

NOT THE REPUBLIC OF
THEIR DREAMS:
Historical Obstacles to Political and
Social Democracy in Brazil

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BLACKS AND WHITES IN SÃO PAULO, BRAZIL, 1888–1988. By George Reid Andrews. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991. Pp. 369. \$47.50 cloth, \$17.50 paper.)

MILLENARIAN VISION, CAPITALIST REALITY: BRAZIL'S CONTESTADO REBELLION, 1912–1916. By Todd A. Diacon. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1991. Pp. 199. \$42.50 cloth, \$16.95 paper.)

PATRONAGE AND POLITICS IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY BRAZIL. By Richard Graham. (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1990. Pp. 382. \$39.50.)

VALE OF TEARS: REVISITING THE CANUDOS MASSACRE IN NORTHEASTERN BRAZIL, 1893–1897. By Robert M. Levine. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992. Pp. 353. \$45.00.)

As has been true elsewhere in Latin America, the era of good feelings generated by the campaign for democratization and transition to civilian rule in Brazil proved to be a brief one. During the actual transfer of power, social scientists focused on novel forms of popular political expression and organization that seemed to herald a new political culture for Brazil in the aftermath of military rule. Historians in Brazil and the United States, however, have rarely been able to find cause for optimism in the Brazilian past, which contains few elements of hope for a more egalitarian and democratic future.¹ The particularly gloomy tone of recent works thus seems perfectly congruent with the current situation in Brazil, where traditional networks of patronage and influence, racial prejudice, and various forms of institutional and noninstitutional violence have survived the

1. One partial exception is the labor historiography. For instance, both John French and Joel Wolfe, despite otherwise divergent perspectives, emphasize the democratic aspects of earlier labor activism. See French, *The Brazilian Workers' ABC: Class Conflict and Alliances in Modern São Paulo* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992); and Wolfe, *Working Women, Working Men: São Paulo and the Rise of Brazil's Industrial Working Class, 1900–1955* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1993).

“transition” intact. Moreover, a prolonged economic recession and an unprecedented wave of government scandals have compounded a situation that offers scholars of Brazilian history little to celebrate.

There is nothing new about historians searching for origins or explanations of contemporary problems in the distant or non-so-distant past. Earlier scholarly generations assumed that one could explain contemporary dilemmas by referring to the most distant cultural traditions or social or structural formations. And throughout the military dictatorship, scholars trained their sights on the Vargas regime of the 1930s as a potential source of such problems as authoritarianism, manipulation of labor unions, and the suppression of alternative projects for economic development.²

More recently, attention has shifted to the era of the First Republic (1889–1930), as historians have increasingly sought the moment of “original sin,” the seeds of authoritarian modernization, in the transition to republican rule. This trend may be due in part to recent commemorations of the republican centennial but may also reflect the stimulating effect of recent works by distinguished Brazilian historians. In particular, the work of José Murilo de Carvalho has recast many of the debates about the Brazilian Empire and the First Republic and set the tone for a critical reevaluation of republican rule.³ Diverging from an earlier view of the republic as flawed but a step forward from the archaic imperial regime, this literature focuses on the republic as the source of Brazil’s wholesale devotion to modernization without democratization (whether social or political). These analyses cite the era as a key juncture for the penetration of foreign economic influence due to the indiscriminate desire of local elites for economic “progress,” and they emphasize the racism of republican elites, for whom Brazil’s people of color were automatic impediments to modernity. In the heyday of the Old Republic, one of its founders confessed that “this is not the republic of my dreams.”⁴ Although for somewhat different reasons, the same could be said by historians who have recorded and analyzed the key events of the republican period.

2. The most influential examples are Luiz Werneck Vianna, *Liberalismo e Sindicato no Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1976); Marilena Chauí, “Apontamentos para uma Crítica da Ação Integralista Brasileira,” in Chauí and M. S. Carvalho Franco, *Ideologia e Mobilização Popular* (Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1978), 17–149; and Edgar Salvadori de Decca, *1930: O Silêncio dos Vencidos* (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1981).

