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The presence and absence of race

PETER WADE

ABSTRACT Wade examines the presence and absence of race, and David Theo Goldberg's thesis in *The Threat of Race* that racism under neoliberalism continues in hidden form, not named as such. Wade argues that Goldberg's approach privileges an overly institutional presence for race and thus loses sight of the real and continuing presence of race in contemporary societies, especially notable in biotechnological and genomic contexts. This depends on defining race in a clear way, so that it can be recognized when it is present: race is not about biology, but about a constant movement between nature and culture, mediated by classifications of Others, based on histories of western colonialism and postcolonialism. Wade goes on to argue that, in Latin America, racialized difference is, if anything, made more explicit in the context of what Charles Hale has labelled 'neoliberal multiculturalism'.

KEYWORDS David Theo Goldberg, Latin America, *mestizaje*, neoliberalism, race, racism, *The Threat of Race*

The apparent absence, or silencing, of race and racism has been noted by many scholars who focus on these questions in Latin America. Many have commented that an explicit discourse about race is often absent or tacit in Latin America; that people deny that racism is a problem (including many black and indigenous people); that they assert that class inequality is the real problem; that overt reference to race somehow goes against the national grain in many countries; and that those who highlight racial identifications—for example, in the name of antiracism—may be accused of being racist.¹ Robin Sheriff, for example, notes that the US sociologist E. Franklin

1 Peter Wade, *Blackness and Race Mixture: The Dynamics of Racial Identity in Colombia* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press 1993); Robin E. Sheriff, *Dreaming Equality: Color, Race, and Racism in Urban Brazil* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press 2001); France W. Twine, *Racism in a Racial Democracy: The Maintenance of White Supremacy in Brazil* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press 1998); John Burdick, *Blessed Anastácia: Women, Race, and Popular Christianity in Brazil* (London and New York: Routledge 1998); Diane M. Nelson, *A Finger in the Wound: Body Politics in Quincentennial Guatemala* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1999); Marisol de la Cadena, *Indigenous Mestizos: The Politics of Race and Culture in Cuzco, Peru, 1919–1991* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press 2000); Mary Weismantel, *Cholas and Pishtacos: Stories of Race and Sex in the Andes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2001); and Denise Ferreira

Frazier said of Brazil in 1941: 'It appears that there is an unexpressed understanding among all elements in the population not to discuss the racial situation.' She adds: 'More than half a century later, Frazier's observation remains essentially accurate.'² For a rather different context, Diane Nelson observes that the Maya 'constitute an absent presence in public discourse' in Guatemala. She analyses a series of 'racist and smutty' jokes directed at Mayans that express hidden anxiety about racialized and sexualized difference in the nation.³ The same absent presence can be observed at a more individual level in the account of an Afro-Colombian woman I interviewed in the 1980s, who said that she had not 'felt any kind of rejection' as a black person, and yet also said that a white boyfriend's family might not accept her and that, in public places, she had been mistaken for a domestic servant (a very common occupation for Afro-Colombian women in the city).⁴

In these examples, race is not absent in a straightforward way. Instead it is masked, tacit, hidden and displaced. This kind of absent presence is the main theme of Goldberg's recent book, *The Threat of Race*, which opens a very fruitful way into thinking about Latin America in a more global context, as one regional example—albeit a highly heterogeneous one—of the practice of racism in the absence of the explicit naming of race.⁵ Goldberg sees this silencing as a long-term process, embedded in the gradual demise of scientific racism and the associated explicitly biological theories of race. But in *The Threat of Race* he tracks this silencing in more recent times and links it more specifically to the privatizing tendencies of neoliberalism and the concomitant rolling back of the state and the official regulation of citizenly welfare (which might include racial categorizations, whether for positive or negative discrimination). However, as the examples above already indicate, it is necessary to think hard about what exactly is absent when we talk about the silence about race in Latin America: race is clearly present in those examples, even if it is masked and uttered *sotto voce*. It is also necessary to examine with care the effect that neoliberalism is having on silence about race in the region, as it can be argued that ideas about racial and ethnic difference are becoming more, not less, explicit in this context.

Da Silva, 'Facts of blackness: Brazil is not (quite) the United States . . . and racial politics in Brazil?', *Social Identities*, vol. 4, no. 2, 1998, 201–34.

2 Sheriff, *Dreaming Equality*, 59.

3 Nelson, *A Finger in the Wound*, 173, 74.

4 Wade, *Blackness and Race Mixture*, 261–2.

5 David Theo Goldberg, *The Threat of Race: Reflections on Racial Neoliberalism* (Oxford and Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell 2009) (subsequent page references will appear parenthetically in the text).

Race: absent and present

Absence raises the question of presence. What does it mean for race to be explicit, for it to be named? What, for example, is Goldberg referring to when he talks about a regime in which race is not silenced? I think he is referring, first, to the United States in the late nineteenth century and the twentieth century until about the 1980s, when a political and everyday discourse of 'colour-blindness' as being morally and politically correct emerges (not, however, uncontested, or even perhaps dominant).⁶ He is also talking about South Africa under apartheid. Finally, he refers to the 'classic racisms' formed in the context of European colonialism (69). In all cases, the state actively created, shaped and reproduced racial categories at an institutional level, in the interests of regulating and controlling populations and managing privilege. It is the absence of this institutional presence that, I think, figures as absence or silence in Goldberg's approach. This leads him to focus on racisms as practices of oppression that can persist without the explicit naming of race or the overt deployment of the concepts and categories of race.

