
REVIEW ESSAYS

SOMEBODIES AND NOBODIES IN THE BODY POLITIC: Mentalities and Social Structures in Colonial Brazil*

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O TEATRO DOS VICIOS: TRANSGRESSÃO E TRANSIGENCIA NA SOCIEDADE URBANA COLONIAL. By Emanuel Araújo. (Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio, 1993. Pp. 362.)

HOMENS DE GROSSA AVENTURA: ACUMULAÇÃO E HIERARQUIA NA PRAÇA MERCANTIL DO RIO DE JANEIRO, 1790–1830. By João Luis Ribeiro Fragoso. (Rio de Janeiro: Arquivo Nacional, 1992. Pp. 324.)

O ARCAISMO COMO PROJETO: MERCADO ATLANTICO, SOCIEDADE AGRARIA E ELITE MERCANTIL NO RIO DE JANEIRO, C. 1790–1840. By João Luis Ribeiro Fragoso and Manolo Florentino. (Rio de Janeiro: Diadorim, 1993. Pp. 118.)

AS VESPERAS DO LEVIATHAN: INSTITUIÇÕES E PODER POLITICO, PORTUGAL SEC. XVII. 2 volumes. By Antonio Manuel Hespanha. (Lisbon: Pedro Ferreira Artes Gráficas, 1986. Pp. 742.)

INFERNO ATLANTICO: DEMONOLOGIA E COLONIZAÇÃO, SECULOS XVI–XVIII. By Laura de Mello e Souza. (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1993. Pp. 263.)

ROSA EGIPCICA: UMA SANTA AFRICANA NO BRASIL. By Luiz Mott. (Rio de Janeiro: Bertrand, 1993. Pp. 749.)

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- ARRAIA-MIUDA: UM ESTUDO SOBRE OS NÃO-PROPRIETARIOS DE ESCRAVOS NO BRASIL. By Iraci del Nero da Costa. (São Paulo: MSGP, 1992. Pp. 159.)
- INQUISIÇÃO, ROL DOS CULPADOS: FONTES PARA A HISTORIA DO BRASIL, SECULO XVIII. By Anita Novinsky. (Rio de Janeiro: Expressão e Cultura, 1992. Pp. 195.)
- AO SUL DO CORPO: CONDIÇÃO FEMININA, MATERNIDADES E MENTALIDADES NO BRASIL COLONIA. By Mary del Priore. (Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio, 1993. Pp. 358.)
- OS CRISTÃOS NOVOS EM MINAS GERAIS DURANTE O CICLO DO OURO (1695–1755): RELAÇÕES COM A INGLATERRA. By José Gonçalves Salvador. (São Bernadino do Campo, São Paulo: Pioneira, 1992. Pp. 197.)
- LA HERENCIA MEDIEVAL DEL BRASIL. By Luis Weckmann. (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1993. Pp. 397.)

Until recently, the modern historiography on Brazil reflected heavy concentration on political economy, the colonial arrangement, the issues surrounding slavery, and the anomalies of a multiracial society. Strongly influenced by Marxist or neodependency approaches and vocabulary, the study of colonial Brazil has been oriented by the themes of economic structure, class, and race. A consensus view emerged among historians of radically different political and methodological persuasions that envisioned Brazil as a mercantilist colony with an economy structured by its export orientation and slave-based latifundia, headed by a planter aristocracy who determined its social life in many ways, even in nonplantation regions.¹ This consensus dominated historical thinking about Brazil for half a century but is now under serious scrutiny. The attack is being mounted by historians who still view the traditional Marxist themes of economic structure and its relation to social organization as the appropriate subject of analysis but also by a new generation of historians interested more in the attitudes and ideas that have shaped or resulted from those structures and relations than in these phenomena per se. This review essay will survey some of the recent historical production seeking to redefine or redirect the study of the Brazilian colonial past.

Two related books authored or coauthored by João Fragoso argue that the traditional vision of the export-oriented nature of Brazil's econ-

1. The classic formulation emerged in the 1930s. See Gilberto Freyre, *Casa grande e senzala* (Rio de Janeiro: Maia and Schmidt, 1933); Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, *Raízes do Brasil* (São Paulo: J. Olympio, 1936); Caio Prado Júnior, *Formação do Brasil contemporâneo* (São Paulo: Martins, 1942); Roberto Simonsen, *História econômica do Brasil*, 4th ed. (São Paulo: Editora Nacional, 1962; 1st ed. 1937). On the impact of this generation, see Fernando Henrique Cardoso, "Livros que inventaram o Brasil," *Novos Estudos (CEBRAP)* 37 (Nov. 1993):21–35. More recently, see the conflicting views but common framework of Fernando Novais, *Portugal e Brasil na crise do antigo regime (1777–1808)* (São Paulo: HUCITEC, 1979); Jacob Gorender, *O escravismo colonial* (São Paulo: Atica, 1978); Ciro F. S. Cardoso, *Agricultura, escravidão e capitalismo* (Petrópolis: Vozes, 1979).

omy and the predominance of the planter class is wrong or at least unbalanced. In his critiques, however, Fragoso continues to view the economic structure and its social manifestations—the mode of production—as the appropriate loci of study. *Homens da grossa aventura: Acumulação e hierarquia na praça mercantil do Rio de Janeiro, 1790–1830* is based on Fragoso's exhaustive examination of wills and inventories, notarial listings of sales, port records, and various other sources from Rio de Janeiro for this period. He argues that previous students of the Brazilian economy have erred in two directions. First, by concentrating on the “plantation nature” of the colonial economy, they have exaggerated Brazil's export orientation and ignored the size and importance of the internal economy. This focus has in turn led to overemphasis on the landowning class as the economic and social elite of the colony. Fragoso has compiled evidence demonstrating that in the early nineteenth century, the internal market for food was large and growing and its value often exceeded that of the main exports. In cities like Rio, a class of indigenous or locally based great merchants (*homens de grosso trato*) involved in international commerce and internal trade had become the most dynamic and powerful social group. Fragoso argues that the colony's commercial orientation was reflected in the fact that the average value of commercial operations exceeded that of rural properties in the transactions registered by Rio notaries. Business—not landownership—was the key to success in this era.

This stimulating and challenging piece of research is impressive, and its results are provocative. The book is not an easy read, however. It is built around seventy-nine tables and organized like a research report with numerous sections and subsections within four long chapters (one of them more than a hundred pages). Fragoso expresses his thesis in the usual Marxist terms. He argues that colonial Brazil was characterized by merchant capital and not by capitalism because much of the profit was directed into honorific noneconomic activities such as purchasing titles, acquiring large estates, or maintaining large households. Above all, he emphasizes the endogenous nature of capital formation that made the colonial relationship a far less crucial factor in Brazil's social formation.

