

black not mestizo accomplishments. One wonders whether the negative should be leavened with more references to some of the earlier interracial success stories, such as the wide appreciation of black artists in pre-revolutionary Cuba or the multiracial adoption of black music and dance that John Chasteen has detailed. Whites may have dominated the political, economic and social lives of their nations, but there were non-whites who joined those ranks and that story also needs to be told. The problem is that in his limited number of pages the author paints in broad strokes that ignore the nuances, leaving the reader constantly asking, 'Yes, but what about?'

With its maps, illustrations, timelines, boxes describing specific figures, reiterated points, and short length, this book is obviously designed as a textbook for undergraduate courses, despite the astronomical price for the hardback. But students may be confused by some of the author's sentences, such as when he writes: 'Mestizos emerged from the castas and at first glance were the product of sexual mixing of Europeans and indigenous' (pp. 109–10) and 'For Bolivia, Paraguay, Ecuador, and Peru, where the indigenous population was at its largest, Cuba did not have a similar experience' (p. 188). Teachers may be concerned by the book's numerous historical errors. They include: Túpac Amaru's execution in 1781 was preceded by the execution of one son, not three; in 1815 Francisco Miranda was in chains in a Spanish prison, where he had been for three years, not on his way into exile in Europe; Juan Manuel Rosas was never president of Argentina; Pedro II did not abdicate before the abolition of Brazilian slavery in 1888; Fidel Castro returned to Cuba in 1956 not 1957; and Ramón Castilla not Alberto Fujimori was Peru's first non-creole president. Ultimately, any work on Latin America must address the issues of race and ethnicity. Certainly, most general histories do so to some extent or another, and their length permits them to cover the subject in greater detail and with a better idea of the context and surrounding realities than this brief overview of a complicated topic.

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J. Lat. Amer. Stud. 47 (2015). doi:10.1017/S0022216X15000516

Antonio Acosta, *Los orígenes de la burguesía de El Salvador: el control sobre el café y el estado, 1848–1890* (Barcelona: Taller de Estudios e Investigacions Andino-Amazónicas, Universidad de Barcelona, and Seville: Instituto de Estudios sobre América, Universidad de Sevilla, 2013), pp. xxviii + 419, pb.

Acosta opens his study asking: 'Another book about coffee and the dominant minority?' Indeed, the study of nineteenth-century El Salvador is defined by two paradoxical traits that make asking such a question necessary. The first trait is a shortage of evidence, caused largely by the tragic burning of the national archive in 1889. The second trait is ironic: despite a paucity of evidence, the historiographic field of nineteenth-century El Salvador is rather crowded. Scholars have long located the roots of the twentieth-century authoritarian state in the nineteenth century, and so many of them have focused their attention on it. What does Acosta offer that is new? The answer is, quite a bit.

In regard to sources, Acosta does what many scholars of nineteenth-century El Salvador have done; rely heavily on published sources, like newspapers. Indeed Acosta makes ample use of the official government newspaper, *La Gaceta*, and others, like *El Constitucional*. What sets Acosta apart is his unparalleled dive into those sources. He read the newspapers comprehensively and he extracted a tremendous

rage of details. Additionally, Acosta introduces new evidence, namely court records from the *Fondo Judicial*, the judicial collection in the national archive, which had been stored elsewhere prior to 1889. Acosta employs records in unique ways in Salvadorean historiography, using documents of civil proceedings, like probate and private debt, to discover such things as the value of land, the nature of credit relationships and the enforcement of labour contracts.

In regard to the extant historiography, Acosta sets revisionist sights on works by a handful of predecessors, including Héctor Lindo Fuentes, Aldo Lauria, Brad Burns and me, among others. Acosta is not seeking to radically overturn received wisdom, and, indeed, anyone familiar with the story of nineteenth-century El Salvador will find much familiar in this work, including the coffee economy, landed elites, stark social inequalities and a hierarchical political system. Rather, Acosta's succession of challenges has the effect of amplifying the current narrative(s) in new ways.

Acosta challenges three inter-related claims that he attributes to his predecessors: 1) the Salvadorean state was weak; 2) the oligarchy did not come into existence until the late nineteenth century, mainly with the emergence of the coffee economy; and 3) El Salvador was a poor country prior to the economic boom of coffee. Whether his predecessors advance those claims as emphatically as he says they do is a matter of debate, but for the sake of the current review, I shall assume they do.