But how do we know that what we are looking at is racism, as opposed to something else: ethnocentrism, classism, geopolitical bullying, the oppressive policing of criminality, land-grabbing, the exploitation of cheap labour and so on? To know this, we have to know what 'race' is, how we recognize it when we see it, even if its name does not appear on the tin. Here, it seems to me, Goldberg is a little reticent. The closest thing to a definition that I found comes in Chapter 5, about 'racial europeanization', when he states that 'race is not simply a matter of false views about biology or skin colour'. Instead: 'Race has to do—it has always had to do—more complexly with the set of views, dispositions, and predilections concerning culture, or more accurately of culture tied to colour, of being to body, of "blood" to behavior' (175).⁷

This linking of biology to behaviour, or more generally of nature to culture, seems to me crucial. It highlights that the whole apparatus of race (racial categorizations, racial concepts, racisms) has always been as much about culture as it has about nature, that race has always been about shifting between these two domains. It is a classic instance of what Bruno Latour calls never having been modern.⁸ He argues that western modernity is

6 Ruth Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (London: Routledge 1993); Howard Winant, 'Difference and inequality: postmodern racial politics in the United States', in Malcolm Cross and Michael Keith (eds), *Racism, the City and the State* (London and New York: Routledge 1993).

7 See also my discussion of Goldberg's definition of 'race' in Peter Wade, *Race, Nature and Culture: An Anthropological Perspective* (London: Pluto Press 2002), 6–9.

8 Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. from the French by Catherine Porter (London and New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf 1993).

characterized by processes of 'purification' that attempt to maintain a clear ontological distinction between the realms of nature and culture. The two realms have been conceptually held separate since the seventeenth century, when scientists began to forge the 'modern constitution' in which a clear distinction between nature and society was a precondition for the latter to gain objective knowledge of the former. On the other hand, says Latour, modernity has also, in practice, been characterized by processes of 'translation', in which nature and culture influence each other and come together to produce hybrid forms that are networks of connection. Despite modernist claims of purification, nature and society have always been interlocking processes, creating complex networks of people and animate and inanimate things that mutually shape each other. Science does not produce simple objective knowledge of a sealed realm of nature; knowledge of nature is co-produced with knowledge of society. However, moderns like to keep purification and translation separate, and to privilege the former as constituting modernity: they (we) have been systematically blind to the co-production of nature and society, even while this has always existed alongside purification. In that sense, 'we' have never been modern. Westerners have never really maintained the purity of separation that they claim constitutes modernity. There has always been a dual process in which categories of nature and culture are produced as pure and separate, but simultaneously mixed together in ways that blur their apparent separation.

Racial thinking bears the same marks. It purifies in various ways. It may assign some categories of people to the realm of nature and others to the realm of culture. It may carve out a clear conceptual space for 'human nature' in the person, which has specific relations to cultural attributes: human nature may dominate culture for some less 'civilized' people, while culture can control nature for the more 'civilized'. It may construct stereotypes that define certain cultural constellations as 'natural' to a given population. It is in these purifications that racial thinking has been constitutive of modernity, as Goldberg argues in *The Threat of Race* and elsewhere, and as Paul Gilroy has also contended.⁹

But translation or hybridization is a constant presence too. The people steeped in nature or those less civilized are, in fact, vital to the possibility of existence of those who bask in culture: vital in both material and symbolic senses, as providing labour and also constituting the very meaning of culture as separate from nature. More profoundly, the limits of what constitutes nature, whether non-human or human, are never clear in relation to

9 Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso 1993); Paul Gilroy, *Between Camps: Nations, Cultures and the Allure of Race* (London: Penguin 2000); David Theo Goldberg, *Racist Culture: Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning* (Oxford: Blackwell 1993); David Theo Goldberg, *The Racial State* (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell 2002).

something called 'culture'.¹⁰ The cultural can become naturalized, a process conceptualized in the past and today as the forming of 'habit' and 'second nature'. For many centuries, this process was also thought to work through the inheritance of acquired characteristics, a Lamarckian belief that persisted until the 1920s in medical circles in the West and that has now returned, transformed, as epigenetics (in which environmental and behavioural factors shape the way genes express themselves in phenotype). Conversely, the natural can become culturalized, as the environment shapes human behaviour and, more recently, biotechnology allows scientists to intervene in 'life itself' and manipulate nature at the level of the cell and the DNA sequence: what appears fully 'natural' (cells, DNA) is drawn into hybrid networks with social actors.¹¹

Indeed, it is evident that the naturalization of culture and the culturalization of nature are not easily separated in a conceptual sense: they inherently blend into one another. For example, eighteenth-century thinkers were often strongly environmentalist, seeing humans and human behaviour as shaped by their natural surroundings. This was a naturalization of culture. But concomitantly 'life was commonly associated with activity and plasticity' and, in relation to gender, for example, 'every fibre of a female carried femininity within it—a femininity which was acquired by custom and habit. . . . Organisms interacted with their surroundings, giving sexuality a behavioural dimension, in that females became full women by doing womanly things, like breast-feeding their children.'¹² This was also a culturalization of nature. (And, in my view, it necessitates a rethink of Goldberg's idea that, until the end of the eighteenth century, 'race was driven formatively by the restriction of cultural traits racially defined to a supposedly unalterable biology' (216).)

But, if race is characterized by this nature–culture hybridization, this can hardly be thought of as particular to race alone. Latour's argument applies to concepts of nature and culture generally in western thought and practice. What makes race a specific nature–culture hybrid is its reference to particular aspects of nature–culture. These are, on the one hand, the body, 'blood', inheritance and what Goldberg nicely calls 'presumptive filiation' (6), the combination of familiarity and familiarity, of kinship and social

10 Wade, *Race, Nature and Culture*.

11 Sarah Franklin, 'Life itself: global nature and the genetic imaginary', in Sarah Franklin, Celia Lury and Jackie Stacey, *Global Nature, Global Culture* (London: Sage 2000), 188–227; Paul Rabinow, 'Artificiality and the Enlightenment: from sociobiology to biosociality', in Jonathan Crary and Sanford Kwinter (eds), *Incorporations* (New York: Zone Books 1992); Sarah Franklin and Margaret Lock (eds), *Remaking Life and Death: Toward an Anthropology of the Biosciences* (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research/Oxford: James Currey 2003).