Much in *Homens de grossa aventura* is not entirely new, although Fragoso pays more attention to the theoretical implications of his argument than others have. The growth of merchant fortunes, political influence, and independent action has already been suggested by A. J. R. Russell-Wood, Catherine Lugar, Pierre Verger, and Rae Flory and David Smith.² More recently, the significance of the internal market and its

2. A. J. R. Russell-Wood, *Fidalgos and Philanthropists: The Santa Casa da Misericórdia da Bahia, 1550–1755* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968); Catherine Lugar, “The Merchant Community of Salvador, Bahia 1780–1830,” Ph.D. diss., State Univer-

articulation with the export sector have been emphasized in studies by José Roberto Amaral Lapa, Larissa Brown, Bert Barickman, and this reviewer. This aspect has also been stressed by the group of historians associated with Yedda Linhares first at the Centro de Pós-Graduação em Desenvolvimento Agrícola da Escola Interamericana de Administração Pública at the Fundação Getúlio Vargas and then at the Universidade Federal Fluminense in Niteroi (with which Fragozo is affiliated).³ Fragozo emphasizes the internal market but constantly (and rightly) points out its links to the export sector, thus creating a certain tension in his argument between the novelty of its claims and his recognition that the internal economy and overseas commerce were intrinsically connected. Earlier formulations like that of Caio Prado had given considerable attention to nonlandowners or small farmers and the internal market, but he and others had argued that exports remained the dynamic sector of the economy. Fragozo's innovation is to argue that the internal market had begun to drive the economy as a whole.

A second problem arises with *Homens de grossa aventura* because during the period under study, an agricultural boom following the San Domingue revolt of 1792 combined with the European political situation to resuscitate Brazilian exports. This development stimulated a concomitant spurt in the slave trade that created new demand for food in the internal market. The increase in the slave trade and overall demographic growth, especially in cities like Rio de Janeiro (which experienced a population increase of 160 percent between 1799 and 1821) created a peculiar set of economic parameters reflecting demographic, economic, and political conditions. Moreover, the Marquis de Pombal, Portugal's activist prime minister from 1750 to 1777, had instituted a policy of employing state power to back great Portuguese and Brazilian merchants in order to break the foreign stranglehold on Luso-Brazilian commerce. Designed to create a "powerful national class of businessmen," this policy may also have created the basis for the social and political rise of the Rio merchants.⁴ Fragozo implic-

sity of New York, Stony Brook, 1980; Pierre Verger, *Flux et reflux de la traite des negres entre le golfe de Benin et Bahia de Todos os Santos* (Paris: Mouton, 1968); Rae Flory and David Smith, "Bahian Merchants and Planters in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 58, no. 4 (Nov. 1978):571-94.

3. On the internal market, see José Roberto Amaral Lapa, *O antigo sistema colonial* (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1982); Larissa Brown, "Internal Commerce in a Colonial Economy: Rio de Janeiro and Its Hinterland, 1790-1822," Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1986; Stuart B. Schwartz, "Peasants and Slavery: Feeding Brazil in the Late Colonial Period," *Slaves, Peasants, and Rebels: Reconsidering Brazilian Slavery* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 65-102; Bert Barikman, "The Slave Economy of Nineteenth-Century Bahia: Export Agriculture and Local Markets in the Recôncavo, 1780-1860," Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois, 1991; and Barikman, "A Bit of Land They Call *Roça'*: Slave Provision Grounds on Sugar Plantations and Cane Farms in the Bahian Recôncavo, 1780-1860," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 74, no. 4 (Nov. 1994):649-88.

4. See Kenneth Maxwell, "The Atlantic in the Eighteenth Century: A Southern Perspec-

itly views the patterns inherent in the situation that he describes as structural characteristics of colonial Brazil rather than perceiving them as aspects of a more chronologically limited conjuncture. As a result, he overstates the long-term predominance of merchant capital and the internal market throughout the colony's history by reading the 1790s too far into the past, interpreting them as if they were representative of the earlier era.

Finally, despite the richness of Fragoso's documentation, the "men of great trade" and their families do not materialize here as individuals or as a social group whose motives and strategies are clearly discernible. Why did merchants operating since the beginning of the colony continue to invest in land and slaves if these investments were less profitable than business? To argue that they did so primarily for status considerations because colonial Brazil was not a capitalist regime is tautological. As Lawrence Stone and Robert Brenner have shown, English merchants had been buying their way into the landed nobility for a long time by the eighteenth century, and their actions denoted no lack of capitalist mentality nor did they seem to diminish the rise of capitalism in England.⁵ To the contrary, P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins have argued that "gentlemanly capitalism" characterized England in the eighteenth century and that a commercially progressive aristocracy rooted firmly in agriculture dominated English life until the mid-nineteenth century.⁶ In France the eighteenth century witnessed a great expansion of the nobility as the bourgeoisie "infiltrated" upward on an unprecedented scale.⁷ The mercantile class of Brazil seems to have been acting much like its European and Spanish American counterparts.⁸ Thus for Brazilian merchants, investment in land and slaves provided relative security and risk limitation along with social status and image, multiple advantages that they must have recognized.

tive on the Need to Return to the 'Big Picture,'" *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th ser., no. 3 (1993):209–36.

5. Lawrence Stone, *Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558–1641* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965); and Jeanne C. Fawtier Stone, *An Open Elite? England, 1540–1880* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984); and Robert Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution: Commercial Change, Political Conflict, and London's Overseas Traders, 1550–1563* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993).

6. P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism: Innovation and Expansion, 1688–1914* (London: Longman, 1993), 58.

7. See the summary of sources in Jack A. Goldstone, *Revolution and Rebellion in the Early Modern World* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), 231.

8. Compare John E. Kicza, "The Great Families of Mexico: Elite Maintenance and Business Practices in Late Colonial Mexico City," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 62, no. 3 (Aug. 1982):429–57; and Susan Socolow, *The Merchants of Buenos Aires, 1778–1810* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978). Kicza argues that Mexican merchants diversified investment in agriculture and other enterprises and used marriages to solidify status and provide generational security for their wealth. Socolow demonstrates how merchants who were at one time uninterested in agricultural investment changed their minds when it became profitable.

Arcaísmo como projeto: Mercado atlântico, which Fragoso coauthored with Manolo Florentino, sharpens and condenses many of the theses advanced in *Os homens da grossa aventura*. It also stresses the nature of the slave trade and its central importance to Brazil's economic growth, an emphasis developed previously by Florentino in his master's thesis.⁹ The argument made is that slavery had a structural function in both Africa and America and that elasticity in the supply of workers, food, and land created a low level of capitalization in Brazil and permitted rudimentary agricultural techniques to continue. To restate their interpretation somewhat differently, relatively cheap access to the trans-Atlantic slave trade and (by extension) to the eighteenth-century improvements in that trade that kept slave prices low allowed routinizing agricultural practice and maintaining the predominant social relations and practices. Portugal benefited from this arrangement by taxing and reexporting colonial products. Thus Brazil and its social hierarchy were created to preserve the ancien régime in Portugal, not to transform it. This goal was the "archaic project" of the metropolis controlled by its aristocracy and the aristocratizing merchants at home and abroad, who remained allies as long as the emerging bourgeoisie did not threaten the established order. The argument here is something of a variation of Roberto Schwarz's "ideas out of place." Whereas in Europe, merchant fortunes allowed the mercantile class to challenge the nobility that had preceded it, in Brazil (which had no aristocratic past), merchant capital consolidated the ancien régime. The irony in the comparison makes sense only in the context of the somewhat old-fashioned idea of the emergence of the bourgeoisie in the rest of Western Europe and requires dismissal of the staying power of aristocracies and the continuing economic importance of agriculture. If merchants and commerce overtook agriculture as the dynamic sector of the Brazilian economy and the foundation of the social system, then Brazil was quite unlike England and France, according to the new historiography.

