienic concern for the health of the nation's body, threatened for example by home-brewed *chicha* (maize beer), and also naming racialized collectivities (*negros*, *indios*, mestizos) and locating them in a racialized moral geography of the nation. This notion of race challenges standard oppositions between biology and culture that are common in the social sciences. One of these writers, for example, opposed "territories, languages, and ethnic similarities" to "spiritual community, tradition, and genealogy" as bases for a collective identity (262). Although Saade glosses this as an opposition between the material and the spiritual, it is interesting to see language placed on the side of the material, while genealogy is spiritual.

While most of the authors appreciate that Latin American concepts of race at that time (and arguably still today) tend to merge what we would now see as "culture" with biology – although I would add that this merging was evident in other regions, colonial and metropolitan – not all of the contributors to this volume do so. Fernando Devoto notes that Argentinian intellectuals deployed a cultural definition of social collectivity, which he opposes to ideas of "race" – and thus, also, to racism – that define it based mainly on biological criteria. This misses precisely the possibility that ideas of race can include more than strictly

biological criteria –and indeed that such ideas have been, and are today, more the norm than the exception.

I was also intrigued by Casaús Arzú’s argument that in Costa Rica, El Salvador, and Guatemala, mestizaje never gained traction as an ideology of nationhood, as it did in Mexico and Brazil. Instead, elites were intent on eugenically whitening their nations as much as possible, invisibilizing black and indigenous populations, and/or physically eliminating them through genocide. There is no denying the extreme violence visited upon indigenous peoples in El Salvador in the 1932 massacre or in Guatemala in the 1980s and 1990s, but Casaús Arzú’s analysis seems to ignore the fact that mestizaje in Mexico, and especially in Brazil, went hand in hand with powerful elements of whitening and eugenic improvement, or that anti-indigenous violence in Brazil has, historically and today, reached alarming levels. It also seems a bit odd to put Guatemala alongside Costa Rica as very whitened nations in which indigeneity is invisible.

There is not room here to cover each of the book’s ten chapters, but Pérez Vejo and Yankelevich are to be congratulated on a great achievement in consolidating discussions of race in Latin America.

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BARBARA WEINSTEIN: *The Color of Modernity: São Paulo and the Making of Race and Nation in Brazil*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2015

Em *The Color of Modernity – São Paulo and the Making of Race and Nation in Brazil*, Barbara Weinstein realiza um cuidadoso e bem documentado estudo da Revolução Constitucionalista de 1932 e do IV Centenário de São Paulo para mostrar, como o próprio título da obra sugere, que a formação da nação brasileira repousa sobre o racismo, ou seja, a modernidade brasileira não é tão mestiça como sugere a ideologia nacional!

Como outros estudiosos, inclusive os maiores expoentes da sociologia do período pós segunda guerra mundial, a autora parte do princípio de que as formações econômico-sociais dependem tanto das estruturas econômicas como dos “discursos de diferença e dos modelos de poder político e cultural que eles produzem” (p. 2). Com o objetivo de apresentar a premissa central do seu estudo, Barbara Weinstein inicia questionando a ausência de reflexividade de Albert O. Hirschman na sua obra *The Strategy of Economic Development* (1958). Ela observa que Hirschman, apesar de crítico do desenvolvimentismo, acabou