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George Reid Andrews. *Blackness in the White Nation: A History of Afro-Uruguay.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010. xiii + 241 pp. $59.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8078-3417-6; $22.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8078-7158-4.

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Uruguay as Race and Nation

As the landscape of cultural studies scholarship increasingly favors transnational, translocal, and global analytical frameworks, George Reid Andrews's *Blackness in the White Nation: A History of Afro-Uruguay*, offers a refreshingly nuanced and successful statement on the continuing importance of nation-specific analyses in the study of blackness and black history. Andrews contrasts Uruguayan social and cultural histories with those of other American nations, particularly in terms of black consciousness and racial (in)equality. At the same time, his careful research and use of primary sources hold the reader firmly inside Uruguay for the entire book. Andrews offers a wide range of case studies that speak to the roles played by political, social, and labor movements; sexuality; music; gender; race and minstrelsy; and carnivalesque performance in the formation of Uruguayan national understandings of blackness, whiteness, and the conception of racial democracy. What emerges is a complex yet highly accessible work, characterized by even-handed conclusions drawn from careful research and the foregrounding of primary sources. *Blackness in the White Nation* fills a major gap in Spanish- and English-language scholarship in the history of Latin America and the African diaspora, and should be of interest to scholars in fields as diverse as sociology and performance studies. Andrews's work should also prove useful to advanced undergraduates and graduate students as well as to specialists in social and cultural history, music, dance, and performance, gender and women's studies, and those interested in the continuing validity of national frameworks for working through African diasporic histories.

Andrews begins by tracing the difficulties of studying black history in a country that, for much of its existence, has disregarded racial difference as a factor in political or social life. Indeed, on the centenary of Uruguayan independence, *El Libro del Centenario del Uruguay* went so far as to explicitly deny cultural influence from any group outside of Europe. No racial census data was taken for nearly two centuries, and Uruguay's black population has been consistently marginalized under this national ideology. Yet Andrews is able to trace a clear history of black social organizations, political parties, and newspapers at least from the early and mid twentieth century. In chapter 5, Andrews goes on to quantitatively and qualitatively analyze post-World War II barriers to education and employment, and responses to this discrimination through the present day. Surprisingly, Andrews concludes that the social democracy experiment has worked well in Uruguay. Afro-Uruguayans overall have greater political, economic, and educational opportunities than their black counterparts elsewhere in the Americas, even though in Uruguay educational opportunities for blacks remain roughly half those of their white counterparts. Andrews suggests that one cause is the Uruguayan government's stance on race, a longtime insistence on 100 percent social inclusion that has left the government and society as a whole blind to the social realities of cultural difference and institutional racism.

The irony of such blindness is what Andrews spends the other half of the book discussing–the longtime Uruguayan (read: white) obsession with African music and dance that continues to this day in the national cultural expression of *candombe*. Indeed, the beauty of *Blackness in the White Nation* lies in the compelling history of *candombe* that Andrews gives, and in particular the way he uses *candombe* to signify the relationship between blackness and national consciousness in Uruguay and throughout the Americas comparatively. *Candombe* emerges as a metaphor for the cultural complexities of understanding and defining Afro-Uruguayan cultural practices and their troubled and difficult histories. Particularly interesting, and especially useful for art, music, and performance historians, are Andrews's care-

ful accounts of *candombe'*sinterplay of racial minstrelsy and gendered performance in defining racial subjectivity.