Whereas Fragoso and Florentino mount a frontal attack on interpretations that have viewed Brazil's economic development only in terms of the slave-based export sector, Iraci del Nero da Costa presents the social dimension of this new orientation by analyzing the *arraia-miúda* or common folk—in the Brazilian context, those who were not slaveowners. Called *agregados*, *posseiros*, *sitiantes*, or other terms according to the region, non-slaveholders' names varied as much as their property arrangements, but they were found throughout the colony. Nero da Costa draws his data from census materials gathered in eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-cen-

9. Manolo Florentino, "Em costas negras: Um estudo sobre o tráfico atlântico de escravos para o porto do Rio de Janeiro, c. 1790–1830," M.A. thesis, Universidade Federal Fluminense, 1991.

tury São Paulo and Minas Gerais, from limited materials on the cattle-ranching state of Piauí (where about half the population were slaves), and from two marginal *sertão* parishes in Bahia in the late eighteenth century. He examines this segment of the colonial population in *Arraia-miúda: Um estudo sobre os não-proprietários de escravos no Brasil*, a short volume that discusses descriptive statistics presented in 142 tables.

Nero da Costa emphasizes the fact that many areas included a large population who did not own slaves. In late-colonial São Paulo, about three-quarters of the households in the captaincy had no slaves, while in Minas Gerais, the figure was often considerably lower, with some 40 percent of the residences containing slaves. The fact that 50 to 65 percent of the colonial population were not slaveholders might at first seem to suggest that slavery has been overemphasized as a key to understanding Brazilian society. Such a vision would be misleading, I think. The fact that, given regional and chronological variation, 35 to 50 percent of the Brazilian population did own slaves may be even more significant. Except for rare situations such as eighteenth-century Haiti and other Caribbean islands, in most of the major slave-holding societies like classical Rome, the U.S. South, and Brazil, slaves accounted for only about one-third of the total population. But not everyone had to be an owner to make slavery the determining form of labor in that society, and the fact that a wide spectrum of Brazilians—including even peasants and former slaves—acquired slaves attests to the pervasiveness of slavery in the colony and in the social and cultural life of its inhabitants.

Arraia-miúda emphasizes regional variation but essentially argues that few demographic and social criteria differentiated slaveholders from nonslaveholders and that they seemed like “two samples of the same population” (p. 116). Those listed in local censuses as members of the Catholic Church and state bureaucracies or with military titles were more likely to own slaves than those listed as journeymen or artisans, but this difference really reflects relative levels of status and wealth and not “occupation” as such. Although slave owners dominated the production of export commodities as well as those destined for the internal market, non-slave owners were never excluded from these activities.

This small volume, like those by Fragoso and by Fragoso and Florentino, makes a valuable contribution in reexamining the nexus of colonial social and economic life. But I remain unconvinced that Brazil’s slave-based export sector has been unseated as the driving force of colonial life, its *raison d’être*, and the best route to understanding its historical development. Much of the search for the internal economy and its participants, the emphasis on “Little Brazil,” and the desire to shift the focus away from plantation, slavery, and the export sector creates a false dichotomy and loses sight of the relationship between the slave-based export sector and the development of a non-slave-owning peasantry who could

fulfill a variety of functions ranging from hiring out as occasional and temporary laborers to supplying food to growing cities and plantations. This peasantry had existed since the colony's inception, but it clearly grew rapidly in the eighteenth century along with the Brazilian economy. The question is not a matter of "either-or" but rather the process of change and variation in the intense relationship between the export and internal sectors of the colonial economy and the human dimensions of that change.

The works making up the new historiography have generally concentrated on the late eighteenth century but have projected their findings backward in time or assumed that they are describing a structural reality rather than a historical one. Neither *O Arcaísmo como projeto* nor *Arraia-miúda* devotes much attention to the specificity of the period described or the ways in which it might have generated the situation that these authors observe. When opportunities existed, merchants, landowners, miners, peasants, and even slaves clearly sought to participate in local markets and could do so because of changes in the export sector and new possibilities created by Brazil's international position. Slavery proved to be a labor form that was wonderfully albeit cruelly adaptive to these new conditions, as recent work on Minas Gerais has shown.¹⁰ Recognition of this relationship should make the plantation and the export sector even more crucial to understanding Brazilian social and economic formation and the ways that the constellation of social relations—even those outside slavery—were molded by slavery and often by large landholdings.

While the critics of the "Little Brazil" school have questioned the nature of the colonial economy, perhaps a potentially even more radical attack on the traditional historiography has been the change in focus from the social and economic nexus itself in favor of concentrating on the ideas and attitudes that shaped social and gender relations in a multi-racial slave society. The trend in historical studies toward examining mental structures, popular culture, and the domestic sphere has begun to have a profound impact on the manner in which students of the Brazilian past now approach colonial history. In the last decade, the new interest in *mentalités* has changed if not eliminated the almost exclusive emphasis on economic and social relations and has expanded understanding in various directions. This change has certainly reinvigorated colonial history and moved it in previously unexplored directions, but as these studies

10. Considerable research has developed on the transformation of Minas Gerais from mining to commercial agriculture and mixed farming based on slavery. See Roberto Borges Martins, *A economia escravista de Minas Gerais no século XIX*, Centro de Desenvolvimento e Planejamento Regional paper no. 10 (Belo Horizonte: Centro de Desenvolvimento e Planejamento Regional, Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, 1980); see also Amílcar Martins Filho and Roberto Borges Martins, "Slavery in a Non-Export Economy: Nineteenth-Century Minas Gerais Revisited," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 63, no. 3 (Aug. 1983):537–69, and the accompanying responses to it.

begin to accumulate, two questions need to be asked about the trend. First, has the study of mentalities simply replaced the important with the fascinating in producing a kind of historical *wunderkammer* (curio cabinet) chock-full of the bizarre, the curious, and the salacious while losing sight of the overall goal of understanding the functioning of society, polity, and culture? Second, is it possible to locate a point of intersection between the private life and thoughts of Brazil's inhabitants and the political and economic structures of the colony, to determine how public and private spheres were linked, if at all? Although scholars of a more radical deconstructionist position might argue that such an effort would be a futile and misdirected exercise, this approach would allow the new history of mentalities to illumine and enrich the story of Brazil's formation as a colony while placing the role of state power and economic conditions in a central position to explain the thoughts of men and women at various social levels. This union of the material, cultural, and mental bases of life in historical studies could draw a variety of historiographical traditions into a discussion of considerable mutual benefit. Thus far, such exchange has for the most part remained only potential.¹¹

