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Book Reviews



Mercedes García Arenal and Felipe Pereda, eds., *De Sangre y Leche. Raza y religión en el mundo ibérico moderno*, Madrid: Marcial Pons Historia, 2021.

ISBN 9788417945619. €38.00 / \$60.87

This challenging and indispensable volume brings together reflections on the interconnected subjects of religious and racial thought in the early modern Iberian worlds. The ubiquitous symbols and metaphors of blood and milk run through essays from eighteen experts with diverse visions and disciplinary backgrounds (including art history, religious history, literary studies, and the history of science). Questions of relevance and concern are addressed through the study of texts and images produced around the world from the fourteenth through the eighteenth centuries. Far from seeking the origins of racial or religious discrimination, this volume uncovers complex, dynamic analogies and exchanges among ideologies, with specific cases offering models for the fluidity and porousness of religious and racial imaginaries, fomenting critical perspectives on the development of categories as well as resistance to them. It entails a milestone in the approach to intersecting questions at the heart of early modern Iberian interactions.

De Sangre y Leche opens with an introduction on the symbolic, medical, and judicial meanings of blood and milk, with particular attention to the development of early modern genealogical thinking. The editors highlight, in particular, the impact of religious conversions forced upon Jews and Muslims, and the proliferation of “purity of blood” statutes after 1449 in contexts in which phenotype or external appearance proved less visible than belief or custom. Two main, over-arching sections of the book, on “Blood” and “Blood and Milk,” include chapters by specialists who progressively develop related sub-themes, beginning with blood and the politics of lineage. Mohamad Ballan discusses lineage as a source of legitimation and power, specifically the legal and ethno-cultural importance of alleged descent from Mohammad’s original community in Medina in Nasrid Granada in the work of Ibn al-Jatib and Francisco Núñez Muley. Concurring with Ballan in associating a negative view of *mudejarismo*

(Muslims who remained under Christian rule) with the construction of Islamic genealogies, David Nirenberg compares discrimination against converts on the one hand and defenses of their nobility on the other in Almohad and medieval Christian thought to emphasize the futility of any search for the origins of modern racism. Karoline P. Cook compares responses to Inca resistance in Vilcabamba and the second *morisco* rebellion of the Alpujarras based on the rebels' alleged descent from the natural lords of Peru and the oldest son of Abraham, Ismael, respectively. Francisco Bethencourt analyzes a vehement debate over the purity of blood statutes in Castile and Portugal, alongside an increase in fiscal extortions and the number of inquisitorial cases against *conversos*, which preceded the dissolution of the union of the crowns.

Insights into blood as a vehicle of "nature" emerge from four successive chapters: Jean-Frédéric Schaub attributes a lack of recourse to adoption in the early modern period to "the tyranny of blood" (197), which invites further questions about the beneficiaries of such a change. In contrast, Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra emphasizes the permeable quality of early modern bodies and, consequently, social designations, as a result of demonic and climatic influence, or even the imagination, until the late eighteenth century. With reference to a sermon delivered before the execution of converts in Goa in 1644, Giuseppe Marcocci interprets analogies between Judaism and blackness as counteracted by the miracle of the Virgin Mary's purity or the "whitening" (239) of the painter Juan de Pareja in a self-portrait after his manumission. Finally, Stefania Pastore explains references to male converts from Judaism to Catholicism menstruating and having tails in a 1632 treatise written by the jurist as alleged evidence of their apostasy and return to Judaism, rather than simply hemorrhoids.

The collection's second part, on blood and milk, begins with attention to the symbolic discourse regarding both substances. Among monks who converted to Protestantism, James Amelang details one's rejection of the Virgin's lactation as shamefully sensual, another's sorrow regarding what he perceived as idolatrous devotion, and still another's rejection of the adoration of Mary's milk that allegedly led Catholics to lose sight of the superiority of Christ's blood. The intertwined symbolism of blood and milk flow into Felipe Pereda's analysis of patrons' and inquisitors' responses to Christological images, with nuanced readings that culminate in the figure of an androgynous Christ bleeding and lactating. Rachel Burk develops the analogy between anxieties about purity of blood and female fidelity in golden-age dramas staging wife murder as rites of purification. The interdisciplinary distillation of milk and blood continues in three chapters that interrogate fictions and representations in medical texts, chivalric novels, and census records. Drawing upon medical manuals, Christine Orobitz describes an early modern understanding of semen as concentrated blood and milk as digested blood. The relationship between blood

and milk, in particular, supported discourses in favor of maternal lactation or careful selection of wet nurses to prevent contamination. Miguel Martínez examines the inquisitorial trial of a *morisco* whose recitation of chivalric novels depended on a mastery of their genealogical structure accompanied by performative abilities, rather than the prodigious memory suspected. Complementing this micro-historical approach, Francisco J. Moreno Díaz del Campo and Borja Franco Llopis consider descriptions of *moriscos* registered in 1572–1573 as well as the symbolic, rather than racial, use of color in their visual depictions.

Closing the volume, essays by Max S. Hering Torres and Joan Pau Rubiés revisit insights from the preceding chapters to develop their own contributions. Hering highlights, in particular, the invisible nature of race and lineage, largely under the skin in the early modern period, while calling attention to the ambivalences surrounding wet nursing and racial mixture in Latin America. Rubiés considers the prevalence of interracial sexuality and flexibility, alongside economic and sexual exploitation within the Iberian caste systems, compared with those found in India. Until the nineteenth century, Rubiés argues, the belief in a single origin of humankind marked an intellectual limit of racial classifications.

Following such insights, I would argue that a number of limits toward the development of modern racism ebb and flow through the pages of this important collection. One such check may have derived from the universal aspirations of at least two of the religious traditions so brilliantly considered, and alternately mobilized on behalf of conversion, interaction, inequality, and rejection. The idea of humoral equilibrium, applied to the body politic, may have been used to recommend bloodletting in particular “theaters” according to political and military circumstances. Similarly, economic interests could limit the brutal types of exploitation they sustained; and social practices reinforced but also transgressed the “immutable” (173) hierarchies constructed to constrain them. Among the communicable ideologies explored, gender emerges as an overlapping site of alterity, which is not surprising in work that builds upon that of Georgina Dopico Black, Carolyn Walker Bynum, Christiane Klapish-Zuber, and others. This volume, in short, models and inspires profound reflection. It builds upon years of research in diverse disciplines to showcase innovative approaches to the early modern Iberian world with implications far beyond it.

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