3. José Murilo de Carvalho’s works include *A Construção da Ordem: A Elite Política Imperial* (Rio de Janeiro: Campus, 1980); *Os Bestializados: O Rio de Janeiro e a República que Não Foi* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1987); *Teatro de Sombras: A Política Imperial* (Rio de Janeiro: IUPERJ/Vértice, 1988); *A Formação das Almas: O Imaginário da República no Brasil* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1990).

4. Attributed to Martinho Prado da Silva Júnior (1891), in Murilo de Carvalho, *A Formação das Almas*, 52. Even more severe was the judgment pronounced by Alberto Torres two decades later: “This State has no nationality; this country is not a society; these people are not a populace. Our men are not citizens.” *Ibid.*, 33.

Operating according to an ahistorical ideal of an inclusive, nonracist, and genuinely democratic republic, they have judged the Old Republic as flawed and to have actively exacerbated the social, political, and economic problems inherited from the empire.⁵

Three of the four monographs under review here can be placed, with some qualifications, within this historiographical current. All three focus on the republican period as a key antidemocratic moment in Brazilian history and stress the ways in which the search for “order and progress” marginalized the poor and the nonwhite. Moreover, on the rare occasions that these subaltern groups asserted their rights or autonomy, they elicited only a repressive response from the republican state. The fourth monograph, Richard Graham’s study of political patronage under the empire, challenges and refines some of the assumptions underlying this historiographical trend. His arguments, indeed the very questions that he poses, differ considerably, but he is addressing many of the same issues from another angle. Therefore, although Graham’s study deals with an earlier period, I will violate the historian’s usual chronological bias and leave his book for last.

Two of the texts under review, Robert Levine’s study of Canudos and Todd Diacon’s study of the Contestado Rebellion, represent provocative and innovative contributions to the literature on millenarian movements, long a source of fascination for Brazilian historians. Their common subject also provides especially fertile opportunities for exploring the objectives and the shortcomings of the Old Republic in that each narrative focuses on a group of relatively innocuous religious acolytes, cut adrift by changing social and economic circumstances, who were violently suppressed by a brutal but singularly inept military machine. In these accounts, the Old Republic emerges as racist, repressive, and ineffective even by its own lights.

Levine’s *Vale of Tears: Revisiting the Canudos Massacre in Northeastern Brazil, 1893–1897* is the more ambitious undertaking in seeking to revise the historical view of Canudos, a millenarian community immortalized in Euclides da Cunha’s classic account, *Os Sertões*.⁶ Levine takes da Cunha as the point of departure, showing how his work, despite its unusual insight and marked ambivalence, reflected the *visão do litoral* that pervaded Brazil’s urban elites. Da Cunha adopted a “dualist view of

5. In *Os Bestializados*, Murilo de Carvalho contends that with the transition to the First Republic, “one can say that there was even a regression in the realm of social rights,” and that the so-called republican reforms “had the result of delivering power even more directly into the hands of the dominant sectors” (p. 45).

6. A leading text in the Brazilian literary canon, da Cunha’s *Os Sertões* was published in English translation as *Rebellion in the Backlands*, translated by Samuel Putnam (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1944). More recently, Canudos has been subjected to the literary imagination of Mario Vargas Llosa in *The War of the End of the World*, translated by Helen R. Lane (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1984).

Brazilian society as irrevocably divided between the archaic primitivism of the backlands and the progressive culture of the coastal cities." And despite da Cunha's grudging respect for the rural peasants, he nonetheless "accepted the prevailing belief that they were racially inferior" (p. 60). Levine devotes considerable space to this "vision" because he views it as crucial for understanding the extreme (and allegedly irrational) response of the political and intellectual elites to the Canudos movement.

