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Book Reviews

Imagining Identity in New Spain: Race, Lineage, and the Colonial Body in Portraiture and Casta Paintings. By Magali M. Carrera. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003. xviii + 188 pp. Illustrations, tables, glossary, notes, bibliography, index. \$34.95 paper.)

Magali M. Carrera presents a fascinating study of eighteenth-century *casta* painting in New Spain. *Casta* paintings consist of sets of twelve or sixteen panels representing the mixing of "*razas*" across three primary lineage groups: Spanish-Indian, Spanish-African, and Indian-African. Each panel shows a mother and father from different *castas*, or lineages, and the resulting "hybrid" child or children. The originality of Carrera's scholarship lies in her treatment of the dynamic interactions between this visual genre and various contemporary colonial discourses on the body, as well as in her analysis of the transformation of the genre throughout its existence. Carrera draws on Michel Foucault and Homi Bhabha to study *casta* painting as a discourse in which, through surveillance, the colonizer produces a knowable body to regulate and control, particularly in relation to social space. Carrera draws on Bhabha's discussion of colonial mimicry to explain how the genre responded to the growing anxiety of the Spanish elites, as miscegenation and plebeians "passing" as Spaniards threatened colonial authority, control, and order.

One of the book's principal strengths is Carrera's methodology, which sustains a persuasive discussion of the dynamic interactions among visual and verbal colonial discourses on the body. Where previous scholarship has seen *casta* paintings and colonial portraiture as separate and distinct genres, Carrera demonstrates convincingly the dialogic relationship between the genres, which construct elite and plebeian bodies in relation to each other through iconography and spatial representation. She posits that if the *casta* paintings persisted into the late eighteenth century, the iconographic changes in the genre revealed shifting meanings. She studies the marriage records of a single parish to establish a significant increase in the blurring of *casta*-Spanish distinctions that elicited a growing anxiety among elite Spaniards. The later paintings responded to this anxiety by overlaying onto the earlier *casta* taxonomy the concept of *calidad* that moves toward a binary distinction between elite Spanish and non-elite *casta* identities.

The core of Carrera's evidence is a well-illustrated and detailed description of three series of *casta* paintings, executed by Juan Rodríguez Juárez (1725), Miguel Cabrera (1763), and Andrés de Islas (1774). She includes sixty plates, twelve of which are reproduced in color. Carrera finds that while in 1725 family groupings appeared in ambiguous spaces and differentiation depended on skin tones and clothing, the mid- and late-eighteenth-century paint-

ings reveal an increased preoccupation with differentiating social spaces, economic status, and moral character. The 1763 series communicates an "anonymous and accurate observation of *casta* appearances and circumstances" in a "diagnostic gaze" (p. 83). The 1774 series shows networks of people who occupy the same urban spaces and emphasizes the growing plebeian society marked by inadequate clothing, public spaces, and a constant association with labor. Here the overlay of *calidad* onto taxonomy is clearest, producing a binary opposition between the less elite *castas* and the more Spanish groups in the terms of *calidad*, where "illegitimacy, impure blood, debasement, criminality, poverty, plebeian status, and manual labor" oppose "legitimacy, purity of blood, honor, law-abidingness, wealth, and mobility" (p. 37).

Carrera relates these changes in the visual construction of colonial bodies to the Bourbon reforms of the late eighteenth century, specifically to administrative narratives and regulations that reformed and controlled urban spaces and the people who occupied them. The ensuing regulations sought to impose hygiene and civic order on the ambiguous hybridity that threatened the elite hegemony with chaos. Thus, late *casta* painting expressed the same prerequisite surveillance as can be seen in Fernández Lizardi's novel, *El periquillo sarniento* (1816).

If the September 1822 ban on the use of *casta* designations in legal records provides a clear explanation of the ending of the genre of *casta* painting, Carrera tells a more complex story. With the move toward independence, the Academy of San Marcos brought in neo-classical ideas/ideals and sought to ground national identity not in the corporate social body, but in an evaluation of origins and authenticity. In doing so, academic painters developed a "transmutable, metaphorical body," romanticizing ethnic differences and creating heroic allegories of nation (p. 144). Artists transformed the knowable colonial *casta* body into the "transmutable, metaphorical body" of the Indian and the mestizo (p. 144).

Imagining Identity in New Spain offers a well-written interdisciplinary discussion of the dynamic interaction of changing visual constructions of colonial bodies throughout the eighteenth century. The work constitutes an important contribution to our understanding of colonial secular art, mechanisms of social control, and construction of the imaginary through which colonizers sought to impose their knowledge and control onto colonial bodies.

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