12 Ludmilla Jordanova, 'Naturalizing the family: literature and the bio-medical sciences in the late eighteenth century', in Ludmilla Jordanova (ed.), *Languages of Nature: Critical Essays on Science and Literature* (London: Free Association Books 1986), 106–7.

relatedness, of consanguinity and affinity. On the other hand, these elements are mediated by the colonial encounter of Europeans with others in the world. The specific aspects of the body, blood and heredity that became significant to racial thinking were the ones that were made to constitute difference in those encounters.¹³ It is this that, alongside the notorious changeability of racial categories and racial thinking over the *longue durée*, accounts for the remarkable persistence of some basic categories of racial identification—black, white, brown, yellow; African, European, Asian, Native American—which, with variants, recur from the time of Johann Blumenbach (1752–1840), through the US census to the ‘biogeographical groups’ of current DNA ancestry testing that promises to tell you what percentages of your DNA are traceable to these continental categories.¹⁴

The point of this seeming digression is two-fold. First, if racial thinking has always been about the ambiguous move between nature and culture, then is it a good idea to think in terms of a historic shift from what Goldberg calls ‘racial naturalism’ (race as biology) to ‘racial historicism’ (race as culture)? Goldberg places this shift—rather oddly, given the state of racial science at the time—in the mid-nineteenth century (5), but later says that racial naturalism was ‘hardening’ and undergoing a ‘resurrection’ in the second half of the late nineteenth century (269, 274), indicating the difficulty of tracing these supposedly epochal changes. Might it not be better to think in terms of changing constellations and articulations of nature–culture hybrids, in which a discourse of culture has always been important (as Goldberg himself recognizes in his near-definition of race buried on page 175), but in which some reference to nature is also always present, even if only by using racialized phenotype as a cue to discrimination in thought, word and deed. Second, and relatedly, might it be slightly missing the point to emphasize the silencing of race—understood in terms of the disappearance of its own name, the evaporation of an explicit discourse of racialized biology, and the erasure of state institutionalizations of racial categories—when the overtness that is the opposite of silencing is actually something of a temporal and spatial exception in the history and geography of race?

Recognizing the specificity of race at once allows us to see when racism is at work, even when not labelled with the name of race. Goldberg is keen on revealing these racisms, but at some points it becomes difficult to tell if these are racisms or if they are something else. If we are looking at ‘racisms without racism’, as he calls them at one point (360), how can we tell that racism is involved in any shape or form? We need a clearer idea of what race (and thus racism) is, without tying this to the presence of the name of race

13 Wade, *Race, Nature and Culture*, 1–16.

14 Deborah A. Bolnick, ‘Individual ancestry inference and the reification of race as a biological phenomenon’, in Barbara A. Koenig, Sandra Soo-Jin Lee and Sarah S. Richardson (eds), *Revisiting Race in a Genomic Age* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press 2008).

itself or a particular type of biological determinism. For me, the key features are, first, the reference to those aspects of nature that have become the signs of race during the long centuries of European colonialism and postcolonial encounters—the racialized phenotype that is taken to indicate presumptive filiation—and, second, the reference to the enduring categories of race. This is a partly circular definition—race is defined by racialized nature—but it is only so because it is profoundly historical: the racialization of nature has developed over time and we know race not by its name but by its recurrent reference to specific categories of people and specific types of nature–culture hybridizations.

This approach also allows us to engage with the specificity of race in another way. Is there something particular about the way racism works that is different from (some) other sorts of oppression? Goldberg is immensely powerful when it comes to the actual operation of racism at the various times and places he examines. His command of the detail of racial oppression and his insight into its operation are superb. He wants to go much deeper than the simple existence of racial categories and concepts, because he argues that abolishing these can simply bury race alive. In fact, race can only remain alive because the categories and concepts have not actually been erased, although they may have been removed from specific institutional levels and governmental instances. If the categories and concepts had truly been erased, there could be no racism. It would be a different kind of oppression.

So the categories and the features of racial thinking are important and they give racism its character: the embodiment, the visibility in a scopic regime, as noted by such as Homi Bhabha and Frantz Fanon;¹⁵ the notion of heredity through sexual reproduction, made visible and based on the Aristotelian idea that ‘in nature, like produces like’ (Goldberg’s ‘presumptive filiation’); the possibility of interweavings of naturalization and culturalization. I should emphasize here that it is important not to naturalize visibility as something that automatically lends a certain character to racism: this verges on an argument that humans are cognitively predisposed to perceive others in what are, at bottom, racial terms.¹⁶ The visibility of race is itself historically constructed, although it may build on certain widespread patterns of cognitive classification.¹⁷ My point is, however, that the features just listed all give a particular character to racial oppression and help to grasp its very varied and even apparently opposed patterns, such as

15 Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge 1994), 79, 83; Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* [1952] (London: Pluto Press 1986).

16 Lawrence A. Hirschfeld, *Race in the Making: Cognition, Culture and the Child’s Construction of Human Kinds* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press 1996).

17 Rita Astuti, Gregg E. A. Solomon and Susan Carey, *Constraints on Conceptual Development: A Case Study of the Acquisition of Folkbiological and Folksociological Knowledge in Madagascar*, *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, vol. 69, no. 3 (Oxford and Boston: Blackwell 2004).

segregation, which draws power from the visible embodiment of spatial demarcations, and Latin American strategies of whitening racial mixture, which seek to erase the marks of racial stigma. I am not arguing that racism is unique in these features: it shares them with other forms of oppression. Sexism, for example, relies heavily on embodiment, visibility, nature–culture hybridizations and control of reproduction. This is one reason why sexism and racism are so strongly linked: the filiations of race are also the filiations of kinship, which, as we know, is a sexed and gendered domain.¹⁸ Nor do I contend that the particular features of racism necessarily make it more pernicious than other forms of oppression and discrimination. Ethnic conflicts that do not rely on racial categories—although they may well share some features of racial thinking such as recourse to notions of blood—can be equally vicious.