To some extent, most of the new studies of mentalities have been written in the shadow of Michel Foucault, according to their understanding that the early modern era from the late fifteenth century to the French Revolution witnessed the rise of an absolutist state that by itself or aided by its ideological arm, the Catholic Church, imposed increasingly repressive controls over the broadest range of human activities and ideas.¹² Mary del Priore brings this idea to the fore in *Ao sul do corpo: Condição feminina, maternidades e mentalidades no Brasil colônia*: "The biological function of maternity, its social and psycho-affective functions were being transformed throughout this period into a project of the modern state and principally the Church to discipline women in the colony and make them participants in the Christianization of the Indies" (p. 45). Other authors are sometimes less explicit about the process, but many imply that imperial structures and overseas colonies figured prominently in the increase in state power and the more ambitious goals of the state.

Taking the nature of state power as a given or as the locus of repression of the private sphere is more problematical than the historians of mentalités are willing to grant. Giovanni Levi has argued in the context of early modern Italy that such interpretations tend to downplay the role

11. Michel Vovelle has directly addressed the possible relationship between materialist approaches and the history of mentalities. See Vovelle, "Ideologies and Mentalities: A Necessary Clarification," *Ideologies and Mentalities* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 1–13.

12. See the discussion of the "Repressive Hypothesis," in Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, 2d ed. (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 128–33.

of local realities and local powers and to ascribe to the central state a homogenizing ability that it did not possess.¹³ Whatever the validity of this claim for Europe as a whole, recent work on Portugal has raised serious questions about the pace of centralization and the extent of royal power. Antonio Manuel Hespanha has shown that as late as the end of the sixteenth century, royal magistrates (*juizes de fora*) had been appointed in only 10 percent of the municipalities (*conselhos*), which left local governments and interests powerful. The nobility also retained much of its authority and its economic power. In 1640 total seigniorial income nearly equaled that of the Portuguese Crown. As far as the empire was concerned, mid-seventeenth-century taxes on the internal economy (*sisas*) were still generating more income than those levied on exports or overseas trade. Finally, a bureaucratic class had emerged as an alternate power to the crown. The total income of all royal and municipal officials far exceeded that of the major noble houses or bishoprics, with most of this income in emoluments rather than salaries. Thus officialdom, not the crown, was absorbing the social surplus.¹⁴

In concentrating on the sources of income in Portugal, Hespanha probably underestimates the ways in which overseas expansion had already strengthened the crown. But his study, based on a curious combination of German and Italian legal-institutional history and a quantitative study of sources of income among various sectors of Portuguese society, has raised serious questions about the extent and pervasiveness of central authority that make the assumption of concomitant state-directed ideological repression problematic as well. Nevertheless, that supposed repression remains the inherent backdrop for presenting much evidence arising from the new history of mentalities. Such inquiries take on a variety of forms and range from studies of society as a whole of the traditional "life and times" variety to detailed monographs that examine subjects as diverse as religious deviancy and women's bodies.

"Everyday life" has been a popular historical subfield for many years, as evidenced by the continuing publications in Hachette's series *La vie quotidienne*. The attractions and fascination of cultural history or the history of mentalités are readily apparent in Luis Weckmann's study of what he calls "Brazil's medieval heritage," a book paralleling his previous study of Mexico.¹⁵ *La herencia medieval del Brasil* is a grab bag of informa-

13. Giovanni Levi, *Inheriting Power: The Story of an Exorcist*, translated by Lydia G. Cochrane (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 175. A similar argument has been made for France by Robert Muchembled, *Popular Culture and Elite Culture in France, 1400–1750*, translated by Lydia G. Cochrane (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), 312–20.

14. A somewhat modified Spanish edition appeared as *Vísperas del Levantán: Instituciones y poder político (Portugal, siglo XVII)* (Madrid: Taurus Humanidades, 1989).

15. Luis Weckmann, *La herencia medieval de México*, 2 vols. (Mexico City: Colegio de México, 1984); 2d ed. in 1 vol. (Mexico City: Colegio de México, 1993).

tion culled from extensive rereading of the major printed primary sources and secondary literature (some of it outdated) that emphasize the European cultural matrix of Brazilian colonial life. This book might have been subtitled “The Old World in the Tropics” (paraphrasing Gilberto Freyre).

In essence, this book deals with the transference of Portuguese practices, habits, material life, and customs to Brazil. Because Weckmann considers the fifteenth century to be “medieval,” anything brought by the Portuguese in their hands or heads is by his definition *medieval*, a term that seems to have merely a chronological meaning in his analysis. Readers will note that the older Brazilian debates about the feudal or capitalistic origins of the early colonization or about the economic nature of the sugar plantations and the attitudes of the *senhores de engenho* play little part in Weckmann’s consideration of Brazil’s medieval heritage, although a “feudal” explanation emerges by implication.

Such an open-ended definition allows Weckmann to cover an array of interesting and delightful topics—the naming of Brazil, the cult of the Virgin Mary, fishing practices of the colonists—but neither theory nor method imposes any limitation on the topic. George Foster’s *Culture and Contact: America’s Spanish Heritage* long ago provided a more nuanced way of looking at these European cultural transfers. Foster argued that winnowing took place at both ends of the process, with the result being that colonial culture contained many elements from Europe but embedded in a stripped-down and reconstituted colonial variant.¹⁶ What Weckmann does not do is explain the changes in “medieval” practices or institutions in the colony. For example, the town council (*senado da câmara*) was a classic institution in medieval Portugal, but once brought to Brazil, it was stripped for the most part of artisan representation, and the representative board of the major guilds (the Casa de Vinte e Quatro) did not operate. Did this change result from an attempt by the Portuguese Crown or the early lord proprietors to restrict ancient “liberties” or did it reflect the impact of slavery and miscegenation on the status of artisans? Whatever the explanation, the Brazilian version differed from the institution in Portugal, representing the modernization or colonializing of a medieval institution. Similar questions could be raised about the transformation of the *sesmarias* (land grants), dowry practices, the function of the military orders, and a variety of other colonial adaptations. The emphasis on Indian and African elements in Brazilian culture that has predominated in the history of colonial Brazil since Gilberto Freyre’s *Casa grande e senzala* (1933) is reversed by Weckmann. Freyre was also interested in the Portuguese background, but he and others sought to show how the fusion of cultural elements and their transformation resulted in

16. George Foster, *Culture and Conquest: America’s Spanish Heritage* (New York: Wenner-Gren Foundation, 1960).

something distinctive. Weckmann's book is about transferal, not transformation, and is therefore limited to cataloguing and describing.