Levine moves next into a dense description of backlands society. Yet he does not propose a *visão do sertão* as a counterpart to the *visão do litoral*, perhaps because documentation on backlands culture and values is relatively sparse or because he is hesitant to homogenize diverse perspectives into a single vision. More likely, Levine considers the coastal elites as modern political actors influenced by broader ideological and cultural trends, while the backlanders are viewed as simply "living." Their nonhegemonic values and cultural attributes do not add up to a coherent ideological "vision," although at several points Levine hints that if Canudos had been allowed to evolve unharassed, it might have produced one. Readers are guided instead by the perspective of the sympathetic historian or outsider.

Throughout *Vale of Tears*, Levine is self-consciously setting the record straight, carefully correcting erroneous assumptions about Canudos and the government campaign against the settlement, many of them directly attributable to da Cunha's masterpiece. This emendation at times entails a simple revision of details, such as Levine's revelation of the much larger number of survivors than da Cunha acknowledged. In other instances, it involves a closer and calmer reading of the sources. For example, Levine tries to reconstruct the theology of Antônio Conselheiro, the founder and spiritual leader of Canudos, through the texts he was known to use and firsthand accounts of his preaching. Levine argues that these materials reveal a lay preacher who stayed well within accepted Christian precepts and backlands religious traditions, not a crazed fanatic promoting heretical or fantastic religious claims.

Levine's approach is so eclectic that it is not always clear which elements are most crucial to his analysis of the Canudos movement. His study draws from the work of virtually every major scholar who has written on millenarianism, including some whose work directly contradicts the others. Factors encouraging messianism in the Northeast are often presented with no indication of their respective importance. Yet certain themes recur in *Vale of Tears* and emerge, through repetition and sequencing, as the core of Levine's argument. First, he wants to emphasize that Canudos was not a rebellion but rather a peaceful and rational response to extreme hardship and disorientation caused by deteriorating conditions in the backlands and dramatic political changes throughout Brazil. The purpose of the community was not to subvert the political or

economic order but to provide a haven for devout Christians seeking a place offering spiritual support and minimal material conditions for survival. As such, it attracted followers from a wide range of social and ethnic backgrounds.

In contrast, the republican government and the elites that supported it are depicted as being highly irrational in their responses. Given the innocuous character of Canudos as portrayed by Levine, one could hardly regard the government's response as rational at any level. In this regard, he does not really diverge from da Cunha, who also concluded that the government acted in a barbaric manner, which for da Cunha was equivalent to irrationality. But the author of *Os Sertões* regarded the backlanders, too, as acting irrationally, and it is on this point that Levine challenges the "Euclidean" perspective.

While Levine's sympathetic approach is much more palatable to the contemporary reader than da Cunha's often unbridled racism and condescension, the limits of the rationality argument should be considered. How rational was it to condemn the republic as the anti-Christ out of fear (as Levine claims) that civil marriage laws would make religious unions invalid and their offspring illegitimate? How rational was it to continue an armed defense of Canudos once it became clear that the government was deeply committed to dispersing the community? My point is not to argue that the Canudenses should have acted differently but that "rationality" (whether in the objective or radically relativistic sense) may not be the most illuminating criterion for understanding their responses.

The same applies when looking at the government's reactions. Readers are told repeatedly that the coastal elites' racism and misinterpretation of backlands culture led them to overestimate the threat from Canudos. Again, it seems safe to say that the Canudenses had neither the means nor any serious intention of overthrowing the republic. Yet this interpretation implies that a "rational" state resorts to violence or repression only when faced with a potentially lethal threat to its existence. If such a test were applied, virtually every state would have to be labeled irrational because governments routinely crush or disband communities that challenge or reject state authority without actually threatening the state's survival. Recent events have provided a similar, if not perfectly analogous, example involving a government considerably more sensitive to individual rights than the First Brazilian Republic.⁷ Here again, framing the issue by using the rational-irrational dichotomy does not seem to

7. I am referring here to David Koresh and the Branch Davidians. Despite substantial differences between the two incidents, the threat posed by the cult in Waco, Texas (however unsavory its practices might have been) also seems insufficient to explain in purely "rational" terms why the state adopted a strategy that was likely to leave many dead, including young children.

elucidate the reasons why states consistently feel compelled to move against millenarian communities, often with tragic results.

