

**BOOK REVIEW ESSAY**

## Ethos and Pathos in Millennial Brazil

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This essay reviews the following works:

**The Invention of the Brazilian Northeast.** By Durval Muniz de Albuquerque Jr. Translated by Jerry Dennis Metz. Foreword by James N. Green. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014. Pp. ix + 277. \$24.95 paperback. ISBN: 9780822357858.

**Brazil and the Dialectic of Colonization.** By Alfredo Bosi. Translated by Robert Patrick Newcomb. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015. Pp. ix + 373. \$35.00 paperback. ISBN: 9780252080845.

**Revolt of the Saints: Memory and Redemption in the Twilight of Brazilian Racial Democracy.** By John F. Collins. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015. Pp. ix + 463. \$29.95 paperback. ISBN: 9780822353201.

**The Economic and Social History of Brazil since 1889.** By Francisco Vidal Luna and Herbert S. Klein. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014. Pp. vi + 439. \$27.03 paperback. ISBN: 9781107616585.

**The Color of Modernity: São Paulo and the Making of Race and Nation in Brazil.** By Barbara Weinstein. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015. Pp. ix + 458. \$29.95 paperback. ISBN: 9780822357773.

**The Rio De Janeiro Reader: History, Culture, Politics.** Edited by Daryle Williams, Amy Chazkel, and Paulo Knauss. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016. Pp. xi + 390. \$20.73 paperback. ISBN: 9780822360063.

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Brazil continues to be an ensemble of Brazils. But this ensemble of Brazils only makes sense ...  
within the form of a vast and unitary Brazil.

—Gilberto Freyre, "Introdução," *Brasis, Brasil, e Brasília* (1960)

Is Brazil one country or many, a plurality completed in unity or a discordant cacophony? The nation can sometimes seem an implausible unit, especially to Brazilians. Colonial rulers claimed territories they had yet to traipse or map. Nineteenth-century statesmen improvised an independent nation from a string of colonial entrepôts, "clinging to the coast like crabs" to channel Brazil's interior riches to newly open global markets.<sup>1</sup> Conquest, slavery, and land concentration structured a vastly unequal society in which laws and liberalisms preserved patrimonialism and hierarchy. Europeanizing crusaders sought to impose scientific and bureaucratic rationality on Brazil's belle époque land- and cityscapes, falling short when their countrymen tenaciously defended alternate social, political, and spiritual practices. Urbanization nurtured favelas even as architects projected Brasília's sinuous monumentalism or São Paulo's sea of concrete; economic planners underdeveloped Brazil's northeast even as they sent the south into industrial overdrive. Erudite culture famously embraces hybridity and mixture but can also be profoundly elitist, alienating to and alienated from the masses. In Brazil, classes, cultures, races, regions, and temporalities collide even

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<sup>1</sup> Frei Vicente do Salvador, *História do Brasil (1500–1627)* (Brasília: Biblioteca Básica Brasileira, 2012), 5.

as they collude. For Gilberto Freyre and many of like mind, the essence of *brasilidade* has always been the creative reconciliation of those differences in a corporate and cordial whole. But in moments of crisis, the challenge of reconciling a fractured plurality can seem insurmountable.

These are times of reckoning for Brazil, and the nation's fractures have emerged with brutal clarity. Maps from the 2014 presidential election foreshadowed the crisis that began in 2016. In areas with concentrated Afro-descendant populations and high levels of poverty, Dilma Rousseff triumphed in the name of "*o povo*"; in the South, within the fortified enclaves of Brazil's global cities and across the country's agro-industrial hinterlands, Aécio Neves won easily, hoisting the banners of technocratic modernization and neoliberal integration. It is not just that Brazil is an unequal country, characterized and structured by hierarchy and difference. In recent years, the microfractures that radiate from those inequalities have converged to create deep schisms. Divided cities, divided regions, and divided races can now be clearly mapped, and they regard one another with less deference, resignation, and cordiality than ever before. One Brazil or many Brazils? The question has rarely seemed more relevant.

In that context, six recent books introduce the ambitious reader to the historical construction of *brasilidade*. Alfredo Bosi's *Brazil and the Dialectic of Colonization* and Francisco Vidal Luna and Herbert Klein's *The Economic and Social History of Brazil since 1889* expose the cultural paradigms and economic projects that have historically structured Brazilian nationalism. Barbara Weinstein's *The Color of Modernity* and Durval Muniz de Albuquerque Jr.'s *The Invention of the Brazilian Northeast* explore a version of unity defined by fissure, demonstrating with engaging moral clarity the mutual historical construction of stark regional and racial inequalities. John Collins's *Revolt of the Saints* and Daryle Williams, Amy Chazkel, and Paulo Knauss's *The Rio de Janeiro Reader* explore key tropes of national fracture and reconciliation through the lens of Brazil's most iconic cities.