Similar published primary and secondary materials are sifted by Emanuel Araújo in *O teatro dos vícios: Transgressão e transigência na sociedade urbana colonial*. This book, admittedly modest in its claims, is careful to avoid anything "as insane as a global interpretation of colonial society" (p. 13) but succeeds nonetheless in exploring materials in print for information about everyday life in the colony, the "theater of all the vices." Here the thesis of the dominant state and the almost sanctified position of its leader is set in opposition to a society trained to depend on that state for everything and unable to seek individual fulfillment in working for the welfare of the community. This perspective views the state as a thing apart in conflict with society rather than understanding the state itself as representative of class interests or some portion of them.¹⁷ Araújo draws heavily on travelers' accounts and mixes observations from three centuries somewhat indiscriminately in an account that highlights the negative aspects of colonial society: dirty cities, poor health conditions, prostitution, sexual deviance, the exploitation of slaves—an overall image of Brazil as "the cradle of sloth."¹⁸ The often-cited scandalous but critical poems of Gregório de Matos, the sermons of Padre Antonio Vieira, and the printed records of the two Inquisitorial visits to Bahia and Pernambuco serve as the main sources for this well-written digest of the human frailties of colonial Brazilians. But one finds no organizing principle behind this recounting of Brazil's sins beyond the simple but questionable notion that all these transgressions represented a kind of resistance to established order and the idea that although the laws and expectations were the same in Portugal and Brazil, practice and mentality differed. When the history of mentalities operates at this level, it can entertain and inform, but it will not lead to any better understanding of social formation and change.

No single source has provided more material for the history of mentalities in Brazil in all its dimensions than the records of the Portuguese Inquisition. Earlier generations of historians were limited to the rich materials in the published denunciations and confessions resulting from Inquisitorial visits to Brazil in 1591–1593 and 1618, which can still be mined profitably, as the books by Weckmann and Araújo demonstrate.

17. The author follows Raimundo Faoro, *Os donos do poder: Formação do patronato político brasileiro*, 2d ed., 2 vols. (São Paulo: Globo, 1975; 1st ed. 1958). For a contrasting view of the relation between society and state, see *Everyday Forms of State Formation: Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico*, edited by Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniel Nugent (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1994).

18. Much in this interpretation is reminiscent of Paulo Prado, *Retrato do Brasil: Ensaio sobre a tristeza brasileira*, 6th ed. (Rio de Janeiro: J. Olympio, 1962; originally published 1928). The overwhelming concern with sexuality and its enervating effects is a recurring theme in much Brazilian thought about the national past.

More recently, historians have been conjuring up a new vision of deviance and repression in the colony after examining the actual trial records housed in Lisbon.¹⁹

Anita Novinsky, Brazil's leading historian on the *Cristãos Novos*, now provides a guide to further research by reproducing the entries related to New Christians born or living in Brazil as extracted from the "Rol dos Culpados," a manuscript catalogue of everyone arrested by the Portuguese tribunal from 1605 to the middle of the eighteenth century. *Inquisição, Rol dos Culpados: Fontes para a história do Brasil, século XVIII* contains her listing (with short biographical entries) of more than eighteen hundred individuals. This work showcases the future possibilities for research and the ongoing importance of New Christians in Brazil, especially in Rio de Janeiro and Minas Gerais in the eighteenth century, decades after the persecution supposedly peaked in the previous century. This volume will open new trails for research, despite the fact that the lack of archival designations and locations for those named or even for the *Rol dos Culpados* complicates its use as a guide. Novinsky states that she hopes to publish future volumes on the New Christians of Portugal and those who lived elsewhere. Such a project seems justified because New Christians were the main targets of the Inquisition, although a question can be raised here about the nature of a historiography determined by the crimes in which separate groups of accused become the objects of study in relative isolation from one another.

José Gonçalves Salvador demonstrates the problem inherent in this approach in *Os Cristãos Novos em Minas Gerais durante o ciclo do ouro (1695–1755): Relações com a Inglaterra*, which examines south-central Brazil in the early eighteenth century. His focus is economic rather than social. The objective here seems to be to discover who was and was not a New Christian, a carrier of "Hebrew blood," and to demonstrate these individuals' ubiquity and importance. Salvador's definition of New Christian (which for him is synonymous with Jew) has little to do with self-perception or identity or even with religion: it is essentially the same definition employed by the Inquisitors, one of blood or race. Thus anyone with any New Christian ancestry is included in the group even though by the mid-eighteenth century the original conversion of a long-forgotten ancestor may have occurred two hundred years before. Salvador shows that New Christians were among the first discoverers of gold in Minas and became merchants, miners, slave owners, and landowners throughout Minas and Rio de Janeiro—that is, they were like any other Portuguese emigrants and white Brazilians. His research in Inquisition materials produces much

19. Use of the extensive collection of Portuguese Inquisition materials will be considerably facilitated by a new guide. See Maria do Carmo Jasmims Dias Farinha, *Os arquivos da Inquisição* (Lisbon: Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, 1990).

interesting information, but the relentless need to demonstrate the salience of New Christians leads to exaggeration and misinterpretation. For example, readers cannot take at face value a remark by a traveler named Froger that three-quarters of Rio's population were New Christians, or the assertion by Integralista folklorist Gustavo Barroso (author of such thrillers as *A sinagoga paulista* and editor of the Brazilian edition of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*) that the English ships in the Portuguese slave trade were all owned by Portuguese Jews.²⁰ Salvador flirts with the intriguing idea that the Inquisition's hunt for Judaizers in Minas paralleled the growth of gold production. But given an average of only one or two prosecutions a year by the 1730s, it is difficult to sustain the argument that the Inquisition's activities underlay the decline of Minas Gerais. Above all, despite considerable evidence of the integration of New Christians by marriage, partnership, and association into the Brazilian population as a whole, isolating them from a broader analysis tends to limit rather than expand understanding of their social and political life.

When New Christians, homosexuals, witches, mystics, and others defined by institutions as deviants are studied in such a way that the interconnectedness of their persecution and hence the underlying mental structures and state policies that directed it are obscured, the fragmentation that results complicates synthesis and may even make it harder to achieve a fuller understanding of these social groups. A new generation of Brazilian scholars have launched a reexamination of the colonial past and are questioning the earlier emphasis on economic structures and state power. Yet the problematic relationships among those structures, concomitant power, and individuals' attitudes and ideas remain undefined.

One study that begins to bridge the gap is *Inferno atlântico: Demologia e colonização, séculos XVI–XVIII*, in which Laura de Mello e Souza expands her earlier work on the devil in Brazil to place the country in the broader context of European expansion.²¹ Employing Michel de Certeau's concept of "heterology" and clearly influenced in subject and approach by Carlo Ginzburg, these sophisticated interrelated essays seek to demonstrate the ways in which the early ethnographies of the Americas seemed to provide evidence of Satanic reality and thus helped redefine Old World demonology.²² Little wonder that Huichilopoctli became a

20. Barroso, a folklorist and a Brazilian delegate to the Paris Peace Conference following World War I, wrote a number of anti-Semitic books including *A sinagoga paulista* (Rio de Janeiro: ABC, 1937) and *Judaísmo, maçonaria e comunismo* (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1937). Barroso also served as editor (and defender) of the forged *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. See *Protocolos dos sábios de Sião*, 2d ed. (São Paulo: Minerva, 1936). On Jews in the slave trade in general, see David B. Davis, "The Slave Trade and the Jews," *New York Review of Books*, 22 Dec. 1994, 14–16.