Todd Diacon's study of the Contestado Rebellion is more narrowly focused and tightly argued than Levine's study. Rather than developing a broad characterization of the republican regime, Diacon scrutinizes the consequences of the no-holds-barred quest for modernization (and profits) in one particular region of southern Brazil. According to *Millenarian Vision, Capitalist Reality: Brazil's Contestado Rebellion, 1912–1916*, this quest generated wholesale penetration by foreign capital (invested in railroads and a gigantic sawmill), massive colonization schemes involving European immigrants, and subsequent displacement of the region's traditional inhabitants, including some who could be regarded as families of substance. In this context, the earlier imperial period emerges as a kind of golden age of patron-client relations, when patrons were occasionally coercive but allowed their peasant "clients" to enjoy a minimally secure and predictable lifestyle.

Diacon is not the first to study the Contestado Rebellion, but he draws on a wider range of documents and testimony and frames his inquiry differently. Initially, in his discussions of the rapid transition to capitalism in the Contestado, Diacon seems to be adopting the classic approach of Eric Hobsbawm to "primitive rebellion." Yet Diacon questions the easy assumption that millenarian movements are a "natural" form of protest for social groups cast as "premodern." He insightfully notes that history is full of revolts staged by displaced peasants in transitional societies that have not adopted a millenarian vision. The specific religious character of the Contestado revolt, he argues, far from being natural or inevitable, is an aspect that historians must explain.

Diacon does so by emphasizing the spiritual as well as the material features of patron-client relations in the remote Contestado region. There the patron routinely served as godparent to the children of *agregados* (sharecroppers) and smallholders, and the only accessible places of worship were often located on the *fazenda*, with the patron officiating in the (frequent) absence of a priest. Thus when members of the local landed elite began expelling peasants from the land and collaborating with the despised foreign companies, these patrons were not only creating a subsistence crisis for their former clients but were also violating their own spiritual obligations of long standing.⁸ Moreover, Diacon demonstrates that a significant segment of the local elite, due either to deep conviction or to exclusion from the economic bonanza, joined the leadership of the millenarian movement. Thus the millenarian community, rather than rep-

8. Diacon's argument about the spiritual role of the patron follows closely the earlier work of Patricia Pessar. See "When Prophecy Prevails: A Study of Millenarianism in Brazil," Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1976; and "Unmasking the Politics of Religion: The Case of Brazilian Millenarianism," *Journal of Latin American Lore* 7, no. 2 (1981):255–78.

representing a transgression of traditional social arrangements, actually sought to preserve the patron-client relations that had traditionally characterized the Contestado region. It sought not to subvert the social order but to convince errant members of the landowning elite to mend their ways and resume their appropriate patriarchal roles.

Both Diacon and Levine modify significantly earlier portraits of these millenarian communities that depicted their members as “rabble” from the lowest orders or transformed them into proto-social revolutionaries. Both authors present evidence that these communities included many families of substance and standing and maintained traditional notions of hierarchy and inequality. But in the case of the Contestado, at least, this argument can be pushed too far. After all, the classic patron-client relationship did not endow the client with the right to enforce certain standards of behavior by the patron. And both Levine and Diacon describe instances in which the communities felt empowered to execute or oust a prominent figure who had violated community norms.

The Contestado rebels held out longer and controlled far more territory than the Canudenses, but their rebellion is considerably less famous, partly because no one of Euclides da Cunha’s literary gifts chronicled the event. But it is also likely that the Contestado, occurring at a time when the republican regime was firmly ensconced, did not provoke the same morbid fascination and fear in the coastal elites. Diacon notes that several military officers involved in suppressing the rebellion, rather than simply denouncing the “fanatics,” adopted a more critical stance toward the republican government that had significant repercussions in the subsequent decades. But setting aside these exceptional figures, Diacon’s account, like Levine’s, is a blistering denunciation of the republican regime and the elites who shaped it and profited from it.