## Nation as Ethos

*The Dialectic of Colonization* is a challenging masterwork, part of a long chain of heterodox treatises that have pondered Brazil's national condition. The elegant, ironic, synoptic essay is Brazil's Great American Novel, and Alfredo Bosi is among its finest practitioners. Born in São Paulo in 1936, just as Gilberto Freyre and Sérgio Buarque de Holanda revolutionized Brazil's essayistic cannon,<sup>2</sup> Bosi was trained in the classical continental tradition that was then the apex of Brazilian high culture. In the late 1960s, Bosi shifted his gaze from Italy to Brazil, articulating a humanistic and historically complex vision of Brazil's literary tradition. Over the years of Brazil's dictatorship and democratization, from the heights of Brazilian academia, he became an important advocate for human and environmental rights, the public university, and the political ethos of collective social responsibility.

The *Dialectic of Colonization*, published in Portuguese in 1992, is Bosi's most influential work, evoking for a millennial public iconic forms of *brasilidade* such as corporatism, cordiality, and evolutionary radicalism. The book emerged from a crisis reminiscent of 2016: corruption scandals engulfed Brazil's politics, chaos overwhelmed its economy, and everyone questioned democratization's viability. From Bosi's perspective, Brazil also suffered acutely from a global existential crisis marked by the rise of individualism, consumerism, and neoliberalism's globalizing logic. For Bosi, the crisis of the early 1990s was moral and cultural, provoked by a version of Vico's "barbarism of reflection," "the cruel moment in history in which instrumental reason, divorced from the meaning of the natural and human whole, comes to serve the forces of oppression and destruction" (321). The *Dialectic of Colonization* was a searing synthesis, marshaling five centuries of Brazilian thought against the "mental and moral dispersion, decomposition, and anomie ... afflicting Brazil (321)."

Clearly translated by Robert Patrick Newcomb, *The Dialectic of Colonization* remains an erudite and difficult work. In ten linked essays, Bosi posits that Brazil's colonial and colonized culture emerged from an intractable dialectical tension between two core meanings of colonization, one "oriented toward the satisfaction of present day material needs" and another entailing "the transplantation of a past that is shot through with religious images, symbols, and rites" (143). Brazil's colonial age produced "two rhetorical tendencies, which generally ran parallel but were sometimes in tangential contact with one another. These were humanistic-Christian rhetoric and that of the intellectual spokesmen for the agro-mercantile agenda. While the first sought to join together culture and cult, utopia and tradition, the second firmly placed writing in the service of the efficient operation of the colonial economic machine, articulating culture and colo" (24). Buffeted by the dynamics of international capitalism and its ideological superstructures, Brazilian

<sup>2</sup> Gilberto Freyre, *Casa grande e senzala* (1933) and *Sobrados e mucambos* (1936); Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, *Raízes do Brasil* (1936).

culture emerged as a space where transposition, elitism, cordiality, and resistance alternated as strategic tools in the art of reconciling contradiction.

Bosi examines the colonial era through four iconic literary and theological masters: José de Anchieta, Gregório de Matos, Antônio Vieira, and Johannes Antonius Andreonius ("Antonil"). Chapter 2 analyzes the colonial degradation of Anchieta's Christian universalism. Chapter 3 delicately explores de Matos's horrified contemplation of the challenges to honor and hierarchical corporate unity presented by the "mercantile machine" and colonial society's functional logic. Chapter 4 reconstructs Vieira's contradictory crusade to adapt Christian humanism to mercantile modernism, to reconcile Christ's law and natural law by emphasizing action over privilege and the values of equality and freedom over those of instrumental colonial domination. For Bosi, Vieira's late apologies for slavery, sanctifying slaves for bearing the "cross-for-others" (122), poignantly underscored how "the colonial condition erected a barrier against the universalization of humanity." In Chapter 5, Bosi counters his sympathetic rendering of Vieira with a blistering analysis of his junior contemporary Antonil, a master chronicler of Brazil's early economic history portrayed here as a diabolically precise liberal apologist, in whose writings "moral conscience has been entirely bent to the purposes of colonial mercantilism" (128).