21. Laura de Mello e Souza, *O diabo na terra da Santa Cruz* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1986).

22. Most of the recent studies of witchcraft as well as those seeking to reconstruct micro-

name for the devil in Germany. Like Sabine MacCormack, Mello e Souza demonstrates how European preconceptions of witchcraft and the devil molded the ways in which American practices were perceived, recorded, and extirpated.²³ This interplay between Old World ideas and New World realities was a complex and shifting process.

Mello e Souza suggests ways in which understandings and perceptions related to other aspects of life. She notes in passing the parallel development of demonology and the rise of the centralized state, implying that the demonization of nonorthodox belief and practice was somehow related to the increasing authority and monopoly of power held by the state and the Catholic Church. Sometimes Mello e Souza stretches the metaphors and images of the infernal. Her argument that *degredo* (penal exile) made Brazil a kind of purgatory has a certain metaphoric attraction but is less convincing when one considers the fact that the frontier town of Castro Marim in the Algarve in southern Portugal was the most frequent destination of the *degredados*.²⁴ Sometimes she misses opportunities to draw the relation between mentalities and state even more clearly. For example, Mello e Souza presents a chapter on the sources consulted by the Italian Jesuit Giovanni Botero and his surprising inclusion of information about the syncretic *santidade* cult among the Indians on the Brazilian coast and its implications about the devil's progress. Botero's identity as the author of *Della ragion di stato* (1589), one of the anti-Machiavellian classics of European Catholic statecraft, might have provided opportunities to analyze how his knowledge of Brazil could have influenced his vision of the state and to examine more closely the relationships among Catholic doctrine, the control of popular mentalities, and the rise of state power.²⁵

O inferno atlântico is nonetheless a nuanced and penetrating study of popular religion and elite power that raises as many questions as it answers. The first problem is why, in fact, the devil seemed to make so

histories based on Inquisition materials draw on the work of Carlo Ginzburg, who has been sensitive to the methodological problems inherent in using this kind of documentation. See especially Ginzburg, *Ecstasies: Deciphering the Witches' Sabbath*, translated by Raymond Rosenthal (New York: Pantheon, 1991); and *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method*, translated by John and Anne Tedeschi (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989). See also the exchange among Ginzburg, Edoardo Grendi, and Jacques Revel, "Sulla microhistoria," *Quaderni Storici*, n.s. 86, no. 2 (Aug. 1994):511–75.

23. Sabine MacCormack, *Religion in the Andes: Vision and Imagination in Early Colonial Peru* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991); and Francisco Quevedo, *The Devil in the New World* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1994).

24. See Timothy J. Coates, "Exiles and Orphans: Forced and State-Sponsored Colonization in the Portuguese Empire, 1550–1720," Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 1993, 340–45. See also Jacques Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, translated by Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

25. João Botero, *Da razão de estado*, edited by Luís Reis Torgal, translated from Italian into Portuguese by Raffaella Longobardi Ralha (Coimbra: Instituto Nacional de Investigação Científica, 1992).

little progress in Portugal and by extension in Brazil, or more precisely, why the Catholic Church seemed to pay him so little attention.²⁶ Certainly, the colony with its African and indigenous inhabitants and practices should have provided fertile ground for perceiving witchcraft and the hand of the devil everywhere. But in fact, relatively few cases were prosecuted. In this regard, Brazil resembled its metropolis. A study of the Evora Inquisition demonstrated that between 1547 and 1668, out of the 8,644 people punished by the Holy Office, only 100 were tried for witchcraft, while more than 7,000 (84 percent) were prosecuted for Judaizing.²⁷ Nor was Portugal exceptional in its lack of witchcraft prosecutions. The Aragonese Inquisition prosecuted only one witch out of 2,000 defendants between 1550 and 1600, and after 1610 even charges became rare. Although William Monter may be correct in suggesting that witch prosecutions were expensive and yielded little income, the devil's weakness in Iberia probably stemmed from other causes.²⁸ In comparison with the phenomenon in the rest of Europe, the lack of interest in witches seems to be "an Iberian thing."

Here scholars confront one of the methodological and theoretical problems inherent in any type of social analysis, and especially troublesome in studies according to Inquisition records. Just as conflict creates classes and not the other way round, groups must be studied relationally because their interaction creates society. Concentrating on witches, New Christians, homosexuals, or errant priests—on any one set of accused based on a characteristic ascribed by contemporaries or modern researchers—tends to obscure the Inquisition's program and its overall application of power. Clearly, prosecutions of the various crimes were interrelated. Although one goal was to repress all kinds of deviant behaviors and beliefs, a hierarchy of control existed regarding the severity of perceived threats to the social order. For example, although the Evora tribunal alone prosecuted 7,000 New Christians, all the Portuguese tribunals combined arrested only 447 sodomites up to 1768.²⁹ For the Evora Inquisition, the most intense period of witch-hunting followed the general pardon extended to New Christians in 1547. In Portugal and Brazil in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the primary targets of repression were the New Christians. The number of trials and the comparative severity of punishment meted out to them makes their primacy obvious, and as Anita Novinsky demonstrates, they continued to be a major con-

26. The best modern study is Francisco Bethencourt, *O imaginário da magia: Feiticeiras, saudadores e nigromantes no século XVI* (Lisbon: Projeto Universidade Aberta, 1987).

27. Antonio Borges Coelho, *Inquisição de Evora*, 2 vols. (Lisbon: Caminho, 1987).

28. William Monter, *Frontiers of Heresy: The Spanish Inquisition from the Basque Lands to Sicily* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 255–76.

29. Luiz Mott, "Justitia et misericordia: A Inquisição portuguesa e a repressão ao nefando pecado de sodomia," in *Inquisição: Ensaios sobre a mentalidade, heresias e arte*, edited by Anita Novinsky and Maria Luiza Tucci Carneiro (São Paulo: EDUSP, 1992), 703–38.

cern of the Holy Office well into the eighteenth century.³⁰ How this program influenced the perception and treatment of other forms of behavior defined as deviant is a story that historians of mentalities need to address. It is also the approach that will facilitate their understanding of state power, class relations, ideologies, and the material basis of society.

Demonization of others was not reserved for colonial subordinates. Since late antiquity, women had been viewed as effective agents of evil and sin.³¹ In *Ao sul do corpo: Condição feminina, maternidades e mentalidades no Brasil colônia*, Mary del Priore envisions the bodies of women in colonial Brazil as a battlefield on which official ideologies, popular attitudes, and state projects struggled. The prescribed role of women as mothers and their reproductive function are the volume's central focus, although aspects of sexuality, marriage, and illness are also examined. For documentation, Priore drew primarily on the Arquivo da Cúria Metropolitana de São Paulo and even more on medical and theological treatises, from which she carefully culled misogynistic ideas.

