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ing of both democracy and intellect and who were equally guilty of an academic delinquency that transcended the comprehension of both. Theirs was a life that, in the final analysis, may have been personally satisfying, but was not, alas, socially ennobling.

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⁶Bennett, W.J. (1984). *To Reclaim a Legacy*. Washington: National Endowment for the Humanities. Pp. 19-20; Bloom, A. (1987). *The Closing of the American Mind*. New York: Simon and Schuster. Pp. 321-22.

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Book Review Essay

Brazilian Race Relations in Hemispheric Perspective

by

Rhett S. Jones

The Abolition of Slavery and the Aftermath of Emancipation in Brazil, by Rebecca J. Scott et al. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1988.

Luso-Brazilian Review, Volume 25, 1988. Guest Editor, Stuart B. Schwartz.

Race, Class, and Power in Brazil, Pierre-Michel Fontaine (Ed.). Los Angeles: Center for Afro-American Studies, University of California, Los Angeles, 1985.

The late Oliver C. Cox, one of the most insightful black Americans from the leftist tradition, was not often fooled. In his classic 1948 work, *Caste, Class, and Race*,¹ Cox, a long-time professor of sociology at Lincoln University in Missouri, revealed the nonsensical underpinnings of what then passed for the serious study of comparative race relations among sociologists in the United States. So successful was Cox that his book was thoroughly and deeply buried by the sociological establishment. When Pierre L. van den Berghe published *Race and Racism: A Comparative Perspective*² in 1967, sociologists hailed his

work as the first of its kind, thereby demonstrating that they had forgotten Cox's work, or at least managed to convince themselves that they had forgotten it.

But, while Cox was not taken in by the pretensions of white sociologists (whether born in the United States or imported from Sweden by white sociologists born in the United States) or by the black elites in such varied places as Liberia and Haiti, he was fooled by the Brazilians. He wrote of the "Portuguese's remarkable freedom from race prejudice in Brazil."³ In reality, of course, neither the Portuguese nor their Brazilian descendants were free from race prejudice. But Cox was not the only Afro-American to conclude that Brazilian society was free of racism. Such astute North American black observers as E. Franklin Frazier and Robert S. Abbott were also taken in.

I ought to say at this point that my approach to this review essay is the same as that of Cox, Frazier, and Abbott in that I do not read Portuguese and my interest in Brazil is that of a black North American concerned with the comparative study of race in this hemisphere. I have been fortunate in team-teaching courses at Brown University with two distinguished scholars on race who are from Brazil: Anani Dzidzienyo, chair of the Afro-American Studies Program and associate professor of Portuguese-Brazilian studies and Afro-American studies; and Thomas Skidmore, chair of the Latin American Studies Program and professor of history. In talking with them and through eavesdropping on their dialogues with our students I have gleaned many insights into Brazilian race relations. While Dzidzienyo is black and Skidmore is white, each takes a no-nonsense approach to race in Brazil and each has a great love of that sprawling nation and its racially diverse peoples. Each is remarkably tolerant of a scholar such as myself who views the study of race in Brazil not as an end in itself, but as grist for his comparative history mill.

Rebecca J. Scott's opening article in *The Abolition of Slavery* is entitled "Exploring the Meaning of Freedom: Postemancipation Societies in Comparative Perspective." In it she explores the meaning of freedom for the emancipated slave and while conceding that "freedom" is a difficult term to define—particularly in a cross-cultural sense—offers some useful ideas as to how scholars might come to grips with it. Some of these ideas, she writes, "can begin to provide detailed portraits of economic and social options and constraints faced by former slaves, and thus illuminate the patterns of their individual and collective behavior. At the same time, we will need to listen for the faint echoes of the voices of the participants themselves." (p. 21)

In his essay on the abolition of slavery in Brazil, as compared to other places in the Americas, Seymour Drescher—whose 1987 book *Capitalism and Anti-slavery: British Mobilization in Comparative Perspective*⁴ continues to provoke debate—concludes that Brazilian slaveholders were not able "to rally the country around the principle of slavery," and in this they differed from their counterparts in North America. (p. 51) George Reid Andrews begins his essay on the working class in São Paulo between 1888 (the year of the abolition of slavery in Brazil) and 1928 with the observation: "One hundred years after abolition, Brazil remains a country of marked racial inequality." (p. 85) Andrews then goes on to explore the role of both the labor movement and those who would be termed "white ethnics" in the United States in Brazil's continuing racism. For those familiar with relationships between ethnic groups who arrived in the United States during the twentieth century and black Americans, Reid's essay offers much food for comparative thought.

