

PATRICIA PINHO: *Mama Africa: Reinventing Africanness in Bahia*. Translated by Elena Langdon. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.

This translation of Patricia Pinho's *Mama Africa* is a timely and welcome addition to the scholarship on racial identity in Brazil and will be useful as an English-language teaching resource in courses about Brazil, race, and the Atlantic World. Instructors might consider its adoption in contexts where they have also employed Kim Butler's *Freedoms Given, Freedoms Won*, though the study is wholly based on experiences in Bahia.

Mama Africa draws readers into a discussion of the nature of race as a cultural and social construct, and focuses on the politics of renegotiating racial identity that have gained speed and visibility in Brazil. While the book does offer background on the history of negotiating racial identity in Brazil, with particular attention to the articulation of Africanness and blackness in Bahia in the 1970s, *Mama Africa* centers on the contemporary politics of racial identity, looking in particular at the historical crossroads in Brazil where "becoming black" (11) is a growing and controversial phenomenon.

Pinho recognizes Brazil's racialization as a political process, one closely tethered to social movements that seek remedies for discrimination and pursue mechanisms to promote racial integration, such as quotas and affirmative action programs in hiring and university admissions. These politics of identity and redress have understandably created polarized camps of advocates and opponents, and Pinho does an even-handed job of outlining the rationales that undergird the dimensions of the debate. At one end is a belief that the assertion of racial identities undermines the gauzy and empty promises of racial democracy, bringing visibility to inequalities that must be remedied. At the other end is a concern that racialization is a dangerous process that could create a reality of racial differences that might deepen social divisions and do violence to the more complex and organic construction of identity in Brazil. Pinho rightly dismisses some of the more garish outliers in this debate, such as Ali Kamel's *Não somos racistas* ("We Are Not Racists"), which rejects out of hand any notion that racial inequality exists in Brazil. But readers might wish for more guidance from Pinho in understanding the logic of this debate and the ways in which it is shaped by the construction of "African" and "black" identities that she analyzes.

Central to Pinho's analysis is the notion that race serves as a barrier, either a barrier imposed from the outside—"race" is, above all, the result of racism" (218)—or from within, as a means of asserting difference, building community, or advancing a political project. Both cases reinforce the notion that race is a fiction, albeit a socially significant one that is the product of multiple kinds of investments. Pinho wonders whether contemporary racial politics paradoxically

serve to reinforce divisions that have historically reproduced inequalities. Pinho explains: “As long as they are informed by raciology, the strategies employed by oppressed groups to elevate the self-esteem of children and youth will contribute to the goal of enhancing identity boundaries rather than overcoming racial barriers. As a result, identity projects continue to set groups apart from one another, further distancing them from the prospect of an inclusive understanding” (141). There is an important question here: if some people embrace a fixed racial identity as a means for seeking redress, might that reinforce differences that negatively affect other people? We must consider another question as well: are these barriers nonetheless negotiable? Proponents of fixed black identities suggest that their approach challenges and moves boundaries that are already present.

Pinho’s study draws readers deep into the well of contemporary debate on race in Brazil, highlighting the complexity and political significance of identity. Speaking of identity, I should note the renegotiation of my own identity in the book, where I am twice identified as “Jeffrey Dávila,” perhaps conflating my own identity with that of another historian of Brazil. I am grateful to be associated with such an eminent scholar, but nonetheless reassert my Jerryness.

In closing, though, this is a sharp study and an able translation that should hold an important place in the tools available for helping students outside Brazil understand that country’s fascinating politics of racial identity. It can most profitably be employed alongside other texts that might help contextualize its subject and approach, such as Edward Telles’ *Race in Another America*. Indeed, taken together, they illustrate the complexity and significance of understanding a phenomenon that is simultaneously a fictive cultural construction and yet a powerful social force.

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IGNACY SACHS, JORGE WILHEIM, and PAULO SÉRGIO PINHEIRO (eds.): *Brazil: A Century of Change*. Translated by Robert N. Anderson with a forward by Jerry Dávila. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009.

Brazil: A Century of Change is a collection of fourteen essays on Brazilian politics and socioeconomic development, including a foreword by Jerry Dávila, a translator’s note by Robert N. Anderson, and a preface by the volume’s editors. The original volume, published in 2001 at the end of Fernando Henrique Cardoso’s second term as president of Brazil, was conceived as a collection of thematic essays examining Brazil’s historical development over the course of the twentieth century. Dávila’s well-written foreword provides needed context