My point is simply to recognize the particularity of racism, something that I feel gets obscured in Goldberg’s analysis.¹⁹ In a sense, this issue does not come to the fore in his book because he stays on pretty safe ground: Blacks and Whites in the United States; postcolonial migrants in Europe; Blacks, Whites and indigenous people in Latin America; Israelis and Palestinians in the Middle East; Blacks, Whites and Coloureds in South Africa. These are mainly situations in which it is easy to think ‘race’. But, even then, the role of Arab Jews in Israel—whose presence, at 40 per cent of Israel’s population (117), does unsettle a simple discourse of race—could have borne a longer and more detailed examination than Goldberg gives it.

Race: silent or not?

Just how silent is race, if we understand it to be more than an institutional presence in the processes of government? In Britain—where Goldberg does grant that race is less silenced than in other European countries—the Race Relations Act (1976) is still in place and ‘ethnicity’ is counted in the census.

18 Verena Stolcke, ‘Race and sex’ (review of Weismantel, *Cholas and Pishtacos*), *Current Anthropology*, vol. 43, no. 4, 2002, 679–80; Sylvia Yanagisako and Carol Delaney (eds), *Naturalizing Power: Essays in Feminist Cultural Analysis* (London and New York: Routledge 1995); Ann Laura Stoler, ‘Sexual affronts and racial frontiers: European identities and the cultural politics of exclusion in colonial Southeast Asia’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 34, no. 3, 1992, 514–51; Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press 2002); Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, 2nd edn (New York: Routledge 2000); Peter Wade, *Race and Sex in Latin America* (London: Pluto Press 2009).

19 The specificity of race comes over very clearly in Juliet Hooker, *Race and the Politics of Solidarity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2009). Hooker also emphasizes the (learned) visibility of race as a key feature of its ‘social ontology’ (99).

One may want to argue that precisely the use of 'ethnicity' and not 'race' is evidence of the silencing of race, but it is clear that ethnicity is simply a 'politically correct' terminology: this does not add up to a silencing of race in my view. In fact, a recent study indicates that the term 'mixed race' is preferred both colloquially and in scholarship in Britain for people who identify as of mixed origins, even if the census has preferred 'ethnic' terminology.²⁰ Moreover, some European studies indicate that, in this age of 'cultural racism', it is still common in everyday practice to deploy ideas of blood, heredity and physical appearance in thinking and talking about 'ethnicity'.²¹ (In fact, the online edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* nods to popular understandings by glossing 'ethnic' as, among other things, 'pertaining to race'.) This recourse to ideas of physical difference and some slippage between 'ethnicity' and 'race' has been evident in British guidelines on IVF treatments. In October 2002 the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA) amended section 3.18 of the fifth edition of its Code of Practice to read as follows:

Where treatment is provided for a man and woman together, centres should strive as far as possible to match the physical characteristics and ethnic background of the donor [of gametes] to those of the infertile partner (or in the case of embryo donation, to both partners) unless there are good reasons for departing from this. . . . For example, those seeking treatment should not be treated with gametes provided by a donor of a different racial origin unless there are compelling reasons for doing so.²²

In the sixth edition of the Code (2003), the word 'racial' was dropped; in the seventh edition (2007), all reference to ethnicity and race was removed, leaving an injunction to avoid any harm, 'physical, psychological or medical', to either recipient or child. These changes suggest a desire to avoid publicly policies that might smack of eugenics. Nevertheless, donors are advised that the information form they are required to fill in may ask for

20 Peter J. Aspinall, "'Mixed race'", "'mixed origins'" or what? Generic terminology for the multiple racial/ethnic group population', *Anthropology Today*, vol. 25, no. 2, 2009, 3–8.

21 Katharine Tyler, 'The genealogical imagination: the inheritance of interracial identities', *Sociological Review*, vol. 53, no. 3, 2005, 476–94; Katharine Tyler, 'Race, genetics and inheritance: reflections upon the birth of "black" twins to a "white" IVF mother', in Peter Wade (ed.), *Race, Ethnicity and Nation: Perspectives from Kinship and Genetics* (Oxford and New York: Berghahn Books 2007); Wade (ed.), *Race, Ethnicity and Nation*; Wade, *Race, Nature and Culture*.

22 Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA), Chief Executive's Letter CE(02)01, 4 October 2002, available online at www.hfea.gov.uk/1606.html (viewed 6 November 2009). See also Ben Campbell, 'Racialization, genes and the reinventions of nation in Europe', in Wade (ed.), *Race, Ethnicity and Nation*.

their 'ethnic group' as well as their 'physical characteristics'.²³ Interestingly, the same kind of explicit racialized matching in IVF practice goes on in Spain, where clients fill in a form that asks them to enter their race (*raza*) as well as numerous other physical details.²⁴ Race is also an explicit concern among Israeli IVF clients,²⁵ and, indeed, Charis Thompson notes generally that 'phenotypic and other descriptors of race and ethnicity are one of the few things that form a common differentiating, kinship-conferring and legitimising organisational principle for the world's egg, sperm and embryo markets'.²⁶

In the recent practice of genomic science, too, the categories of race are far from becoming silenced, and there are heated debates (again) about whether race is actually a medically, biologically viable category.²⁷ In the United States, but also in European countries and all over Latin America, molecular genetics labs are carrying out ancestry tests to determine the 'biogeographical' ancestry of either paying clients or individuals in sample populations selected to participate in genomic studies.²⁸ This ancestry is almost always broken down into African, European and Native American components. In Brazil, some scientists have explicitly deployed genetic data showing how mixed is the biogeographical heritage of Brazilians—including those who

23 See HFEA, 'My information: what can my donor-conceived offspring find out about me', 23 September 2009, available at www.hfea.gov.uk/1974.html (viewed 23 November 2009). For all the Codes, see www.hfea.gov.uk/1682.html (viewed 23 November 2009).