The remainder of the book focuses on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when Brazilians internalized the dialectic of colonization and forged the core disjunctions of independent nationhood. Bosi examines slavery, race, and regional inequality, all molded by the competing currents of instrumental materialism and humanistic inheritance. Chapter 6 vividly depicts the romantic novelist José de Alencar's Indianism, in which "nobility is only achieved for the weak person through the sacrifice of his or her life," and a cleansing and egalitarian rebirth can exist only in the context of a "savage, presocial romanticism" (162). Chapter 7 analyzes two contradictory currents of nineteenth-century liberalism: a laissez faire vision of propertied citizenship that justified slavery with cruel coherence, and a humanistic and sometimes egalitarian embrace of transnational abolitionism that triumphed in 1888 only to sink in defeat during Brazil's conservative and extractive First Republic (1889–1930). Chapter 8 explores slavery, racism, and betrayal through Castro Alves's abolitionist poetry and Lima Barreto's embittered rendition of Brazil's postabolition condition as one of exile, experienced "in the stigma attached to the color of their skin" (234). A fascinating ninth chapter roots Getúlio Vargas's welfare state in the corporatist humanism of Brazilian positivism. A final essay evaluates contemporary cultural production with a searing gaze: Bosi finds hope only in the possibility that producers of high culture might cast away the sterility of the university and the crassness of commodification to embrace with love "the people's daily lives and imaginations," embodied in popular culture (296).

In Brazil's larger essayistic tradition, the threads that bind Bosi's essays have long united an imagined Brazil. For Bosi, Brazilian culture is rooted in history, materiality, and the experience of alterity in relationship to a colonial center. At its worst, this culture is made hard and instrumental by the logic of extraction and domination; at its best, it is a necessarily hybrid expanse knit together by a common spiritual and religious heritage, by love, and by a profoundly corporate sense of national belonging. Bosi, like Gilberto Freyre and Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, embraces a holistic and catholic form of intellectual engagement, but he does so with a distinct contemporary sensibility. He has no faith in technocracy, but also censures the poststructuralist emphasis on "discontinuity and decenteredness," which can reify appearances and foster "a spiritual decentering that can also be described as a refusal of totality" (304–305). Bosi emphasizes the need to "acknowledge the natural and human whole, which constitutes us and invites us to exist in the world" (308), but he also recognizes a Brazil bound by the wry acknowledgement of power and the affective embrace of difference and inequality.

Francisco Vidal Luna and Herbert Klein's *The Economic and Social History of Brazil since 1889* represents a radically different ethos of national unification, in which economic development is at once Brazil's unifying *raison d'être* and the explanation for most political and social change. This heterodox tradition has included a wide range of brilliant political and economic thinkers, including industrialist and developmentalist Roberto Simonsen, Marxists Caio Prado Júnior and Nelson Werneck Sodré, structuralist innovator Celso Furtado, and the economic historian Werner Baer. Despite significant differences, all share a faith in economic development as Brazil's unyielding integrative force, the root of inequality and fragmentation but also the path to a triumphal national unity. In this vision, the building blocks of history are material—land, labor, and capital—and the nation originates in the mission to exploit them and the political struggles surrounding their control, regulation, and distribution. This is the most politically influential of Brazil's national narratives: from the First Republic through Dilma Rousseff, "development" in its various definitions and guises was Brazil's guiding mirage—ever changing, ever alluring, unifying a fragmented nation around an idealized modernizing future.

Vidal Luna and Klein's four chronological chapters provide a clear and data-rich summary of Brazil's conventionally accepted economic evolution. Readers learn about the coffee economy and its fortuitous links to infrastructure and early industrialization, as well as the authoritarian and populist origins of Brazil's welfare state. They follow Brazil's meteoric rise as a major industrial nation in the mid-twentieth century, its deep economic crisis of the 1980s, its millennial turn toward the Washington Consensus and primary exports, and the brief early twenty-first-century period when economic development and political democratization converged to create hope for an egalitarian first-world future. Vidal Luna and Klein synthesize Brazil's deep statistical resources and lucidly link Brazil's economic evolution to dramatic demographic shifts and improvements in human well-being. Some readers will chafe at the book's language—the authors frequently employ the term “backward” to describe Northeastern Brazil—and others might rightly criticize the volume's limited incorporation of recent scholarship on racial and gendered inequalities, social movements, and environmental and urban history. Nonetheless, *The Economic and Social History of Brazil* serves as a model introduction to a highly influential narrative.