The results are fascinating. A religious ideology that cast women in the role as "sainted mother" found little space for feminine sexuality, especially outside of a sanctioned marriage that awarded women a place in society. Women's primary role was procreative, but whether they served simply as receptacles for semen or had in fact some effect on the nature of their children was a matter of dispute, at least among medical writers. Female sexuality was closely associated with sin and *luxúria* (lechery), which led easily to sickness. Priore's chapter on the "*madre*" (vagina and uterus) and its secrets, enchantments, and dangers in popular thinking and learned discourses shows just how far this kind of historical research can depart from the paradigms that have predominated in the historiography on Brazil.

Priore's approach raises one of the central theoretical issues in the history of mentalities, the problem identified by Mikhail Bakhtin: what is the relationship between learned culture and subaltern cultures? To what extent is popular culture a form of resistance, and how can historians get to it at all when it is always filtered through written sources and thus

30. The relatively few executions ordered by the Inquisition out of the large number of persons arrested has led to a somewhat benign interpretation of the Holy Office by some modern historians. The problem should be studied, however, in terms of the ratio of executions to arrests in comparison with the parallel ratio in the civil courts. Timothy Coates has suggested that capital punishment was extremely rare in the Portuguese civil courts, which favored *degredo* (exile), and that in comparison, the Holy Office was far more stringent, especially toward Judaizers. See Coates, "Exiles and Orphans," 35–72. Antonio Manuel Hespanha argues that between 1600 and 1800, only about two people per year were executed but that the rate of capital punishment was much higher in the eighteenth century than in the seventeenth. See Hespanha, "De *iustitia a disciplina*," *La gracia del derecho: Economía de la cultura en la edad moderna* (Madrid: Centro de Estudios Constitucionales, 1993), 213–16.

31. Jean Delumeau, *Le peur en Occident* (Paris: Fayard, 1978), 398–449.

corrupted?³² In *Ao sul do corpo*, historians are presented with a considerable amount of fascinating misogynist medical and theological literature on women's sexuality and bodies, but almost all of this material was published in Portugal and usually by men who had never even been to Brazil. Priore produces little evidence to demonstrate that Brazilians actually believed many of these ideas. Certainly, Inquisition materials have demonstrated that much of what theologians were teaching about the relative value of chastity, the cult of the saints, the souls of Indians, and the nature of sin was simply not accepted. There is equally good reason to suspect that what the learned doctors said about women's bodies was also doubted or filtered and reformulated. Similar studies on other areas in the early modern era in which sources recorded the opinions of patients have revealed that they maintained an understanding of their bodies and a discourse on the subject quite different from the learned ones.³³ Priore did not have this kind of information available to her. Although she makes an effort to use travelers accounts, Inquisition materials, and documents from the ecclesiastical court of São Paulo along with medical and religious tracts, the lack of evidence about the acceptance of many of these ideas is noticeable. The two source types, learned tracts and local evidence, do not fully complement each other, as revealed in the fact that different parts of the book are based on one or the other. Priore tried to fill the gaps in the medical and theological literature on Brazil and Portugal by citing parallel studies from France, a tactic that is suggestive but ultimately unsatisfying. Above all, the inability to examine the disparity between popular attitudes (especially those of women) and published opinions on these issues demonstrates the difficulty of undertaking the history of mentalities and the centrality of the "Bakhtinian problem."

Finally, although Priore provides leads, she does not explore the ways in which increasing control over women's bodies accompanied the rise of the state or how the colonial milieu might have made this process different in Brazil than it was in Portugal. Bakhtin might have been a relevant point of reference here too because his emphasis on the lack of restraint in popular carnivals seems to indicate popular contestation of

32. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1968). See also the discussion in Serge Gruzinski and Solange Alberro, *Introducción a la historia de las mentalidades*, INAH Cuadernos de Trabajo no. 24 (Mexico City: Departamento de Investigaciones Históricas, INAH, 1979), 25–40. Muchembled argues for the emergence of "mass culture," an elite-dominated and -produced culture for the masses designed to replace popular culture and to reinforce the existing political and social order. See Muchembled, *Popular Culture and Elite Culture in France*, 279–311.

33. See, for example, Gianna Pomata, *La promessa di Guarigione: Malati e curatori in antico regime*, Bologna, xvi–xviii secolo (Rome: Laterza, 1994), 247–87; and Barbara Duden, *The Woman beneath the Skin: A Doctor's Patients in Eighteenth-Century Germany* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991). Compare Jacques Gélis, *History of Childbirth: Fertility, Pregnancy, and Birth in Early Modern Europe* (Boston, Mass.: Northeastern University Press, 1991).

the growing power of central authority and its increasing efforts to control its subjects' bodies.³⁴ *Ao sul do corpo* moves instead toward the particular history of women rather than in the direction of general history, linking the history of the body, specifically women's bodies, to their use as political symbols and the "transmitters of political intentions and actions" at a time when the image of the organic body politic was being used less and less.³⁵

Although the women remain mostly silent in *Ao sul do corpo*, exceptional women did emerge at times in the public sphere. One of the few ways that women could gain popular recognition and be heard was as mystics and visionaries. The church did not deny this role, although ecclesiastical authorities were always wary of such claimants. The Portuguese Inquisition punished at least thirty *embusteiras* (phony visionaries) in the eighteenth century, and in a multiracial slave society like Brazil, authorities were especially sensitive to any possible disruption of the existing order. The stories of these visionaries and their reception can provide views into social structures and mentalities that when done with skill and perception bring to life even the most despised marginal groups and individuals.

One such study is *Rosa Egipcíaca: Uma santa africana no Brasil* by Luiz Mott. This remarkable biography recounts the life of a remarkable African girl brought to Brazil as a slave in the early eighteenth century, deflowered by her master, and forced into prostitution. She was then led by divine inspiration or astute self-construction, with the help of a manipulative confessor, into a life of sanctity as a *beata* and a mystic. Despite being persecuted and punished by ecclesiastical authorities, she was eventually revered widely by the populace of eighteenth-century Rio. Although Rosa founded a *recolhimento* (retreat) for women and wrote a theological treatise, her claims of sanctity and her self-proclaimed role as a wet-nurse to Jesus finally occasioned her arrest by the Inquisition and her eventual examination by the Lisbon tribunal. Rosa disappeared from the historical record in 1765, the outcome of her trial and her final years still unknown.