24 See Campbell, 'Racialization, genes and the reinventions of nation in Europe', which reports on studies done in Spanish IVF clinics. For the form, see Real Decreto 412/1996, 1 March 1996, available online at www.juridicas.com/base_datos/Admin/rd412-1996.html (viewed 6 November 2009); the decree is still in force today.

25 Michal Nahman, 'Materializing Israeliness: difference and mixture in transnational ova donation', *Science as Culture*, vol. 15, no. 3, 2006, 199–213.

26 Charis Thompson, 'Biological race and ethnicity: dead and alive. The case of assisted reproductive technologies in the US', paper presented at Anthropology and Science: The 5th Decennial Conference of the Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and Commonwealth, University of Manchester, 14–18 July 2003.

27 Esteban González Burchard, Elad Ziv, Natasha Coyle, Scarlett Lin Gomez, Hua Tang, Andrew J. Karter, Joanna L. Mountain, Eliseo J. Pérez-Stable, Dean Sheppard and Neil Risch, 'The importance of race and ethnic background in biomedical research and clinical practice', *New England Journal of Medicine*, vol. 348, no. 12, 2003, 1170–5; Richard S. Cooper, Jay S. Kaufman and Ryk Ward, 'Race and genomics', *New England Journal of Medicine*, vol. 348, no. 12, 2003, 1166–70; Koenig, Lee and Richardson (eds), *Revisiting Race in a Genomic Age*.

28 Bolnick, 'Individual ancestry inference and the reification of race as a biological phenomenon'; Sijia Wang, Nicolas Ray, Winston Rojas, Maria V. Parra, Gabriel Bedoya *et al.*, 'Geographic patterns of genome admixture in Latin American mestizos', *PLoS Genetics*, vol. 4, no. 3, 2008, e1000037; Alondra Nelson, 'Bio science: genetic genealogy testing and the pursuit of African ancestry', *Social Studies of Science*, vol. 38, no. 5, 2008, 759–83; Ricardo Ventura Santos and Marcos Chor Maio, 'Race, genomics, identities and politics in contemporary Brazil', *Critique of Anthropology*, vol. 24, no. 4, 2004, 347–78.

identify themselves as 'white' and 'black'—in order to show how meaningless racial categories 'really' are, and to contest the recent trends in Brazil towards affirmative action for black Brazilians.²⁹ All over Latin America, there are strong narratives emerging from genomic science about the indigenous (or African) 'mother', evident in the widespread presence of maternally inherited mitochondrial DNA that can be identified as Native American or African in origin. This female figure is counterposed to the European 'father', evident in men's Y-chromosome DNA, inherited in the paternal line.³⁰ These narratives reinforce classic national origin myths that root the nation in the sexual exchange between European men and Native American and African women, an account that completely marginalizes black and indigenous men.

In short, then, precisely at the current conjuncture of nature–culture transactions represented by genomics and biotechnology, race (articulated with gender) is quite explicit. As usual, race is a nature–culture hybrid, referring to nature (gametes, DNA), but organized into cultural categories of difference. Interestingly, this is happening in the context of the increased commodification of the body and body parts (DNA, gametes, organs) that can be easily linked to neoliberal capitalism.³¹ Now I readily grant that the racism that is allied to these kinds of practices is not of the order of the phenomena that mainly occupy Goldberg's attention: duress, violence, death, occupation, securitization, segregation and so forth. But it is worth noting a report recounting how Asian and Middle Eastern women used British IVF clinics to get access to white women's ova in an attempt to whiten their own offspring, government guidelines about racial matching notwithstanding.³² Israeli women tend to avoid dark-skinned Yemeni

29 Sérgio D. J. Pena, Denise R. Carvalho-Silva, Juliana Alves-Silva, Vânia F. Prado and Fabrício R. Santos, 'Retrato molecular do Brasil', *Ciência Hoje*, vol. 27, no. 159, 2000, 16–25; Ricardo Ventura Santos, Peter H. Fry, Simone Monteiro, Marcos Chor Maio, José Carlos Rodrigues, Luciana Bastos-Rodrigues and Sérgio D. J. Pena, 'Color, race and genomic ancestry in Brazil: dialogues between anthropology and genetics', *Current Anthropology*, vol. 50, no. 6, 2009, 787–819.

30 Pena *et al.*, 'Retrato molecular do Brasil'; Gabriel Bedoya, Patricia Montoya, Jenny García, Ivan Soto, Stephane Bourgeois, Luis Carvajal, Damian Labuda, Victor Alvarez, Jorge Ospina, Philip W. Hedrick and Andrés Ruiz-Linares, 'Admixture dynamics in Hispanics: a shift in the nuclear genetic ancestry of a South American population isolate', *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, vol. 103, no. 19, 2006, 7234–9. See also Rick Kearns, 'DNA study: Colombia's founding mothers recognized', *Indian Country Today*, 9 November 2006, available online at www.indiancountrytoday.com/archive/28153639.html (viewed 5 November 2009).

31 Nancy Scheper-Hughes, 'The global traffic in human organs', *Current Anthropology*, vol. 41, no. 2, 2000, 191–224; Gísli Pálsson and Kristín Harðardóttir, 'For whom the cells toll: debates about biomedicine', *Current Anthropology*, vol. 43, no. 2, 2002, 271–302.

32 Tessa Mayes, 'Asian women seek white donor eggs for light-skin babies', *Sunday Times*, 16 November 2003, 7.

surrogate mothers, whom they fear might darken the baby in the process of gestation, as well as preferring light-skinned egg donors.³³ I have already mentioned how black and indigenous men get erased from national histories in Latin American genomic science. These are perhaps small examples of an everyday kind, but they do indicate that racist practices allied to overt racial categories are clearly in operation.