Yet this is a teleological form of history, written with an eye toward future policies and politics; its coherence depends heavily on history's presumed end point. Unfortunately, Cambridge published *The Economic and Social History of Brazil* in 2014, at the last possible moment before economic crisis and political calamity forced a painful national reinterpretation. In 2018, triumphal language about Brazil's rise as an international powerhouse, its integration of the entire population into the formal market economy, and its strides against inequalities based on region, race, and gender seem exaggerated; the argument that “Brazil can now be considered a model democracy” (353) and praise for “the extraordinary unity in which the nation finds itself as a society that feels that the future may have finally arrived” (354) now reads as quintessential Brazilian irony.

This conjunctural misfortune might seem trivial, and it will hopefully be short-lived. But the astonishing suddenness and unpredictability of the recent crisis revealed the hollowness of prevailing wisdom. How could Brazil fall so far so fast, and why did so few see it coming? Part of the answer lies in the limitations of teleological and positivistic narratives of political economy. These accounts—*The Economic and Social History of Brazil* outstanding among them—trace admirably Brazil's progress on a well-trod road toward “modernization.” They answer important questions about conventional markers of demographic change and economic development. But if the current crisis tells us anything, it is that available statistics do not accurately describe the economy, and well-worn modernizing narratives do not tell development's full story. What is the contemporary impact of international commodity cycles, capital flows, and power differentials? How can economic historians integrate phenomena such as informality, illegality, environmental degradation, and corruption as something more than atavistic holdovers or inconvenient externalities? What is the economic impact of social, cultural, and political phenomena that do not derive directly or transparently from material factors: prejudice; patriarchy; fear of change, disorder, and violence; anger at exclusion or disruptive leveling? What kinds of noninstitutional power—personalistic, ideological, informal—tip the political and economic playing fields, unfairly channeling the flows of modernization? How has the development process been distorted by deep disagreement over the term's meaning: growth or distribution, the fulfillment of human needs or the enabling of human freedoms?<sup>3</sup> The quest for development is undoubtedly central to Brazilian history, but a full chronicle of its history will require a renewed theoretical and methodological imagination.

## Regional Dialectics

Durval Muniz de Albuquerque Jr.'s *The Invention of the Brazilian Northeast* and Barbara Weinstein's *The Color of Modernity* imaginatively broach these intangible questions, focusing on unities built on the presumption of difference. Albuquerque Jr. and Weinstein revive a long tradition of understanding Brazil's essence through its central polarity.<sup>4</sup> Wealthy São Paulo and the poor Northeast, the two components of a Brazil once imagined as “Belíndia” (Belgium + India), moor a nation forged through disjuncture and inequality.<sup>5</sup> Many visions of national unity – even Bosi's humanistic ideal, and certainly Vidal Luna and Klein's modernizing trajectory – presume a dialectical relationship between Brazil's extremes; the historical triumph of modernization depends on the demise or folkloric marginalization of Brazil's deepest traditions. Weinstein and Albuquerque Jr. examine how those extremes came to be expressed in geographical terms,

<sup>3</sup> Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (New York: Anchor Books, 2000).

<sup>4</sup> See also Chip Blake, *The Vigorous Core of Our Nationality* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011), and Paulo Fontes, *Migration and the Making of Industrial São Paulo* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016).

<sup>5</sup> Edmar Lisboa Bacha, “O rei da Belíndia” (1974), reprinted in *Belíndia 2.0* (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2012).

arguing that São Paulo and the Northeast were deliberately and mutually constructed as the symbolic terrains that structured Brazil's wrenching twentieth-century transformation.

*The Invention of the Brazilian Northeast* (published in Portuguese in 1999) is a soulful scholarly work, inspired in the author's personal experience as a Northeasterner steeped in longing for his mother's native São Paulo, idealized in his nation's futurist imagination. Albuquerque Jr. traces the discursive construction of Brazil's Northeast as a "vast medieval space" (19), replete with tradition but defined by poverty and suffering, destined to be both victimized and saved by modernity. His explanatory framework is unapologetically (and perhaps narrowly) discursive; here, literature, art, music, criticism and film create rather than describe Brazil's regional extremes (5). For the uninitiated, Jerry Dennis Metz's able translation provides an excellent introduction to the Northeast as the site, source, and subject of much of Brazil's richest twentieth-century cultural production.

The book begins with the Northeast's belle époque emergence as a problematic discursive "other," characterized by drought, fanaticism, and banditry. This Northeast is temporally and culturally opposed to the twin currents of urban industrial modernity and cultural modernism, discursively rooted in São Paulo and empowered to define Brazilian nationalism. Albuquerque Jr. traces the racial and environmental determinism that gave rise to such views, and details the Northeast's role as a black legend in São Paulo's boastful boosterism. But he also argues persuasively that the Northeastern elite, disoriented by slavery's end in 1888 and by Republican recalibrations of economic and political power, tapped into a narrative of suffering, victimization, and loss in order to strengthen regional solidarity and lay a claim to national redress.