George Reid Andrews’s *Blacks and Whites in São Paulo, Brazil, 1888–1988* is certainly the most important contribution from a North American historian to the debate over Brazilian race relations since Carl Degler’s *Neither Black nor White* appeared in 1971. Andrews’s study begins with the final moments of the empire and ends with the one hundredth anniversary of Brazilian abolition, thus covering far more than the years of the First Republic. This period nonetheless occupies a crucial place in Andrews’s narrative as a time when Afro-Brazilians, at least in São Paulo, were definitively marginalized by waves of European immigration and widespread racism associated with conservative theories of modernization. Drawing on a longstanding *ideologia da vadiagem*, which portrayed people of color as inherently lazy, the adepts of “order and progress” assumed that “native workers” would form an impediment to visionary dreams of modernity.

Andrews’s discussion of abolition and the fall of the empire appears to be deeply influenced by the work of Murilo de Carvalho. Thoroughly

rejecting the earlier emphasis on “progressive planters” and giving minimal attention to city-based reformers, Andrews explains abolition as engineered in its gradualist guise by the emperor and his closest advisors and then secured in a more immediate form by the slaves themselves, who deserted the coffee estates en masse. Andrews extends this argument one step further: because of its support for emancipation, the monarchy became identified as the champion of the freed slaves, whereas the republicans, dominated by Paulista coffee planters, emerged as the embodiment of the slavocracy. By this logic, the overthrow of the empire and the triumph of the republicans in 1889 initiated a period in which those most hostile to the former slaves assumed the reins of power.

Andrews bolsters his argument with references to a monarchist tradition in the Afro-Brazilian community. It is also well-known that the Republican party continually waffled on the issue of abolition because it wanted to maintain the allegiance of the Paulista coffee planters in its ranks. Historians also know that the Paulistas eventually emerged as the dominant figures within republican politics. But many leading republicans were fervent abolitionists, and large segments of the party diverged from the Paulistas’ foot-dragging. Moreover, the group that actually seized power in 1889 was far from dominated by coffee planters; rather, it included several leading military figures, positivists, and the eminent abolitionist Ruy Barbosa. Although Andrews’s critique of the notion that “progressive planters” were the architects of emancipation in Brazil is persuasive, his attempt to make the exact opposite argument and expand it to apply, *grosso modo*, to the empire and the republic simply does not square with the historical evidence. At the same time, Andrews’s stance is compatible with the current tendency to reappraise the empire more positively and to scorn the republic as representing the triumph of superficially progressive modernizers who merely reinforced the power of authoritarian landowners and local political bosses.

Fortunately, this tendency to stereotype historical eras does not spill over into Andrews’s next chapter on immigration during the Old Republic. This section provides a brilliant analysis of the process by which white European immigrants crowded out people of color from the main sectors of employment in São Paulo—the coffee fazendas and the embryonic industrial economy. Here Andrews explores shifting elite attitudes and objectives, the aspirations of freed slaves, and the complicated interactions between immigrants and people of color. In doing so, he thoroughly dismantles the “Fernandes thesis,” with its contention that enslavement handicapped freedmen and -women once they had to enter the job market.⁹

9. Distinguished Brazilian sociologist Florestan Fernandes, who pioneered the study of racial discrimination in Brazil, argued that the experience of slavery left the former slaves

In the subsequent chapters of *Blacks and Whites in São Paulo*, Andrews focuses on the fitful and limited advances made by middle- and working-class Afro-Brazilians in the job market and the educational arena as well as on the sporadic attempts at political organizing along racial lines.¹⁰ Like virtually every other historian who has recently addressed this issue, Andrews dismisses Brazil's "racial democracy" as a myth. Citing current statistics on employment and education, Andrews goes even further to argue that Brazil now lags behind the United States in terms of equality of access and opportunity for people of color. Whereas such eminent U.S. predecessors as Donald Pierson, Frank Tannenbaum, and Carl Degler (with reservations) looked to Brazil as a model for better race relations, Andrews turns this perspective upside down in perceiving the United States, with its militant African-American communities and affirmative-action programs, as a model for disadvantaged Brazilians of color. He even contends that Degler's "mulatto escape hatch" is a myth because unemployment statistics for light-skinned Afro-Brazilians are closer to those for blacks than for whites.