Neoliberal multiculturalism

The brief reference above to the way neoliberal capitalism seems to provide opportunities for racial categories and practices to emerge—perhaps especially in areas close to ‘presumptive filiation’ or the articulation of race with kinship—clearly runs against the grain of Goldberg’s basic thesis: that neoliberalism silences race, while invigorating racist oppressions. In Latin America, this counter-argument takes on wider dimensions, as I will argue below.

First, however, let me link Latin America to the broader argument, made above, about the need to recognize the character and specificity of race. This approach allows us to see the persistence and indeed re-emergence of race in Latin America, despite the reluctance to use the term openly and to prefer references to ‘culture’ and ‘ethnicity’. Constant reference to ‘black communities’, ‘Afrodescendants’ and ‘indigenous peoples’, alongside a discourse of nations having emerged from a mixture of Africans, Europeans and indigenous Americans, are clearly examples of racial discourse. It is notorious that, in Latin America, ‘race’ is flexible and can be trumped by ‘culture’: the move from ‘indio’ to ‘mestizo’ is often described as one effected by a change in residence, language or clothing; people can be identified by different colour terms (e.g. more or less black) according to how wealthy they look.³⁴ Yet in my view we are still clearly confronting something that analytically falls into the social categories of race because, first, the enduring categories of race are being deployed—‘negro’, ‘indio’ and so on—and, second, reference to racialized phenotype and to concepts of blood and

33 Elly Teman, ‘Surrogate Motherhood in Israel’, MSc thesis, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2000; Wade, *Race, Nature and Culture*, 106–7; Nahman, ‘Materializing Israeliness’.

34 David M. Guss, ‘The Gran Poder and the reconquest of La Paz’, *Journal of Latin American Anthropology*, vol. 11, no. 2, 2006, 294–328 (296); Mauricio Solaún and Sidney Kronus, *Discrimination without Violence: Miscegenation and Racial Conflict in Latin America* (New York: John Wiley and Sons 1973); Livio Sansone, *Blackness without Ethnicity: Constructing Race in Brazil* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2003).

heredity is still an important feature, even in societies where one can become a mestizo by altering behaviour.³⁵

Goldberg's account of Latin America, while it feels a little distant from the complex realities of a heterogeneous region—made evident in part by some minor errors of fact³⁶—still captures some central features of how racism and racial identities operate in much of the area. The complexity of racial categories, the individualization of race, the informal racism, the general absence of population enumeration by racial categories, the overlap and merging of racial and class inequality, the way race mixture in ideology and practice diverts attention from racism and makes it hard to point to racial difference, the way critics of the myth of racial democracy are stigmatized as racists and how racial social movements find it hard to accomplish much in concrete material terms: all this is acutely observed. His comments on the fragility of a whiteness that is always open to being undermined are very insightful (211).

Yet Goldberg's emphasis on *mestizaje/mestiçagem* as basically euro-mimesis and his rather brief account of black and indigenous resistance and organization—which he labels 'almost inconceivable' (232) before going on to catalogue some of it—fall a bit short of the target in my view. Recent work—including by Marisol de la Cadena,³⁷ whom Goldberg cites—suggests that *mestizaje* has not only operated as a national departure from euro-mimesis, or more accurately US-centrism (the celebration of mixture counterpointed to the imposition of segregation under Jim Crow), but also as a way for plebeian mestizos to assert an identity that is not just about the rejection of blackness or indigenoussness and the pursuit of whiteness.³⁸ To be sure, such

35 See, for example, Nancy Grey Postero, *Now We Are Citizens: Indigenous Politics in Postmulticultural Bolivia* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press 2007), 12; Joceny Pinheiro, 'Authors of Authenticity: Indigenous Leadership and the Politics of Identity in the Brazilian Northeast', PhD thesis, University of Manchester, 2009, ch. 3; Weismantel, *Cholas and Pishtacos*, 189; Nelson, *A Finger in the Wound*, 231.

36 For example, 1821 is not the date for the abolition of slavery in Colombia (201); it was actually 1851, and 1821 was the date of the 'free womb law' that freed children born to slave mothers. The demographic figures for Brazil on 203 are wrong; they are right on 229. An estimate of the black population of Colombia is given as 4 per cent (202). The 2005 census gives a—naturally contested—figure of 10.5 per cent; for pre-census estimates of the black population in Colombia, see Peter Wade, 'The Colombian Pacific in perspective', *Journal of Latin American Anthropology*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2002, 2–33 (21). The quotation about Costa Rica attributed to Chomsky on 220 belongs to Gladys Spence (listed in the bibliography on 244). The word *crisol* is misspelled on 224, as is the city Cartagena on 238. The Portuguese *mestiçagem* is spelled consistently without the cedilla.

37 De la Cadena, *Indigenous Mestizos*.

38 Charles R. Hale, 'Neoliberal multiculturalism: the remaking of cultural rights and racial dominance in Central America', *PoLAR: Political and Legal Anthropology Review*, vol. 28, no. 1, 2005, 10–28; Florencia E. Mallon, 'Constructing *mestizaje* in Latin

an assertion is often highly ambivalent, but it is also not quite euro-mimesis, even when Goldberg distinguishes the latter from simple Eurocentrism in so far as mimesis carries with it some sense of the inevitable failure of replication and of the need to adapt the European blueprint to local conditions (218). In my reading of *mestizaje*, it holds within it not just racial hierarchy, expressed in whitening and exclusion, but also the promise of racial democracy, expressed in an inclusive process of mixture that is not simply about homogenization into a normative light-brown identity but also about the generation of less than entirely predictable heterogeneity.³⁹ It is important not to be romantic here: this aspect of *mestizaje* has to be held in mind simultaneously with its exclusive and hierarchical aspect. They both work at the same time and in doing so provide partial, contradictory, but overlapping realities that help secure the hegemony of racial inequality in Latin America.