Stuart B. Schwartz, guest editor of the summer 1988 issue of the *Luso-Brazilian Review* devoted to Brazilian slavery and race relations, not only provides a useful introductory essay and bibliography in an article entitled "Recent Trends in the Study of Slavery in Brazil," but reminds readers of how difficult comparative history can be. He notes that there are far more documents on Brazilian slavery available than scholars have long assumed. In this sense slave scholarship there resembles slave scholarship in the United States two decades ago when some of our nation's most distinguished historians proclaimed there could be no Afro-American history because blacks left no written records. Brazil, however, is different in one important respect. Schwartz writes, "Unlike the situation in the United States where vast numbers of slave narratives exist and where government-sponsored collections of slave testimony were gathered and have subsequently been analyzed, slave and former slave writings or depositions are rare in Brazil." (p. 12)

But if students of comparative history are gradually becoming convinced that Brazil was not necessarily better than the United States in its treatment of black people, many black Americans have believed and continue to believe differently. The essay by David J. Hellwig, "A New Frontier in a Racial Paradise: Robert S. Abbott's Brazilian Dream," and Teresa Meade's and Gregory Alonso Pirio's "In Search of the Afro-American 'Eldorado': Attempts by North American Blacks to Enter Brazil in the

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1920s," both demonstrate the attraction of Brazil to many black North Americans. According to Hellwig, Abbott, the long-time editor of the *Chicago Defender*, believed that Brazil "was indeed a racial paradise or utopia" even after a journey there in 1923. (p. 61) However, black citizens of the United States who shared Abbott's vision found that things were quite different when they sought to emigrate to Brazil. "It is in fact one of the great ironies of history," write Meade and Pirio, "that a number of black North Americans sought to migrate to Brazil because they had heard it was a land of opportunity for members of the black race, only to be prevented from entering by Brazilian authorities enforcing a whites-only migration law." (p. 85)

The edge in such observations is sharper in *Race, Class, and Power* which, like the other two collections of essays reviewed here, is scholarly. It would not quite be correct to suggest that these essays are angry, but it might be legitimate to suggest that they collectively take exception to the idea that Brazil was or is a racial paradise. In his short, introductory essay, Pierre-Michel Fontaine provides a useful bibliography and sketches out varied approaches to the study of race relations in Brazil. He also places the work of contributors to the volume in context and concludes by observing that what is needed is "an understanding of the meaning of race in Brazilian society, and its relation to class and power." (p. 8)

Skidmore's article, "Race and Class in Brazil: Historical Perspectives," is not especially kind to the disciplines of history, sociology, or anthropology, and pointedly reminds readers that there is more to understanding ideas about race in this hemisphere than scholarly exchanges in the groves of academy. He notes, for instance, that the military regime in

Brazil branded as “subversive” not only “kidnapers with guns, but also social scientists with ideas.” Such a policy, he continues, was bound to include academics who had raised questions about Brazil’s “racial democracy.” (p. 16) Skidmore also warns against carrying historical comparisons too far, fearing they may obscure rather than provide insight into the workings of black-white relations in Brazil. (p. 20)

Anani Dzidzienyo’s “The African Connection and the Afro-Brazilian Condition” is the closing essay in *Race, Class, and Power* and appropriately traces the evolution of changing attitudes about race in Brazil and in African states. As Africans have become more knowledgeable about Brazil, he argues, they have become more skeptical of the nation’s racial democracy and of its claims to a leadership role in the Third World based on the supposed lack of Brazilian racism. A fiasco took place, he writes, in “the meeting between members of the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs and Brazilians in São Paulo in August 1980, where the Nigerian delegation expressed surprise at the initial absence of Afro-Brazilians.” (p. 146) Dzidzienyo’s article effectively and convincingly demonstrates that while the patterns of race relations have been different in the United States and in Brazil, both countries have been and are racist.

The assumption that Brazilian slavery and race relations were less harsh than those of the United States has been a staple of American scholarship for nearly a century. Sir Harry Johnston, who wrote *Pioneers in Tropical Africa*,⁵ may have had the first word on the subject when he noted that the Portuguese were less cruel in their treatment of blacks than were the English. Two works published a generation later have also had a profound and lasting impact on the image of Brazil among North American historians and social scientists. Both appeared in 1946. Gilberto Freyre’s *The Masters and the Slaves*⁶ was a translation of the Brazilian social scientist’s massive work which argued that the Portuguese in Brazil drew no firm line between the races in part because of the attraction of Portuguese men to African women. Freyre went on to suggest that black women were often influential and powerful figures in the lives of the white men who ruled Brazil, serving them as mummies, concubines, and shrewd advisers. Frank Tannenbaum’s *Slave and Citizen: The Negro in the Americas*⁷ argued that the Portuguese (and the Spaniards) tended to treat their New World slaves better than the English both because they were long-accustomed to Africans and harbored no special racial prejudice against them, and because the Roman Catholic Church—unlike its Protestant counterparts in North America—insisted that Africans were human beings and protected them.

