value of Carvalho's book, which I deeply enjoyed, and which I enthusiastically recommend to lovers of Brazilian cultural history.

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André Cicalo, *Urban Encounters: Affirmative Action and Black Identities in Brazil* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. xii + 229, £55.00, hb.

The idea that Brazil draws its strength from a cordial mixture of European, African and Indian heritage has been a cornerstone of Brazilian national identity since the idea was articulated by Brazilian social scientist Gilberto Freyre in the 1930s. Even though the narrative is contradicted by media representations of black youth as murder victims, drug dealers and thieves, and by various studies correlating life chances with race, the racial democracy discourse continues to be a cornerstone of the construction of race in Brazil. Part of the argument is that Brazil has found a better solution to the race problem than the United States. Maybe for that reason borrowing Affirmative Action from the United States has been particularly problematic. Anthropologists Yvonne Magghi and Peter Fry, for example, argue that American style quotas reify race, and risk replacing Brazil's flexible racial categories, which allow for a certain racial ambiguity, with a more rigidly polarised system like in the United States. On the other hand Brazilian Black Movement activists, along with other scholars, argue that the racial democracy thesis serves to mask systematic racial prejudice in Brazil. Only by assuming a black identity and organising around that identity, they argue, can historical inequalities be redressed.

These are some of the debates that have raged over the implementation of a quota system in Brazilian universities, which educate 4 per cent of people of colour and 13.4 per cent of whites, although each group makes up about half of society. Quota opponents argue that, in addition to reifying race, such a policy would bring less qualified students into the university who would inevitably fail and at the same time lower the quality and reputation of Brazilian universities.

Cicalo engages in both the academic and popular debates by conducting an ethnographic study at the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ), the first university to implement a quota system in 2003. The UERJ reserves 20 per cent of places for students who attended public schools, 20 per cent for black and indigenous Brazilians, and 5 per cent for disabled students, all of whom must also meet maximum income requirements. Cicalo spent the 2007–2008 academic year following a group of first-year quota students at the UERJ's prestigious law school, as well as analysing data on quota student performance dating back to the beginning of the programme.

The result is a rich nuanced account of evolving racial identities and interactions that pays attention to the codings of spaces in the university and beyond. The author says he did not set out to judge the policy merits of university quotas, but he ends up challenging most of the arguments of quota critics. Quotas did not directly reify race. Students used quotas strategically and separated their quota status from their identities. He did find a tendency towards politicisation of students of colour at the university, but this was more due to exposure to liberal professors and to an active black student movement. Quota students performed well after an initial period of catching up and UERJ law continued to be the most prestigious law programme in Rio de Janeiro after five years of quotas.

Most interesting to me was the author's engagement with debates about the construction of race in Brazil. While some scholars celebrate the flexibility of Brazilian racial categories, Cicalo sides with Sheriff (2000), who argues that much of the observed flexibility represents attempts of people to lighten each other in conversation out of politeness. This kind of 'cultural censorship' reinforces the ideology of racial democracy and serves to obscure race. Based on his experience with quota students Cicalo argues that the apparently contradictory terminology people use to refer to themselves and others is actually quite consistent. He writes, '… the contextualized use of diverse identity labels may conceal a relatively solid coherence in the way students understand themselves and others' (p. 118). The key is distinguishing between terms that describe physical appearance and terms of racial identity. The Brazilian census offers five categories, which to some extent overlap description and identity: *branco* (white), *pardo* (brown), *preto* (black), *amarelo* (yellow) and *idigena* (indigenous). Negro (black), however, is a category of racial identity not included in the census. People who describe themselves as branco, generally identify as white racially. People who describe themselves as preto, generally identify as negro. The pardo category is contested. These include many of Cicalo's informants, who may or may not come to identify themselves as negro as they become politicised at the university, regardless of whether they strategically identified themselves as negro to get in under the quota system. Black movement activists generally consider people described as pardo to be negro, but the darker the person's skin and the more African her features, the more authentic her blackness is within the movement. For Cicalo the key divisor of the pardo category is whether the person is dark enough and has enough African features, particularly curly hair, to have been discriminated against. Thus the flexibility observed in language can be attributed to cultural censorship, the distinction between description and racial identity, and the development of racial consciousness over time.

I was particularly interested in the author's efforts to spatialise race both within the setting of the university and in the city at large, although this analysis would have benefited from an engagement with spatial theory in the tradition of Henri Lefebvre. The broad associations of North Zone with poor and black, and South Zone with rich and white are complicated in this study. The UERJ is located in the North Zone, but displaced the favela of Esqueleto in the 1960s, turns its back on the favela of Mangueira and is perceived as elite space by suburban quota students. Cicalo sees the university as a kind of utopian space with more egalitarian racial codings that could provide a model for a more just city. The language of classroom geographies of difference was fascinating, with terms like *cones, barbárie* and *playboyzinhos*. At the same time the university experience reinforces the dominant spatial order. White university students arrive at the UERJ in private cars and offer rides to their colleagues who live in the South Zone, while suburban students take the train in the opposite direction. Quota students are excluded from socialising with wealthier students in South Zone clubs because of the cost of such outings and the limits of transportation home at the end of the night.

This book will be greatly appreciated by students of urban Brazil and particularly those who are interested in the co-production of race and space.

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