The idea that *mestizaje* has some roots in an enduring heterogeneity leads to a reconsideration of the region-wide move towards official multiculturalism that Goldberg notes very much in passing for Brazil, but to which he does not really give enough attention. Many countries in the region have adopted multicultural constitutions and other types of legislation.⁴⁰ Colombia, for example, has been foremost in defining legislation (Law 70 of 1993) that targets 'black communities' for a number of initiatives, from collective ethnic land-titling to ethno-education projects.⁴¹ This legislation has many problematic aspects; it tends, for example, to restrict the issue of 'blackness' to small rural communities in the Pacific coastal region that can claim land titles. In practice, many such titles have remained on paper, as

America: authenticity, marginality and gender in the claiming of ethnic identities', *Journal of Latin American Anthropology*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1996, 170–81; J. Jorge Klor de Alva, 'The postcolonization of the (Latin) American experience: a reconsideration of "colonialism," "postcolonialism," and "mestizaje"', in Gyan Prakash (ed.), *After Colonialism: Imperial Histories and Postcolonial Displacements* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1995); Peter Wade, 'Rethinking *mestizaje*: ideology and lived experience', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, vol. 37, no. 2, 2005, 239–57; Weismantel, *Cholas and Pishtacos*.

39 Wade, 'Rethinking *mestizaje*'.

40 Donna Lee Van Cott, *The Friendly Liquidation of the Past: The Politics of Diversity in Latin America* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press 2000); Rachel Sieder (ed.), *Multiculturalism in Latin America: Indigenous Rights, Diversity, and Democracy* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2002); Willem Assies, Gemma van der Haar and André Hoekema (eds), *The Challenge of Diversity: Indigenous Peoples and Reform of the State in Latin America* (Amsterdam: Thela Thesis 2000); Postero, *Now We Are Citizens*.

41 Peter Wade (ed.), *Black Identity and Social Movements in Latin America: The Colombian Pacific Region*, a special issue of the *Journal of Latin American Anthropology*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2002.

people are displaced from the land by paramilitary violence.⁴² Furthermore, the majority of Afro-Colombians in fact live outside the Pacific coastal region and their interests are addressed at a much lower level, if at all.⁴³ Yet the legislation does amount to an unprecedented official recognition of blackness, which significantly alters what Goldberg characterizes as the 'largely denied [and] all but invisible' status of Afro-Colombians (238). Granted, blackness has been pushed very much into an 'indigenous' model of ethnic communities rooted in the land,⁴⁴ but it is interesting that the 2005 Colombian census opened the way to conceiving of blackness in a broader light, as it invited people to self-identify as black, *mulato*, Afro-Colombian or Afrodescendant.⁴⁵

Several commentators have suggested that neoliberal governance in Latin America, rather than—or perhaps as well as—promoting the 'invisibilization' of race, actively pursues what Charles Hale has labelled 'neoliberal multiculturalism'.⁴⁶ States may govern, as they have done in the past, through manipulating difference, variously labelled 'ethnic' or 'cultural', rather than suppressing it. It may be rare to see explicit reference to race or racism in such strategies, but the categories deployed are generally 'black' (or variants of 'Afro') and 'indigenous', which on my definition are racial categories even if they are publicly labelled 'ethnic' or 'cultural'. In the case of Colombia, however, one constitutional court decision explicitly justified recent affirmative legislation for black communities in terms of past and present racism.⁴⁷ Other judgements by the same court have recognized the existence of racism in the country, even though 'race'—understood as a

42 Arturo Escobar, 'Cultural politics and biological diversity: state, capital, and social movements in the Pacific coast of Colombia', in Richard G. Fox and Orin Starn (eds), *Between Resistance and Revolution: Cultural Politics and Social Protest* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press 1997); Arturo Escobar, *Territories of Difference: Place, Movements, Life, Redes* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press 2008); Mieke Wouters, 'Ethnic rights under threat: the black peasant movement against armed groups' pressure in the Chocó, Colombia', *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, vol. 20, no. 4, 2001, 498–519.

43 Olivier Barbary and Fernando Urrea (eds), *Gente negra en Colombia: dinámicas sociopolíticas en Cali y el Pacífico* (Cali: CIDSE, Univalle; Paris: IRD; Colciencias 2004).

44 Juliet Hooker, 'Indigenous inclusion/black exclusion: race, ethnicity and multicultural citizenship in Latin America', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, vol. 37, no. 2, 2005, 285–310; Peter Wade, 'The cultural politics of blackness in Colombia', *American Ethnologist*, vol. 22, no. 2, 1995, 342–58.

45 Peter Wade, 'Defining blackness in Colombia', *Journal de la société des américanistes*, vol. 95, no. 1, 2009, 165–84.

46 Hale, 'Neoliberal multiculturalism'; Shannon Speed, 'Dangerous discourses: human rights and multiculturalism in neoliberal Mexico', *PoLAR: Political and Legal Anthropology Review*, vol. 28, no. 1, 2005, 29–51.

47 Corte Constitucional, Sentencia T-422/96, 'Diferenciación positiva para comunidades negras', 10 September 1996: see Wade, 'The Colombian Pacific in perspective', 23.

biological category—is rejected as an appropriate term for talking about the ‘ethnic’ difference displayed by ‘black communities’.⁴⁸ That is, ‘race’ may be silenced here, but ‘racism’ is not.

States may choose to recognize black and indigenous categories in a more official mode for a number of reasons. First, it fits into a process of democratization that, according to international definitions, now includes some concession to rights established on the grounds of difference. This is aided by transnational legal frameworks that institutionalize such definitions, such as International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, or the 2007 UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People.⁴⁹ It is further aided by the interest in indigenous peoples and Afro-Latins or Afrodescendants on the part of bodies such as the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank,⁵⁰ which Goldberg notes in relation to the introduction of racial and ethnic counting into national censuses (239). Second, recognizing black and indigenous communities can help in the governance of areas in which state control is relatively weak, but where there may be valuable resources for development, including unprospected biodiversity.⁵¹ Arturo Escobar links this to new modes of capitalist development in which the conservation of nature, for careful exploitation of its biodiverse chemical and genetic resources, is just as important as its destructive exploitation:⁵² indigenous and, to some extent, black communities can figure in this conservationist developmentalism as stewards of the environment.⁵³ More prosaically, states may simply be interested in development business as usual: building roads, ports, pipelines and exploiting land and sub-soils via industrial agriculture and mining. Such is arguably also the case in Colombia’s Pacific coastal region, where African palm plantations and industrial shrimp farming go hand in hand

48 Donny Meertens, ‘Discriminación racial, desplazamiento y género en las sentencias de la corte constitucional. El racismo cotidiano en el banquillo’, *Universitas humanística*, no. 66, 2009, 83–106.