While the data he has collected contribute a crucial piece to the Brazilian social picture, Andrews raises many issues that cannot be illuminated by statistics alone. Much of the recent literature on race and ethnicity focuses on identity formation, which probably has some relationship to statistical indicators in that data on educational, income, and employment patterns reveal something about daily experiences. At the same time, as Andrews is aware, these data do not tell how individuals explain their experiences and indicate even less about what kinds of political strategies they are likely to adopt. The unique model of racial politics offered by the United States reflects a series of specific historical experiences—the small and marginal free population of color during the centuries of enslavement, the "one-drop rule" adopted by whites to establish who is black, strict and explicit segregation according to that rule, and systematic terror against the black population in the South and other areas of the United States.¹¹ All these factors have contributed to an African-American identity that encompasses an unusually wide range of class and color. In comparison, the individualized encounters with informal segregation and statistical evidence of discrimination in São Paulo highlighted by Andrews are unlikely to have the same political and cultural impact in a society where physical appearance is the main determi-

with deficiencies that made them unable to compete with immigrants in a "free" labor market. See Fernandes, *The Negro in Brazilian Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), 10–12, 52–53.

10. For further details on political activity within the Afro-Brazilian community during the post-emancipation period, see Kim D. Butler, "Up from Slavery: Afro-Brazilian Activism in São Paulo, Brazil, 1888–1938," *The Americas* 49, no. 2 (Oct. 1992):179–206.

11. On the origins and evolution of the "one-drop rule" in the United States, see F. James Davis, *Who Is Black?* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991).

nant of “race.” This argument does not seek to minimize the severe discrimination that people of color continue to suffer in Brazil, but it suggests that the existence of widespread racial prejudice and exclusion will not necessarily yield the particular racial (and political) consciousness that Andrews envisions as desirable for Afro-Brazilians.

Richard Graham’s *Patronage and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Brazil* shares the pessimistic and censorious tone of the other three monographs but focuses on the earlier imperial period to explore the anti-democratic implications of patron-client networks in Brazilian politics. Graham’s excellent study can be seen in part as a direct response to the recent trend in the historiography of nineteenth-century Brazil that portrays the imperial government as relatively autonomous from (or even in conflict with) the landowning elite, which can no longer be regarded as a hegemonic class—at least until the rise of the republic. The empire thus emerges as a period when the rapacious instincts of Brazil’s landed elites were held somewhat in check by the imperial bureaucracy. Graham rejects this argument and reformulates the issue by carefully dissecting the ubiquitous patron-client networks of the era to demonstrate the numerous interconnections between the upper echelons of the imperial hierarchy and the “local” landowning elites.

Other historians have described nineteenth-century Brazil as saturated with patronage relationships at all levels of the social hierarchy, but Graham’s study is the most elaborately documented discussion of the subject, drawing on the correspondence of dozens of key imperial political figures.¹² One is tempted to say “official and personal” correspondence, but Graham shows how blurred the line between these two categories can become in a society rife with patronage relationships. *Patronage and Politics* looks at the politics of patronage in several contexts. It considers the tangible benefits exchanged between patron and client, whether it was protection from arrest for a local miscreant, a minor post in the provincial bureaucracy, or a seat in the senate, with political loyalty to the patron serving as the client’s main medium of exchange. By means of the correspondence, Graham succeeds in composing a compelling picture of the lines of exchange, including who would be likely to ask for such favors and of whom. He also shows how patronage wove truly byzantine webs of dependence and anxiety as even the most powerful patrons worried about loss of prestige and support if they had to refuse too many requests from prospective clients.