Albuquerque Jr.'s fascinating second section explores the regionalism's post-1930 reinvention. Drought, mysticism, and banditry persist, but this Northeast's central characteristic is a folkloric and quickly disintegrating past, articulated through iconic renditions of the slaveholding sugar plantations and the arid *sertão*. For authors such as Gilberto Freyre, José Lins de Rego, and Rachel de Queiroz, the Northeastern soul resided in an bygone patriarchal era harshly disrupted by urbanization, industrialization, and modern social relations.<sup>6</sup> The folkloric Northeast contrasted favorably with the anomie and conflict of modernity; violence and hierarchy were small prices to pay for a uniquely humane and conciliatory civilizational ethos. Musician Luiz Gonzaga channeled a similar nostalgia in the name of the Northeast's migrant masses, fixing the homes they had fled as objects of longing and desire. In this generation, the Northeast became the affective soul of Brazilian nationalism, but at the cost of a permanent identification with a quickly dissipating past.

Albuquerque Jr.'s final chapter provides a counterintuitive portrait of the Northeast's outsized symbolic role in Brazil's leftist revolutionary discourse. Beginning in the 1930s, revolutionaries—steeped in teleological interpretations of Marxist historical dialectics—amplified the Northeast's misery while consistently denying the region's capacity for autonomous historical agency. In fiction, film, and rhetoric, the Northeast's aestheticized suffering silently denounced Brazilian and global capitalism; its primitive rebellions symbolized the revolutionary potential of the oppressed. But the south would lead Brazil's enlightened revolution. Once again the Northeast's moral purity and symbolic prominence came at the cost (quite literally, in the fiction of Graciliano Ramos) of voice and agency.

*The Color of Modernity* serves as an incisive yang to Albuquerque Jr.'s yin. Barbara Weinstein emphasizes questions of race, economy, and power, and she focuses largely on discourses of politics and memorialization in São Paulo. Weinstein portrays the Northeast and São Paulo as interdependent historical constructs in which economic inequality cannot be separated from discursive and political representation. São Paulo's early identification with "modernity" did not result, as Vidal Luna and Klein might have it, from the simple fortuitous fact of a booming coffee economy, or even from the wily manipulation of international price structures or the construction of linkages capable of converting coffee wealth into industrial infrastructure and urbanity. Rather, "racialized, classed, and gendered discourses of modernity have been constitutive elements in the production and reproduction of inequalities—material, political, cultural—naturalized through association with a particular geographic space denominated as a region" (337).

Weinstein's organizes her rich and sweeping narrative around two seemingly dissimilar events; the "Constitutionalist Revolution" of 1932, an ill-fated three-month uprising against Getúlio Vargas's centralizing regime, and the lavish 1954 commemoration of São Paulo's four hundredth anniversary. This unorthodox framing allows Weinstein to distill something as diffuse as regionalist sentiment at two catalyzing moments

<sup>6</sup> Rachel de Queiroz's classic Northeastern novel was her first, *O quinze* (1930). In a career spanning more than fifty years she authored six more novels, hundreds of stories, and thousands of chronicles, as well as works of theater and autobiography. José Lins de Rego is best known for his five-volume "sugar cane cycle," chronicling the social transformation of the Northeastern sugar regions: *Menino de engenho* (1932), *Doidinho* (1933), *Bangüê* (1934), *O moleque Ricardo* (1935), and *Usina* (1936).

that bookend São Paulo's self-imagined rise as the vanguard of Brazilian modernity, progress, and democracy. Each event generated unprecedented reflection on São Paulo's essential traits and their relation to an increasingly centralized Brazilian nation, allowing Weinstein to trace change over time from remarkable array of perspectives without diluting her analytical rigor. It is a brilliant commonsense solution to the formidable methodological challenge of analyzing phenomena as abstract as region, race, and nation.

Weinstein's first chapter details São Paulo's initial economic growth spurt and the outsized imaginings that accompanied it, introducing several recurring themes: the racial whitening of São Paulo's pioneering *bandeirantes*, a discursive distancing from the slave system that fueled São Paulo's early rise, an overwhelming identification with European immigrants and North Atlantic conceptions of modernity, the widely held notion that "only exceptional São Paulo offered a national model that could be 'generalized'—the rest of Brazil was the exotic, the archaic, and the particular" (48).