Such scholars as Stanley Elkins⁸; Herbert Klein⁹; and Magnus Mörner¹⁰ were significantly influenced by the Tannenbaum argument though they did not accept it wholeheartedly and sought to refine, correct, and expand upon it. Brazil thereafter figured

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importantly in all debates on the treatment of slaves and freedpersons of African descent in the Americas. In his attempts to place the treatment of slaves in the northern part of what is now the United States in perspective, Edgar J. McManus referred frequently to slavery and race relations in Brazil.¹¹ Three informative anthologies—Laura Foner’s and Eugene D. Genovese’s (Eds.) *Slavery in the New World: A Reader in Comparative History*¹²; David W. Cohen’s and Jack P. Greene’s (Eds.) *Neither Slave nor Free: The Freedmen of African Descent in the Slave Societies of the New World*¹³; and Robin Winks’ (Ed.) *Slavery: A Comparative Perspective*¹⁴—devoted considerable attention to Brazil.

Roger Bastide’s *African Civilizations in the New World*¹⁵ notes that the experience of African men and women in Brazil was quite different than that of their brothers and sisters in British North America. Harmanus Höetink, in two well-received works¹⁶, suggested that Tannenbaum may have been right in concluding that some blacks were relatively well-treated, but that the Portuguese were no less racial bigots than the English. Utilizing the concept of the “somatic norm image,” Höetink argued that because the Portuguese had a conception of themselves that was darker than the image of themselves held by Englishmen, Brazilian society was more open to mulattos and other mixed bloods than was that of British North America. In *Neither Black nor White: Slavery and Race Relations in Brazil and the United States*,¹⁷ Carl Degler took this argument a bit further suggesting that a “mulatto escape hatch” existed, which enabled those persons of African ancestry who were light-skinned and possessed European facial features to rise in Brazilian society, while those who appeared African could not.

There has always been a strong counter-argument to the Tannenbaum thesis. In a number of books, historian Charles R. Boxer¹⁸ demonstrated that racism was every bit as common in the Portuguese empire as in that of their rivals: the English, the Dutch, and the French. Leslie B. Rout’s *The African Experience in Spanish America*¹⁹ argued that, contrary to Tannenbaum, the Spaniards (and by implication the

Portuguese) had been racist in their treatment of Africans in Africa and in Europe, and just as racist in the Americas.

Three recent historical studies of Brazil (Viotti da Costa, *Brazilian Empire: Myths and Histories*²⁰; Mattoso, *To Be a Slave in Brazil, 1550-1888*²¹; and Diffie, *A History of Colonial Brazil, 1500-1791*²²) remind the North American reader that the history of Brazil – as colony, as empire, and as republic – is far older than that of the United States and the 13 British colonies that preceded it. Simple generalizations about the meaning of slavery and race in Brazil contort its long and complex history. In writing on Latin American slave societies, Herbert S. Klein observes that while virtually all people accepted the essential humanity of black folk:

[A]t the same time, these were inevitably racist societies which rejected black self-identity and self-worth and often created a second-class citizenship for those who achieved their freedom. Social ascension and mobility were possible for enough blacks to give a majority a sense of hope, but the terms were always rejection of their Afro-American cultural identity and their blackness. In such a situation it was inevitable that the cultures which were established by the slaves in America would serve two often conflicting purposes: that of integrating the slaves into the larger master-dominated societies while providing them with identity and meaning that protected them from that society's oppression and hostility.²³

White citizens of the United States are still grappling with the issue of whether or not African-Americans are human beings. In that sense Oliver Cox may have been correct in perceiving a difference between Brazil and the United States. But much of the remainder of Klein's observation would appear to hold for Brazil, the United States, and the rest of the hemisphere.

To get ahead, to rise in a white-dominated system, and to achieve status blacks have had to turn their back on Africinity and its many manifestations in the New World. The essays in these three anthologies on Brazil provide insightful perspectives on the various ways in which they have come to grips with their blackness and racism.

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