Mott narrates in painstaking detail the amazing biography of Rosa based on two Inquisition investigations and fifty-five of her letters from the prosecution's file. He also uses her life as a vehicle for discussing the society and mental structures of eighteenth-century Brazil, never losing

34. Dorinda Outram presents a discussion of the differing positions taken by Michel Foucault and Norbert Elias on the rise of the state and the repression of the body. See Outram, *The Body and the French Revolution: Sex, Class, and Political Culture* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989), 6–26. See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, translated by Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon, 1977); and Norbert Elias, *Power and Civility: The Civilizing Process*, translated by Edmund Jephcott (New York: Pantheon, 1982).

35. Dorinda Outram, *The Body and the French Revolution*, 21.

sight of the slave-based and multiracial nature of that society. *Rosa Egipcíaca* is as overflowing as the art and architecture of baroque Minas Gerais and Rio de Janeiro, where the biography is set. Digressions are many, some of them long: the diet and eating schedule of the nuns in Rio de Janeiro (pp. 444–45), the role of saliva in colonial Brazil (pp. 461–62), and many other details included as context or background to the story of Rosa. Mott also visited most of the places mentioned and describes in detail the buildings and locations that served as backdrops. In some ways, the book is as much about Mott's odyssey as about Rosa's. The descriptions and digressions, drawing on sources ranging from nineteenth-century travelers to Mott's maid, provide color, charm, and fascinating detail. Their overall effect, however, is to produce a rich but long and somewhat meandering volume.

Even more distracting is the author's moralistic tone, especially on issues of sexuality and personal freedom, although there is no reason for surprise here. Mott, a distinguished Brazilian anthropologist and ethnohistorian, has long been a leading and vocal advocate of gay rights in Brazil. The significance of this background in the present context is that Mott's preoccupation with sexuality and its control is a key he uses effectively to open up the inner workings of religion and life in colonial Brazil, but occasionally it becomes an intrusive theme that he stresses to criticize repression past and present. Although responses to this kind of approach are admittedly a matter of preference, I find the conflation of a political program with historical analysis and description more of a distraction than a contribution. Still, for readers who can stand the preaching, a great deal can be learned from *Rosa Egipcíaca* as Mott shifts incessantly among his various topics: Rosa's life story, popular beliefs, church doctrine, and the reactions of those in authority.

What often makes the study of mentalités of colonial Brazil so difficult for modern researchers is the profoundly Catholic context in which they operated. Even for the skeptics, nonpractitioners, devil-worshippers, Africans, New Christians, and syncretists, the whole Brazilian context of belief and the world of the mind were suffused with the codes and images of Catholic doctrine and practice. Although belief is not a requirement, our modern secular vision provides little help in comprehending this worldview, and our training as historians is often peculiarly lacking in the preparation needed for such studies. The field of colonial Latin American intellectual history, long the most arcane and obscurantist of fields, has only recently been reborn as Catholic theology has been reexamined in relation to the perception of indigenous cultures and the ways in which it molded their transformation or was reincorporated into them.³⁶ What Mott does perhaps better than any other modern historian

36. For some recent examples, see MacCormack, *Religion in the Andes*; Carmen Bernard

of Brazil is to describe the everyday workings of Brazilian popular Catholicism: the founding of convents (p. 200); the story of Santa Egipcíaca (p. 168); the popularity of the cult of Santana (p. 502); the nature of Franciscan sanctity (p. 230); and the spread of the eighteenth-century cult of the *Sagrada Coração de Jesus* (p. 313). Mott's discussions demonstrate some of the greatest strengths of the history of mentalities but also exemplify its potential for the curious and the strange to push other significant themes into the background.

Despite the considerable misogyny of early modern Iberian societies, the role of religious guide and visionary sometimes moved women into positions of considerable influence. Rosa Egipcíaca might have achieved the success and authority of Santa Rosa de Lima or Santa Teresa de Avila and been celebrated with sainthood, but instead she suffered the same fate as the Madrileña Lucrecia de León—repression and eventual obscurity.³⁷ Rosa Egipcíaca's visions became excessive and her assertions heretical. Church authorities could not accept her claims that Christ would be reborn from her body, that she would be the bride of the Holy Trinity, that her home for women would be the new Noah's ark, or that she was God. Mott argues that as a black female former slave and prostitute who became popularly acclaimed, this woman threatened too many aspects of the social and racial order and therefore had to be controlled and silenced. Thus Mott never loses sight of the social and economic context in which Rosa lived. What he does not emphasize, however, is that the increasing control of popular ecstatic religion by ecclesiastical authority was not limited to colonial situations but became a general trend in Catholicism following the Council of Trent.

Mott's study as well as those of Priore and Mello e Souza place mental structures at center stage and often make what was considered deviant behavior the subject of analysis, but they do not reject or overturn the more traditional historiography that has described Brazil as a slave-based, export-oriented colonial society. These three books have not taken the "linguistic turn" that focuses on what was said and how rather than on what was done, and even the works by Priore and Mott in which questions of gender figure prominently are in no way "awkwardly con-

and Serge Gruzinski, *De l'idolatrie: Une archéologie des sciences religieuses* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1988); and *La venida del reino: Religión, evangelización y cultura en América*, edited by Gabriela Ramos (Cuzco: Centro de Estudios Regionales Andinos "Bartolomé de las Casas," 1994).

37. See Richard Kagan, *Lucrecia's Dreams: Politics and Prophecy in Sixteenth-Century Spain* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990); Jean Franco, *Plotting Women: Gender and Representation in Mexico* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), especially "Writers in Spite of Themselves: The Mystical Nuns of Seventeenth-Century Mexico," 3–22. On visionary women more generally and the Catholic Church's reaction, see Jesús de Imirizaldu, *Monjas y beatas embaucadoras* (Madrid: Editora Nacional, 1977); and Luis Sánchez Lora, *Mujeres, conventos y formas de la religiosidad barroca* (Madrid: Fundación Universitaria Española, 1988).

nected to the central concerns” of their field. They remain wedded to traditional concepts of historical analysis and to the image of colonial Brazil as it has developed over the last half century.³⁸ The sizable contribution of the historians of mentalities in Brazil has been to expand the focus of inquiry and thus enrich previous social and economic understandings. The tasks of examining exactly how popular ideas influenced the actions and policies of authority and how and under what conditions the private and public spheres interacted remain to be tackled. Such studies need not be limited to subordinated groups, marginal topics, or the dark backstreets of social life. Ultimately, all questions of class relations and economic behavior rest on mental structures—or is it the other way around? Even in Fragoso and Florentino’s political and economic analysis, the ways in which the aristocratic ideals of the mercantile elite affected their economic behavior become a key to understanding the operation of the colonial system. The dynamic relationship between the ways in which individuals perceive and describe their world and the material conditions of their existence—the old debate over structure versus superstructure—is not easily clarified, but it should make the history of mentalities an essential aspect of social history in Brazil as elsewhere.

38. Compare Joan W. Scott, “On Language, Gender, and Working-Class History,” *International Labor and Working-Class History* 31 (Spring 1987):1–13. See also Kathleen Canning, “Feminist History after the Linguistic Turn: Historicizing Discourse and Experience,” *Signs* 19, no. 2 (Winter 1994):368–404.