The next four chapters analyze the 1932 rebellion, articulated as a nationalist struggle for democracy waged against a racially degenerate Brazil (epitomized by the Northeast) incapable of appreciating the rule of law or forging a path toward development. In that context, even São Paulo's iconoclasts and "others"—modernist intellectuals, women, the "Black Legion" that fought in an armed struggle frequently articulated in racist terms—enthusiastically hoisted the flag of Paulista righteousness, hoping to integrate themselves into the vanguard of Brazilian progress. For much of Brazil, Vargas's swift victory perpetuated the notion that the Paulista movement was "separate, chauvinist and profoundly incompatible with the interests of the Brazilian nation" (217). But within São Paulo, the constitutionalist revolution entrenched a singular self-conception: theirs was a racially superior region uniquely committed to the rule of law and exceptionally capable of leading Brazil toward its developmentalist destiny.

*The Color of Modernity's* then moves to São Paulo's four hundredth centenary celebrations, elaborately staged in 1954 at the apex of the city's developmentalist exultation. In two decades, words that might still have seemed boastful in the 1930s had become regional *doxa*. São Paulo was now unquestionably Brazil's largest and most dynamic city, "o Brasil que deu certo" (266), the poster child for Brazilian modernization. But that transformation was not seamless. The height of developmentalism was also the height of political populism, and the city's labor force and voting population were increasingly drawn from the same Northeastern reaches that São Paulo had long denigrated. How could a democratic and modern Brazil integrate illiterate black and brown laborers, whose bodies and voices recalled slavery, hunger, backwardness and despair? In Weinstein's account, São Paulo's official responses encapsulated the contradictions of Brazil's midcentury. São Paulo was the vanguard of a historically predetermined wave of "progress," "the hope of Brazil" that had "lifted the Nation out of the torpor in which it has been slumbering since the conquest" (257). Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples, along with Northeastern migrants, were historical helpmates in forging the region's prosperity. But their duty in the face of São Paulo's "awesome modernity" was simply to be transformed, to succumb to the guidance of São Paulo's unique capacity for civilization and democracy.

By the 1950s, ascendant ideologies of racial democracy prevented Paulistas from expressing their regional claims to national leadership in overtly racist language. But Paulista regionalism had already elided whiteness and Euro-descendant culture with the values of law, order, and modernity. It was no longer necessary to articulate racial hierarchies, because regional values already projected them. Like nineteenth-century statesman who incorporated categorical exclusion seamlessly into Brazilian liberalism, São Paulo's leaders expertly projected a version of national democracy and progress in which leadership could only be exercised by their own kind.<sup>7</sup> This is why, in 1964, factions of the Paulista middle class occupied the vanguard of the political movement that found democracy's salvation in a brutal military coup (332). And this could well be why, in 2016, São Paulo was also at the forefront of a movement that saw the corrupt and constitutionally questionable impeachment of a duly elected president as the only salvation for the rule of law. Although Weinstein's book was published before Dilma Rousseff's fall, she provides a prescient analysis of the worldview that enabled it.

## Urban Imprints

National unity can be imagined around an ethos, or forged dialectically from the interaction of disparate races, regions, or cultures. But it can also be imagined in place: at the frontier of human agency and uncontrollable nature, in the Big House of the colonial sugar plantation, or—especially in the half century since Brazil became an urban nation—in the city. Brazilian cities often embody core values or aspirations:

<sup>7</sup> Emilia Viotti da Costa, "Liberalism," *The Brazilian Empire: Myths and Histories* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 53–77.

Manaus as high civilization in the tropics, Recife as patrimonial tradition, São Paulo as development, Brasília as futuristic governmentality. But Rio de Janeiro and Salvador, Bahia, sustain unique claims to history, synthesis, and representation. Both were longtime capitals of an entity called Brazil, both were slave ports that became some of the world's first multiracial urban formations, and both have a deep history as spaces where Brazilians have contested, performed, and projected their nation's symbolic meaning over time. *The Rio de Janeiro Reader* and *Revolt of the Saints* provocatively ponder these two cities' encapsulation of the stories, projects, tensions, and imaginings that constitute modern Brazil.

