

Empires of the Atlantic World, and essential reading for students of Latin American independence.

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María Elena Martínez, *Genealogical Fictions: Limpieza de Sangre, Religion and Gender in Colonial Mexico* (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), pp. ix + 407, \$65.00, hb.

In this book María Elena Martínez sets out to demonstrate that the concepts of *limpieza de sangre* and race cannot be neatly separated in the context of Spanish and Spanish American history, and that they need to be re-examined in light of a colonial system that depended on both to establish social categories and personal identities. Focusing on New Spain, this work is a model study for other potential examinations of race and *limpieza de sangre* elsewhere in the region. Race was not a notion 'invented' in the nineteenth century, argues Martínez, and it is essential to understand that racialised discourses have had previous historical expressions that were effective in achieving differentiations and discriminations in their own time. Martínez proposes that no study of the meaning of such powerful notions as old Christian, *casta*, race, *linaje* or *calidad* can ignore the intrinsic complexity of their historical genesis, construction, enforcement and dispersion from Spain to Spanish America.

Beginning in late fifteenth-century Spain, anxiety about Muslim and Jewish ancestry led the Inquisition to begin investigating practitioners of those religions and making distinctions between old and new Christians despite the fact that the Iberian cultural and religious climate was unclear and unstable. Martínez declares that the exact origins of the statutes of purity of blood remain 'a mystery', but they were the foundations of canons on exclusion and inclusion that pervaded throughout the eighteenth century. Included in what is otherwise a review of well-known practices is the claim that as the Holy Office focused on women and the families of *conversas* and *moriscas*, women were identified as the main source of impurity, thus gendering the concept of cleanliness.

The biological and cultural reproduction of *limpieza* was to have an extraordinary weight in the transfer of the concepts of purity to the New World resulting from the sexual meeting of three racial groups. Colonisation gave a new twist to *limpieza*. While in Spain 'fictional' genealogies were tied to nobility, religion and honour, race was injected into the ideological apparatus when the indigenous peoples and the Africans merged into the picture. As the Spaniards transferred their religious, social and political world to New Spain, the concept of *limpieza* gained new purchase. The increasing association of Africans with biblical damnation, servility and the Muslim religion nailed their position as impure and undesirable. As an example of their exclusion, Martínez uses the Franciscan Order's prohibition against accepting anyone with African blood into its ranks. Not just the Franciscans but also other religious orders and the secular church adopted this practice.

The indigenous elites (*caciques* and *principales*), on the other hand, assimilated blood cleanliness to preserve power in their own community (*república de indios*) and to differentiate themselves from the insuperable obstacles faced by the Africans. In the seventeenth century, American-born whites linked their ancestry to Spain and blood purity to buttress themselves against the growing number of mixed-blood people.

Altogether, endogamy and the control of women as reproductive venues were vital to maintaining race as a tool of power. While *mestizaje* was blooming in the seventeenth century, the Inquisition and several jurists and theologians turned to examine the concept of *limpieza* and revived the discussion over the religious aspect of bloodlines. The Holy Office assumed that the indigenous had accepted Catholicism and that caciques could claim purity of blood, but other, lesser-known (albeit influential) writers were of the contrary opinion and compared the Indians to the Jews – to the former's disadvantage.

For the eighteenth century Martínez uses the *casta* paintings extensively, and takes the opportunity to reiterate the role of women in the genetic process. She sides with those who view the paintings as reflecting nostalgia for a past that was rapidly crumbling due to the Spaniards' lack of control over their own women, especially at the lower social levels. This view may still be subject to debate, as are all interpretations derived from these paintings, which have become an anchor to a variety of theses. The fact is that restrictions to exclude *castas* and reassert cleanliness proliferated. Martínez concludes that the religious meaning of *limpieza* declined rapidly (although not totally), while the concept 'became embedded in a visual discourse about the body, and in particular about skin color' (p. 248). To solve the blurred and contradictory picture of both interpretations, Martínez sees the cult of Guadalupe as promoting a creole vision of a Catholic *mestizo* kingdom (p. 252) even though at the end of that century creoles' sense of identity was still based on their claim to direct linkages with Iberian Spaniards.

Buttressed by an extensive historical literature, this study provides a sweeping coverage of the subject of race and blood cleanliness. Given the great deal of attention that the subject of race has commanded, the issue is: to what extent does the book open new frontiers in current debates over race perception? There is a nagging feeling in the reader that much of what is stated is not necessarily new but reinterpreted and cogently synthesised. However, the examination of seventeenth-century theories and practices definitely expands our understanding of how theologians, religious authorities and institutions such as the Inquisition debated the meaning of cleanliness even though they never achieved consistency or absolute clarity, owing to significant differences among themselves. By showing how somatic differences were seen through the lens of religion, Martínez succeeds in establishing new parameters of analysis. The study of *limpieza de sangre* and *casta* construction is a difficult one. Arguments and counter-arguments assault the historian who tries to make sense of the various and often conflicting views contained in legislation and ecclesiastical sources, as well as popular perceptions tangentially wrapped in legal suits or in art. Even though *casta* and *limpieza de sangre* will continue to defy the historical imagination, Martínez's effort to make this process clearer to the modern reader is commendable insofar as it provides a thread that helps us to follow nearly 400 years of attempts to define the significance of cleanliness of blood.

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Jens Andermann, *The Optic of the State: Visuality and Power in Argentina and Brazil* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2007), pp. xv + 256, \$27.95, pb.

Jens Andermann's work has been extremely helpful toward understanding the cultural environment of late nineteenth-century Brazil and Argentina. In this book he