In the nineteenth century, *candombe* was still a powerful mode of collective expression for indentured African laborers. "As an alternative to the oppressive, painful, dehumanizing movements of coerced labor, the *candombes* offered the deeply pleasurable, healing movements of dance–and dance, furthermore, performed collectively, in concert, with friends and countrymen from one's homeland" (p. 27). Beginning with the Montevideo carnival of 1876, large performing groups of *sociedades de negros* emerged, frequently calling themselves *esclavos* as a commentary on labor conditions, and singing the praises of an African homeland. Ironically, the performers in these groups were rarely black, giving rise to the powerful tradition of the *negro lubolo*–the blackface performer of *candombe*. For Andrews, "So strong was the blackface and Afro-Uruguayan presence in Carnival that, to a very high degree, to celebrate Carnival was to come listen to and watch the *candombe*/tangos of the African-based groups" (p. 62). It is here that Andrews's history takes a fascinating turn, for throughout most of the twentieth century, the history of Afro-Uruguayan cultural expression through *candombe* cannot be separated from the *negros lubolos*. Racial minstrelsy thus forms the foundation for articulations of racial identity, as the performance of the *negros lubolos* are, for Andrews (quoting Eric Lott), replete with "the dialectical flickering of racial insult and racial envy, moments of domination and moments of liberation" (p. 56). The *lubolos* of Montevideo carnival, through minstrel performance, led to the continued production and maintenance of racial difference.

In Andrews's account, such minstrelsy effectively illustrates the interplay between sexual desire, racial ambivalence, and carnivalesque performance. Uruguayan blackface was frequently paired with potent sexual connotations of attraction to and fear of black men, underscored by song lyrics where allusions to gender barriers between black men and white women stand in for racial barriers. Particularly noteworthy is Andrews's tracing of the cultural histories of *mama vieja* and *vedette*, two important female characters in Uruguayan carnival. Andrews reads the cultural development of both characters against evolving social ideas of the sexual role and identity of black women, particularly as black female sexuality was characterized as present and accessible, while white women were distant and untouchable. Emerging out of *negros lubolos* groups in the early 1900s, *mama vieja* is a figure symbolic of maternal, domestic sexual power that necessarily carries with it deep class implications. Though this character–a servile, aged, maternal black woman–was frequently performed by white men in the early twentieth century, Andrews does not fully explore its queer and transgendered implications. Andrews contrasts "her" to the *vedette*, the overtly sexualized female figure of contemporary carnival.

Having traced the history of *candombe* in both racial and gendered minstrel terms, Andrews extends his analysis to his own participation in a *candombe comparsa* as a white male, looking at it in explicitly racial and sexual terms. It was only in the late twentieth century that *candombe* emerged as part of Uruguayan national consciousness, and today, more whites than ever before take part, a fact Andrews attributes to the increased economic and social resources available to white as opposed to black Uruguayans. The white influx into *comparsas* is now pushing down wages for black drummers (except for the very best), as white performers can afford to participate for free. It is refreshing to read Andrews's forthright expression of his own feelings towards the powerful drum beats with their primal, sexual quality, characteristics frequently used in popular discourse to link them with the unrestrained sexuality of the *vedette* in carnival.

Andrews's final chapter critiques a 2006 proposal to establish a "National Day of *Candombe*, Afro-Uruguayan Culture, and Racial Equality" (p. 167), a proposal supported by a chorus of Afro-Uruguayan artists and political activists. For Andrews, *candombe* can never be a cultural vehicle to highlight the African origins of Uruguayan cultural expression because it "is a thoroughly multicultural musical form, generally expressive of the Uruguayan nation and its beliefs in racial difference" (p. 171). Nor can *candombe* be a symbol of racial equality, as Andrews effectively demonstrates throughout the book, for "the message that *candombe* conveys is … of basic, essential differences between whites and blacks" (p. 171). Though *negros lubolos* may remove their black face paint at the end of the day, "Afro-Uruguayans do not have that option" (p. 172). Despite his doubts of *candombe*'s use as a vehicle of racial equality, Andrews maintains a belief in the possibility of a racially egalitarian Uruguay. *Blackness in the White Nation* ends with a deeply personal recollection of the Iemanjá festival on a Montevideo beach, (the first mention of Umbanda in the book, and an indication of arenas of greater complexity and depth in terms of Afro-Uruguayan heritage), and with it a hope for a future racial democracy for all.

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