Most literature on Rio de Janeiro is fan fiction: the *Rio de Janeiro Reader* is no exception. Its authors have devoted much of their rich intellectual trajectories to the city's history, and they completed this volume just before the Olympic games of 2016, when Rio still seemed poised to resurge from the long slip toward decadence and violence that has haunted the city since Brasília became national capital in 1960. The collection opens with a few lines from the iconic 1934 samba that popularized Rio's favorite moniker, "the marvelous city," and the authors express little doubt about Rio's magnetic centrality: "No other city, no landmark, no regional 'type,' no form of built environment, and no competing expressive form defines 'Brazil' with the same power and immediacy as those associated with Rio. We are compelled to read the Marvelous City as a singular place of Brazil and as a metonym for all Brazil, that proverbial 'sleeping giant' that has now awakened" (6).

The volume explores Rio's five-hundred-year history through primary documents and brief explanatory texts, divided chronologically: colonial, (1500–1820s), imperial (1820s–1889), republican (1889–1960), and recent (1960–present). The documents range from laws and political proclamations to song lyrics, film notes, maps, and portraits. Police documents figure heavily, as do journalistic and intellectual commentary; the compilers also make creative use of ethnographic transcripts, NGO reports, and slivers of popular self-representation. There is relatively little literature, poetry, or chronicle, and the authors avoid many familiar and iconic materials. Thematically, the book emphasizes Rio's role as a stage for many of Brazil's historical touchstones, especially when it served as Brazil's capital (1763–1960). Thematically, documents privilege slavery, race, sexuality, public order, crime, urban planning, cinema, and transnational perspectives—with due respect also to samba, carnival, *futebol*, and popular religion. The authors creatively deploy visual and cinematic representations, and choose materials pertaining to the twentieth century with an insider's savvy. Many of the documents are rare, the material that professional archival history is written from; meticulously translated excerpts from obscure judicial records, little-known photographs, journalistic ephemera. Explanatory texts help situate the sometimes opaque archival fragments.

Still, in confronting this kaleidoscopic array, thoughtful readers may ponder all that an archive cannot express. In any urban place, but especially in Rio, so much that is formative—to the city, and to the national currents that flow through it—happens within and beyond the fragments frozen in written or visual form. Rio is a sensual city, forged through sound, smell, texture, taste, and movement. It is also a culture in which much is left unsaid or scarcely hinted, and an urban system where much of history and the power struggles that shape it work through oblique channels as invisible to posterity as they are obvious to plain sight. The kinds of archival sources and "modernizing narratives" that shape the very discipline of history in the North Atlantic are particularly poor vehicles for the unarticulated dimensions of urban experience.<sup>8</sup> While a knowledgeable observer will find traces of this visceral Rio in documentary crevices throughout *The Rio de Janeiro Reader*, the genre is too constrictive to reveal a city that deliberately eludes historical fixation.

A critical sense of history's malleability, ephemerality, and blindness pervades John Collins's *Revolt of the Saints*, an expansive ethnography of the ruinous historical restoration of Salvador's iconic Pelourinho district. Salvador was Brazil's colonial capital until 1763, easing into centuries of decline as Brazil's economic center shifted from the Northeast to the south. In the late twentieth century, local politicians joined forces with black movement activists and international cultural institutions to restore an architecturally stunning portion of the city's crumbling colonial core (dubbed the Pelourinho after the slave whipping post that stood at its center). The project swiftly became an international emblem of Brazil's African heritage, as well an early example of its marketability. By the early 2000s, the Pelourinho was one of Brazil's premier touristic destinations, and Salvador was overwhelmingly reaffirmed as the capital of Black Brazil.

Historical patrimony is one of Collins's many subjects, but he spurns traditional historical methodologies. In synthesizing twenty-five years of lived experience, winking ethnography, and archival digging, Collins relies instead on the power of experiential, evidentiary, and narrative fragments to structure heterodox theoretical explorations of themes ranging from slavery and racial formation to sexuality, family, governmentality,

<sup>8</sup> Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007).

populism, agency, religion, spectacle, tourism, and neoliberal urban appropriation. The result is a Cubist chronicle of one of Brazil's most nationally emblematic urban interventions; it is also, in Collins's words, "a theory of the ethnographic production of history that strives to make out significance in the collection of objects—whether tests, people as monuments, or field notes about habits (objectified practices)—rather than their synthesis" (357).