Acosta's overarching revisionist claim is to push back the chronology of the creation of the oligarchy and the modernisation of the state. Instead of these processes occurring in the late nineteenth century, after the privatisation of the communal lands in the early 1880s and the corresponding surge in coffee production, Acosta claims that El Salvador was dominated by an elite minority from the earliest days of the Republic, and that this minority demonstrated a firm command over the levers of the state and that they used the state to promote their interests. Thus, he claims that not only was the state stronger than has been presumed, but also that the oligarchy used it more actively to intervene in the economy than has been argued previously.

The bulk of Acosta's book is dedicated to showing, in one topic after another, the ways in which the state operated as a functional entity in defence of elite interests more or less throughout the entirety of the nineteenth century. In highly detailed descriptions, Acosta looks at currency circulation, credit, land tenure, public finance, public debt and infrastructural projects, among others. In order to portray the state as a functional entity, Acosta looks beyond the various traumas and chaos that tend to typify descriptions of the nineteenth century. He disregards the constant changeovers in office as secondary, insisting that political rivalries between elites were insignificant compared to elites' common goals. He says that over time state actors advanced similar policies and that the personnel of the state tended to remain in place despite the repeated changeovers in office. Finally, Acosta insists that El Salvador was not poor, but rather was wealthy, or that at least it demonstrated the capacity to allow a small core of the population to accumulate impressive amounts of private capital.

I find Acosta's arguments compelling and convincing to a degree, and, once again, his research is deep and profound. A few things concern me, such as working and poor people being mostly passive actors in the story, 'reacting' (*reaccionaban*, p. xv) to elite policies and decision-making. Acosta's narrative is inevitably disjointed owing to the nature of the evidence, and I wonder if his highly coherent claims are as fully supported by it as he asserts. To show that economic policies were being debated and made does not necessarily mean that the state was as functional or as powerful as

he says it was, and he fails to provide a specific definition of the state and thus a standard by which to measure its relative strengths or weaknesses. It is difficult to imagine that the succession of earthquakes, wars and political chaos throughout the nineteenth century were as innocuous as he claims. Even if political rivals shared common goals, changeovers in office had patronage consequences and thus disruptive effects on the state bureaucracy.

One of the compelling consequences of Acosta's study is the way it creates odd historiographic bedfellows. It implicitly unites laissez-faire economic elites with progressive-leaning historians. Acosta is highly critical of the former and sees their claims about their beneficent role in Salvadorean history as unfounded and morally repugnant. Acosta's fellow historians tend to agree with him, but he sees them as promoting a similarly flawed story, a weak state and a poor nation until the coffee elites came along in the late nineteenth century and changed everything.

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J. Lat. Amer. Stud. 47 (2015). doi:10.1017/S0022216X15000528

G. Reginald Daniel, *Machado de Assis: Multiracial Identity and the Brazilian Novelist* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012), pp. xi + 338, \$74.95, hb.

Increasingly, over the last 10 or 20 years, critics have taken an interest in Machado de Assis's racial origins, and in the effect they may have had on his career, his opinions and his writings. We know that he was the child of a father described as 'pardo, forro', and a Portuguese mother, from the Azores. In 2007, Eduardo de Assis Duarte published his *Machado de Assis afrodescendente*, which documents most of the references to the matter, and more generally to slavery and its effects, in the works, novels, stories *crônicas*, and so on.

It is a complex topic: we have little or no unambiguous evidence of what this most ironic and secretive writer thought about the colour of his skin, though we can have little doubt that he would have smiled with a certain amount of bitterness (and who knows, some perverse satisfaction) at the description of his colour as 'branco' on his death certificate.

G. Reginald Daniel's book is certainly the longest treatment of the subject, and perhaps the most comprehensive. A great deal is given over to discussions of the contexts, historical and theoretical, which surround it. The first chapter deals with the history of miscegenation in Brazil since 1500, the second with other mulatto writers before Machado and contemporary with him (Caldas Barbosa, Luís Gama, José do Patrocínio, Lima Barreto); in the third Machado's life is recounted in some detail. It is a faithful account, though with some mistakes. Machado did not translate *Oliver Twist* from English, as Jean-Michel Massa proved, nor is it necessarily true that he suffered from epilepsy all his life. The first of two stories entitled 'Mariana' is twice given the date 1864, instead of 1871 (the year of the Law of the Free Womb). There is no series of *crônicas* entitled *Crônicas do relojoeiro* signed 'Policarpo'. José Galante de Sousa's *Bibliografia de Machado de Assis* is, astonishingly, missing from the very extensive bibliography. Some important and relatively unknown facts, however, are there, like Gonçalves Crespo's 1871 hesitant letter saying he has heard he is an 'homem de cor'. Large parts of the later chapters are given over to accounts of other writers (Graça