For this reader, even more interesting was the discussion of the public manifestations of the patron’s power, particularly what Graham

12. In several of her essays, Emília Viotti da Costa has explored the impact of patronage on imperial political and intellectual life. See *The Brazilian Empire: Myths and Histories* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1985).

calls “the theater of elections.” Contradicting previous accounts of imperial political life that emphasized its formal exclusion of the vast majority of the Brazilian population, Graham argues that until the late imperial period, substantial numbers of Brazilian free males were able to meet the requirements for voters, either on their own or with the help of a patron. This finding means that the frequent elections involved large numbers of Brazilians, not a handful of local notables, and took on the aspect of a spectacle. But Graham’s conclusions regarding popular participation are perhaps the most sobering of all: the relatively large turnout had little meaning for democratization because the voters’ choice at the ballot box merely reflected the wishes of their patrons. Thus even when legally enabled to vote, Brazil’s poorer classes proved unable to express their independent political will. Not surprisingly, Graham follows this discussion with a chapter on violence and electoral fraud, concluding that “the roots of what later came to be called *coronelismo*—the tendency to give local bosses free rein as long as elections returned congressmen supportive of the goals of national and regional leaders—were firmly planted in the nineteenth century” (p. 123).

This and other remarks indicate that Graham does not perceive the patronage system as fading over time but rather as permuting and surviving, perhaps even in contemporary Brazil. The political culture produced by such patronage, in Graham’s view, is thin on ideology because clients must be prepared to shift their stances according to the patron’s political fortunes. The only exception is a vaguely defined “ideology of inequality” central to the hierarchical (and intrinsically nondemocratic) world of patron-client relations. In this sense, Graham goes even further in *Patronage and Politics* than previous analysts of this phenomenon in Brazilian society in arguing that patronage was the very core of Brazilian political life. Thus even what seems like a contrary example—such as the enthusiasm for positivism within the Brazilian military during the closing decades of the empire—Graham explains as a response to the “failure of patronage.”

It is Graham’s contention that patronage was the guiding principle of Brazilian politics that I find least persuasive. In the case of the military, one can discern a familiar process in which a group frustrated by specific aspects of the existing system adopts an ideological position that goes beyond the original grievance to provide a thoroughgoing critique. All ideologies have an element of opportunism or situationism, but it does not necessarily make them “inauthentic” (a category that may not be useful in the first place). In methodological terms, Graham treats the correspondence of political figures as revealing their “true” intentions and priorities, whereas their public statements are generally dismissed as mere window dressing or convenient posturing. To be sure, nineteenth-century Brazil had its share of politicians who jumped from one party to

the other and leaders who fulfilled few of their stated political objectives once in power. But is that peculiar to Brazil? And is patronage the main factor in explaining this weakness of purpose? It seems reasonable to argue that patronage was a powerful force that intervened in the articulation between political ideologies and public policies, but I am less convinced that the logic of patronage made political debate virtually meaningless. This reservation aside, *Patronage and Politics* represents a major achievement and should become a classic text for understanding the Brazilian Empire and its political legacies.

Graham makes no hard and fast claims about the persistence of patronage in contemporary Brazilian politics.¹³ Indeed, the pervasiveness of personal influence in even the most meritocratic societies should make scholars proceed with caution in drawing generalizations about the decisive weight of patronage in any political system. Yet Graham's study, in its vigorous insistence on patronage as the logic underlying Brazilian politics during the empire (and presumably the First Republic as well), describes a social tradition so powerful that it surely continues to influence Brazilian political life. And if the implications of patronage are patently antidemocratic, then its persistence hardly bodes well for the most recent effort at democratization.¹⁴

Whether implicitly or explicitly, all four studies make this bleak Brazilian past seem less remote than one might wish. Whether the problem be patronage, racial prejudice, repression of popular movements, or economic development for the few, the difficulties explored seem remarkably enduring. Even the most optimistic observer cannot imagine that Brazil's newest republic will substantially resolve these problems anytime in the near future. It too may fail to become the republic of our dreams. Some critics may even denounce it someday as morally bankrupt, the phrase Levine uses to describe the republican state that crushed Canudos. But whereas the tragic failures of the Old Republic made some observers (and even a few historians) nostalgic for the monarchy, one hopes that the shortcomings of the Nova República will never prove so severe as to prompt a revisionist appraisal of the regime it replaced.

