

countries, broadening awareness of their work, and pointing out directions for future researchers to follow.

Karen Racine

University of Guelph

JOANNE RAPPAPORT: *The Disappearing Mestizo: Configuring Difference in the Colonial New Kingdom of Granada*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2014.

Whether and how race shaped social hierarchy in colonial Latin America has provoked hot debate among generations of historians and anthropologists. A consensus has emerged that the modern concept of race does not map onto notions of difference in the early modern Iberian World. Instead, economic, legal, and cultural markers, including caste, *calidad* (quality), purity of blood, lineage, honor, and gender combined to shape a person's place in colonial society. With *The Disappearing Mestizo* Joanne Rappaport synthesizes decades of scholarship and contributes fresh insight through a case study of the Kingdom of New Granada. She focuses on the category "mestizo," arguing that since people labeled as such had no group identity or obligations to the Crown as did Indians, Spaniards, Africans, and mulattos, they tended to disappear into the social groups proximate to them. Rappaport argues convincingly that in this regard, the category "mestizo" is ideal for exploring the construction of difference and malleability of identity in colonial Latin America.

A signal contribution of Rappaport's work is its interdisciplinarity. In the first three chapters of the book, which treat the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, she approaches the historical record in an ethnographic vein. Privileging depth over breadth, she carves from official records and a compendium of elite genealogies vignettes of individual lives, which were at one point or another defined as "mestizo." She approaches these stories as spaces of interpretation in which to trace how a person's identity unfolded over time depending on social context. In Chapter 1, she tells the story of members of the urban elite whose classifications changed, from Moor to Spanish *encomendero*, or daughter of Spanish conquistador, to "*mestiza en hábito de india*." Rappaport details the social circumstances that allowed for the "passing" of these figures from one classification to another. Lineage and nobility figure prominently in these narratives of changing identities. In Chapter 2, Rappaport moves to the countryside to explore the contours of rural plebeian mestizo identity, and to ask whether we can conceive of mestizos as a distinct sociological group. She concludes that

we cannot. Relying on records of parish inspections in the absence of census data on mestizos, she finds that when mestizos appeared in the official record, they were embedded in social networks, whether Indian communities, migrant Indians, or plebeian Spaniards. Their fragmented stories suggest the ways in which they incorporated themselves and “disappeared” into supposedly bounded social groups. In chapter 3, Rappaport moves back to the élite urban context to examine the gendered dimensions of mestizo identity, arguing that mestizo men faced greater obstacles to social mobility than did mestiza women due to Iberian notions of honor and blood purity. In short, mestizas could “marry up” without sully the honor of their Spanish husbands, whereas mestizos could not, since family honor was identified primarily with the male head of household.

Rappaport’s method in the second half of the book will be more familiar to historians. She takes the insights gleaned from her earlier chapters and applies them to larger documentary corpuses, and situates individual lives within broader historical processes. Chapter 4 analyzes the strategies of identification used by don Alonso de Silva and don Diego de Torres, mestizo *caciques* who claimed legitimate inheritance to their respective *cacicazgos*, and waged legal battles with the region’s *encomenderos*. Their lawsuits take on special import in the context of imperial efforts to reform the institution of the *encomienda* following the promulgation of the New Laws in 1542. In contrast with the élite urban mestizos of earlier chapters who sought to move into Spanish society, Silva and Torres used their Spanish identity and cultural knowledge, especially legal literacy and Catholic piety, to claim that they were ideally suited to rule according to Spanish norms of good governance. At the same time, they mobilized their indigenous *Muisca* identity to claim their *cacicazgos* based on the Muisca practice of matrilineal inheritance. They never referred to themselves as mestizos, but their Spanish *encomendero* opponents did, using the term as an epithet to contest their right to rule in the republic of Indians. Chapter 5 tests the importance of phenotype in imperial social hierarchy by analyzing classificatory practices that combined descriptions of peoples’ appearance alongside caste categories in dozens of documents granting permission for individuals to travel from Spain to the Nuevo Reino. Rappaport finds that in keeping with the early modern science of physiognomy, physical description focusing on a range of features -- glossed as “aspect” -- played a greater role in determining people’s status than did caste classification or phenotype. Chapter 6 analyzes demographic data from secondary literature, much of it produced by Colombian scholars, that charts a mestizo population boom during the eighteenth century. Rappaport argues that the colonial officials who collected the data struggled to distinguish between Indians and non-Indians, suggesting that native communities had become more open over the colonial period than closed and corporate. She also finds that in

contrast with colonial Mexico where the “caste system” became increasingly significant and racial boundaries hardened over the eighteenth century, in the Nuevo Reino, social conditions were more fluid.

Rappaport’s study is impressive on many fronts. She constantly tests her findings for New Granada against the thick scholarship on Spanish America’s core regions, especially Mexico and the central and southern Andes. Her comparative approach makes a case for the historical specificities of the Nuevo Reino, cautioning scholars not to apply a single model of social hierarchy and difference to all of Spanish America. Her contrapuntal movement between urban and rural, and elite and plebeian contexts demonstrates the dynamic relationship among institutions, social networks, and historical context and contingency in shaping colonial social relations and identities. In doing so, she challenges assumptions about and historicizes the meaning of “mestizo,” a concept that has been central to the making of national identities in Latin America. Rappaport’s engaging vignettes, which animate individual lives while probing their broader meaning, and her conversational style, which guides readers through her interpretive method, will make *The Disappearing Mestizo* appealing to students and scholars alike.

Yanna Yannakakis

Emory University