49 Sieder (ed.), *Multiculturalism in Latin America*; Rachel Sieder, Alan Angell and Line Schjolden (eds), *The Judicialization of Politics in Latin America* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2005).

50 Shelton H. Davis, ‘Indigenous peoples, poverty and participatory development: the experience of the World Bank in Latin America’, in Sieder (ed.), *Multiculturalism in Latin America*; Peter Wade, ‘Afro-Latin Studies: reflections on the field’, *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2006, 105–24 (112); Wade, ‘Defining blackness in Colombia’.

51 Christian Gros, ‘Indigenismo y etnicidad: el desafío neoliberal’, in María Victoria Uribe and Eduardo Restrepo (eds), *Antropología en la modernidad: identidades, etnicidades y movimientos sociales en Colombia* (Bogotá: Instituto Colombiano de Antropología 1997); Escobar, *Territories of Difference*.

52 Escobar, ‘Cultural politics and biological diversity’.

53 Peter Wade, ‘The guardians of power: biodiversity and multiculturalism in Colombia’, in Angela Cheater (ed.), *The Anthropology of Power: Empowerment and Disempowerment in Changing Structures* (London and New York: Routledge 1999).

with road-building projects that displace Afro-Colombians to the cities or turn them into a landless wage-labour force.

In sum, neoliberalism may bring with it the institutionalization of difference. Now, Goldberg's argument is that race is made invisible through neoliberalism, but the point of the argument is that *racism* is thereby rendered invisible. So, where does the official multiculturalist recognition of difference in Latin America leave the question of the recognition of racism? We have already seen that, with some exceptions, much of the multiculturalist legislation refers to ethnic and cultural, rather than racial, difference. Yet explicit reference to racism does occur. The Colombian constitutional court decisions, mentioned above, are one case. Another is the more widespread reference to race, colour and racism in the debates about affirmative action policies in Brazil, a country in which there is currently a Secretaria Especial de Políticas de Promoção da Igualdade Racial (Special Secretariat for Policies Promoting Racial Equality) and where a Statute of Racial Equality, which makes many explicit references to racism, is under discussion in the congress (although it has been mired in debates since 2005).⁵⁴ A further case is the 1995 Guatemalan Agreement on the Identity and Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Indigenous Rights Accord), which has a whole section on racial discrimination. Of course, all such recognition is being undermined by a tokenism manifested in the failure to enact legislation, compounded with other processes and strategies—of development, for example—that actively undermine it. But recognition may even so provide a basis on which people can organize and make claims, and also judicialize them, opening avenues for progress.⁵⁵ In any case, it certainly requires us to reassess the contention that Latin America is still, as Goldberg has it, an 'early experimental prototype for neoliberal raceless racism' (237).

On balance, it is surely right to note that, in much of Latin America, there is a reticence about race, that ideologies of racial democracy remain strong, that people often do not see labels such as 'negro', 'blanco' or 'mestizo' as a primary aspect of their identities (although 'indígena' is probably different in that respect), and that, in institutional circles, an overt discourse of racial categories has been unusual over most of the twentieth century. But, even if people are reticent about them, categories of race have been and remain present in everyday life, shaping such areas as social relations,⁵⁶ the

54 Mala Htun, 'From "racial democracy" to affirmative action: changing state policy on race in Brazil', *Latin American Research Review*, vol. 39, no. 1, 2004, 60–89.

55 Sieder, Angell and Schjolden (eds), *The Judicialization of Politics in Latin America*.

56 Wade, *Blackness and Race Mixture*; Sheriff, *Dreaming Equality*; Twine, *Racism in a Racial Democracy*; Burdick, *Blessed Anastácia*; Nelson, *A Finger in the Wound*; de la Cadena, *Indigenous Mestizos*; Weismantel, *Cholas and Pishtacos*; Ferreira da Silva, 'Facts of blackness'.

aesthetics of music,⁵⁷ alternative religious belief,⁵⁸ and discourses of genetic ancestry.⁵⁹ In all these areas, people will explicitly talk about 'negros', 'blancos', 'mestizos' and 'indígenas' (or more likely 'indios'), as well as other terms such as 'moreno' (brown) and 'pardo' (brown). Neoliberalism has, if anything, accompanied an increased explicitness with regard to racial difference, giving it a more clearly institutional presence, even if not necessarily labelled with the term 'race' or 'racial'. That presence is ambivalent and indeed highly questionable in terms of the material and political benefits it may bring to ethnic and racial minorities in Latin America, but it certainly qualifies ideas about the 'raceless racism' of Latin America.

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57 Peter Wade, *Music, Race, and Nation: Música Tropical in Colombia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2000); Hermano Vianna, *The Mystery of Samba: Popular Music and National Identity in Brazil*, trans. from the Portuguese by John Charles Chasteen (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 1999); Heidi Carolyn Feldman, *Black Rhythms of Peru: Reviving African Musical Heritage in the Black Pacific* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press 2006); John Burdick, 'Class, place and blackness in São Paulo's gospel music scene', *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2008, 149–69.

58 Barbara Placido, 'Spirits of the Nation: Identity and Legitimacy in the Cults of María Lionza and Simón Bolívar', PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 1998; Michael Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1987).

59 Santos and Maio, 'Race, genomics, identities and politics in contemporary Brazil'.