13. For a stimulating comparative discussion, historical and contemporary, of patron-client relations in Brazil and Mexico, see Luis Roniger, *Hierarchy and Trust in Modern Mexico and Brazil* (New York: Praeger, 1990).

14. For a highly provocative discussion of personal influence and its role in devaluing the status of citizen in Brazilian society, see Roberto da Matta, "The Quest for Citizenship in a Relational Universe," in *State and Society in Brazil*, edited by John D. Wirth et al. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1987), 307–35.

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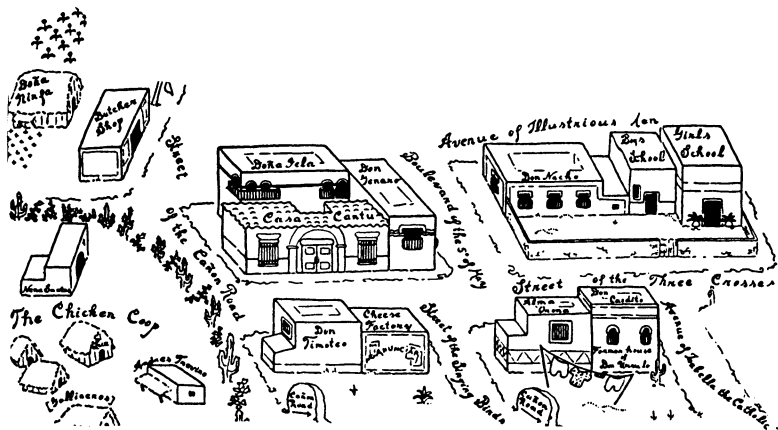
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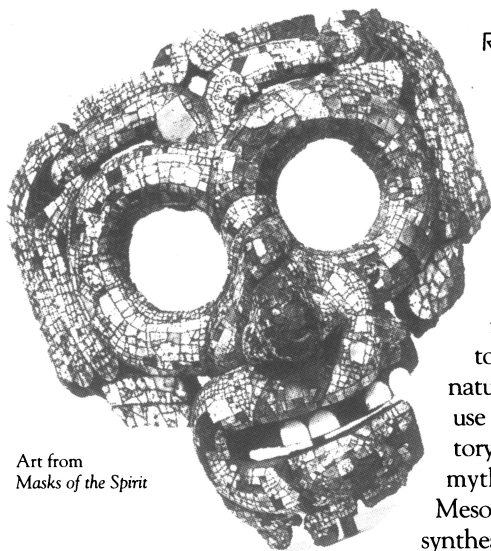
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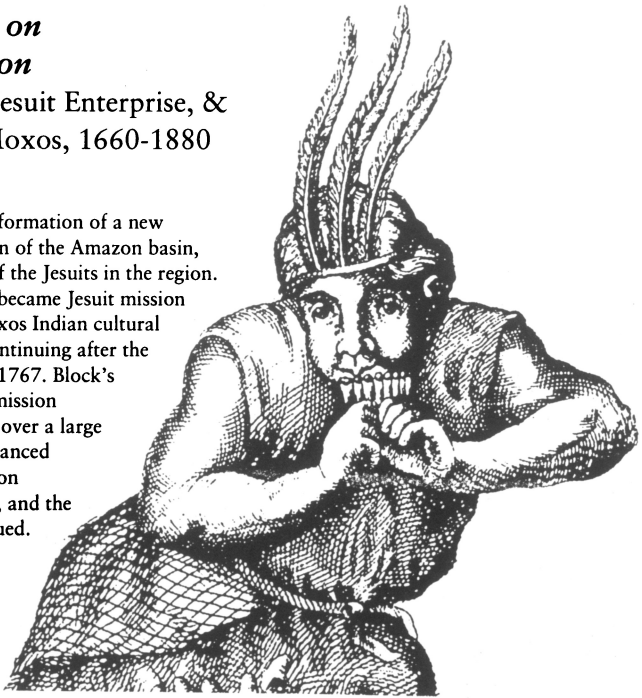
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