A determined reader can pull from *The Revolt of the Saints* a chronological narrative of Pelourinho's urban "renewal." Collins skillfully evokes central Salvador's centennial decadence, showing how the noble areas of Brazil's first capital city gradually disintegrated, occupied in their ruin by the descendants of the slaves who had built them. By the mid-twentieth century, the Pelourinho had become Salvador's capital of red-light vice. This fact assumed special evocative power because that vice involved the structurally (and sometimes physically) violent union of powerful white men and black women, some of whom found in paid sex a rare exit from the brutal drudgery that shaped most working lives. By the late twentieth century, the Pelourinho was physically crumbling and awash in drugs and state violence: it was also home to a large population, many of whom had been born of red-light unions into an era of economic crisis and survived by improvising makeshift dwellings inside the mostly empty hulls of colonial mansions. When populist politics and social science pretensions at community development intersected with a Disneyfied version of Afrocentric historical patrimony, the product was a sui generis urban renewal project. Over the course of an erratic half century, the Pelourinho became a national model and an international monument, declared a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1985. Along the way, the project evicted most of the district's original residents even as it memorialized an academically distilled essence that those same inhabitants had helped to imagine.

Pelourinho's winding trajectory fascinates. Collins's often dense flights of theoretical fancy link the neighborhood and its people to far-flung notions of culture and history, from Erich Auerbach's "figura" (295) to Joanne Rappaport's channeling of Hayden White (354). Yet Collins's text grips most tightly when his vivid storytelling upends the processes through which Brazilians and those who write about them forge their unifying fictions. Collins lived in the Pelourinho long before returning as an ethnographer, and he never quite forgets the fundamental absurdity of the anthropological enterprise or of a heroic politics that would conceive intellectual work as an act of empowerment or solidarity. Collins understands anthropology and the documents and theories it generates as an architecture of power. But he also sees that no one needs an advanced degree to perceive or manipulate this obvious fact. His down-and-out friends from the Pelourinho know what it means to become re-signified as the living remnants of Brazil's African essence or as "living human treasures," just as many of the prostitutes who inhabited Pelourinho's hollow midcentury mansions understood what it meant to incarnate an exotic connection to a racial and cultural past. In both cases, as Collins explains, residents "knew, beforehand, that they had value" but nonetheless "often presented themselves as perpetrators of a clutching fallenness that permitted them to survive but excluded them from many of the benefits of full inclusion" (339). Like the Northeastern intellectuals and politicians portrayed by Albuquerque Jr., Pelourinho's residents help to construct a myth of national origins that requires them to embody a subordinated past, "a self-consciously traditional position" (350), from which they "come at times to understand themselves as a possession, or an object, that both belongs to and helps construct the nation" (350).

### Subordination and Hope

In the quarter century of relative calm that preceded Brazil's recent storm, Brazilians thought in globally innovative ways about the question of national belonging. In the early 1990s, after decades of dictatorship and economic chaos, leaders and thinkers across the political spectrum seemed to agree that Brazil could aspire to be a nation defined not just by cordiality, but also by equality and inclusion. This implied a version of development that embraced growth but demanded distribution. It required a system of governance where law mediated power and personal privilege diminished. It meant giving the vote to illiterates, who were banned from meaningful political citizenship between 1881 and 1988. It encouraged participatory governance and fostered parties structured to represent ideas and constituencies as well as to exercise political control. It entailed official recognition of the violence and marginalization and exclusion embedded in Brazil's racial past, and high-level support for a national imaginary where integration did not denote subordination. And it proposed a reimagining of the country's unifying ideals, such that the price of belonging ceased to be abnegation, silence, dissimulation, and entrenched inequality. While many of these ideas originated with the left, they were also for a time articulated as universal, and provided the charge that transformed Brazil's postmillennial economic boomlet into a moment of unrestrained optimism and euphoria.



The bitter core of the 2016 crisis is that it has decimated this generational project of radical democratization. The legal structures of democracy and even the reams of statistics predicting the achievement of economic and human development were not insubstantial; they created real opportunity, they reflected real change. But they were threaded with the enduring reality of subterranean power, informal practice, and unstated ideology. As Collins illuminates in the case of Pelourinho, the projects that characterized Brazil's period of democratization usually contained an egalitarian, participatory, inclusionary ethos: what could be more inclusionary than a project that heroically memorializes Brazil's African essence in the symbolic center of slavocratic colonialism? But it was evident to many throughout, and is clear to nearly everyone now, that those projects could accommodate many masters. Like the ideal of racial democracy, Brazil's inclusionary ethos provided cover for enduring hierarchies and exclusions, perpetuated through systemically integral patterns of silence and dissimulation. The inclusionary projects of the past quarter century required appeasement and tolerance of the internal forces that would ultimately undermine them. This is true of all ideologies of national unity, but has come to the fore with particular cruelty in Brazil's recent past. Amid the ruins, one can only hope that Alfredo Bosi was right in seeing reconciliatory humanism as Brazil's most redeeming trait.

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