

LAST201: Popular Culture in Latin America

week five: February 7, 2017

Theories of Mixture I: Mestizaje

- theories of mixture
- modernity and modernismo
- racial thinking in the Americas
- “The Cosmic Race”

Theories of Mixture

- culture is messy...
- ...and popular culture even more so...
- ...let alone popular culture in Latin America
- should we then try to reduce this messiness?
- or embrace and try to understand it?
- if so, how?

Theories of Mixture

- the problem is philosophical, too
- the great problem of Latin American identity
- who are we?
- a feeling that identity is especially problematic
- a problem that has not gone away

Modernity and Modernismo

- the late C19th and early C20th was a time of racial(ized) thinking
- it was also a time of modernization, not merely in economics but also art and thought
- Vasconcelos's thought may seem archaic and unfamiliar, but must be seen in that context
- in many ways progressive, especially considering eugenicist tendencies elsewhere

Modernity and Modernismo

- Vasconcelos among a group of Latin American modernist writers devoted to the socio-political problem of regional identity
- José Martí, of Cuba: “Nuestra America” (1891) argued for switch of attention from Spain to USA, even as he fought against Spanish
- José Enrique Rodó, of Uruguay: Ariel (1900) argued for Latin American spirituality and aestheticism against US materialism

Modernity and Modernismo

- Vasconcelos should also be seen in context of the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920)
- the first revolution of the twentieth century and, among other things, against positivism
- Vasconcelos was Minister of Education 1921-1924, and sponsor of Mexican muralists
- (revolutionary) state patronage of culture, rethinking its relation to everyday life

Racial Thinking in the Americas

- Spaniards depended on indigenous labour... and to some extent, indigenous culture
- Spanish colonialism sought to manage difference, rather than eliminate it
- this makes it no less racist than Anglo imperialism, simply racist in different ways
- equally obsessed with difference, which it defined and managed differently



Español con India,
Mestizo.

Mestizo con Español
Castizo.

Castizo con Española
Español.

Español con Negra
Mulato.



Mulato con Española,
Morisco.

Morisco con Española
Chino.

Chino con India
Salta atas.

Salta atas con Mulata
Lobo.



Lobo con China
Gibaro.

Gibaro con Mulata
Albarazado.

Albarazado con Negra
Canbufo.

Canbufo con India
Sanbaigo.



Sanbaigo con Loba
Calpamulato.

Calpamulato con Canbufo
Tente en el Aire.

Tente en el Aire con Mulata
Noseentiendo.

Noseentiendo con India
Tornatiza.

Cast Painting









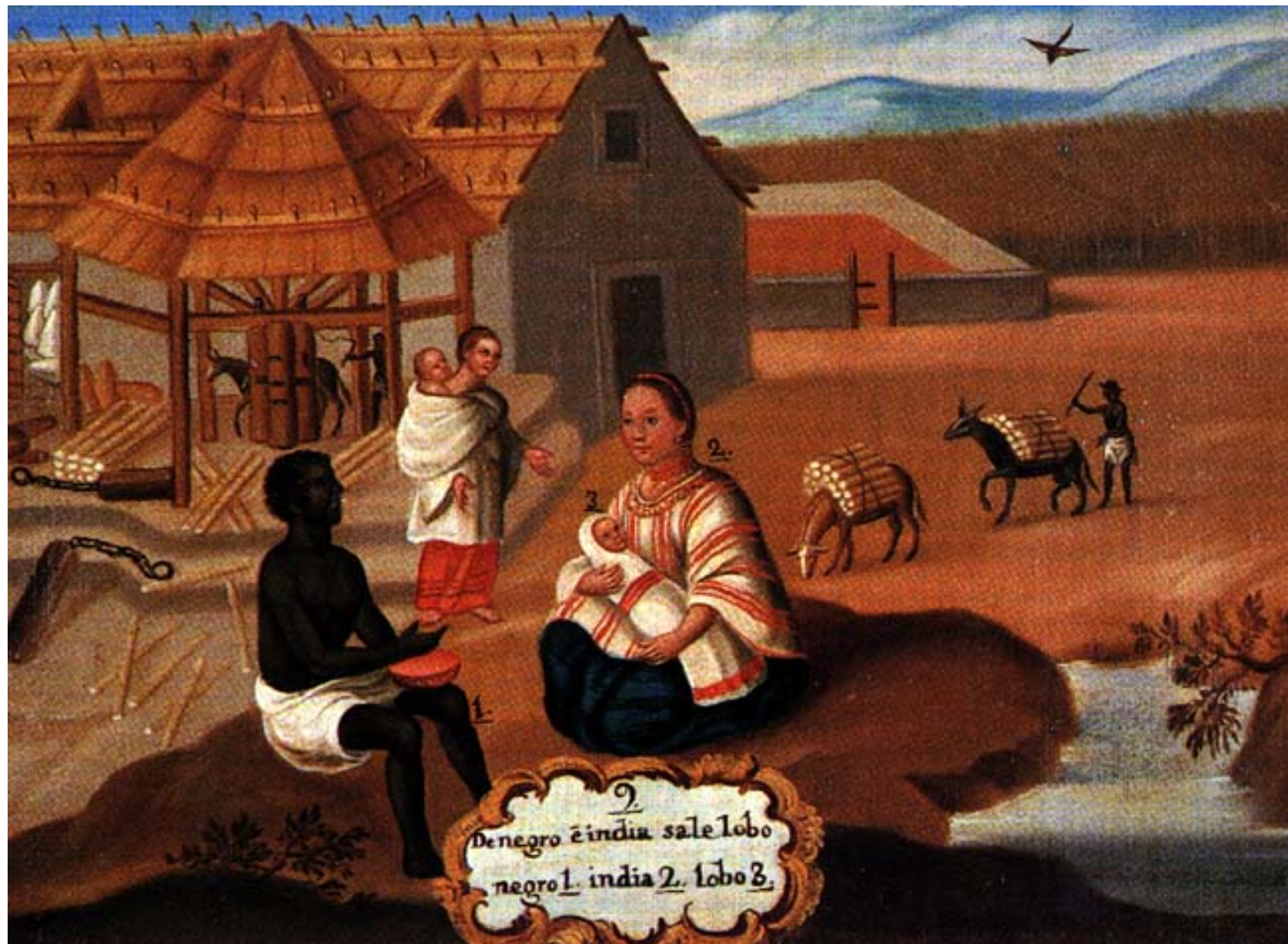




7.
De español y morisca
sale alvino — español 1.
morisca 2. alvino 3.



8.
De espanol y alvina
sale negro torna atras
espanol 1. alvina 2. negro
torna atras 3.



2
De negro e india sale lobo
negro 1. india 2. lobo 3.









13.
De Chamizo é india
sale Cambuja. Chamizo 1.
india 2. Cambuja 3.



14.
De albarrado é in-
dia nace Cachimboeta
albarrado 1. india 2.
cachimboeta 3.





Español con India,
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Español con Negra
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Casta Painting

“The Cosmic Race”

- a new teleology for civilization
- one that accepts, indeed embraces, mixture
- envisages progress rather than degeneration
- a re-imagining of geopolitics
- one that puts Latin America at centre
- racial typology plus evolution of thought
- key principles: love, aesthetics, intuition
- a (pseudo)scientific anti-scientism
- a racist anti-racism?

Questions

- Can we—should we—attempt a sympathetic reading of a text such as this one?
- Can Vasconcelos's text be “deracialized”? Should it be?
- What are the cultural/political implications of his vision of the past, present, and/or future?