

A Revolução do Haiti e o Brasil escravista: O que não deve ser dito

Marco Morel. *A Revolução do Haiti e o Brasil escravista: O que não deve ser dito*. Jundiaí: Paco Editorial, 2017, 346 pages.

Hendrik Kraay

Historians have written surprisingly little about the Haitian Revolution's impact on Brazil, so Marco Morel's new book is a welcome contribution. We have long known that Brazilian masters feared a repetition of the events in Saint Domingue and that, after Brazil's independence as a constitutional monarchy in 1822, the neologism of *haitianismo* (Haitianism) was deployed against free people of color (and a few white radicals) who demanded effective legal equality for people of color or denounced discrimination. Whether Brazilian slaves actually knew about the Haitian Revolution (as opposed to their masters fearing that they did) remains difficult to determine, for those who did were unlikely to reveal this in venues where someone might record it. Morel, a historian of early nineteenth-century Brazilian political culture and newspapers from the Universidade Estadual do Rio de Janeiro, focuses on what lay behind Haitianism and presents evidence for a positive (or at least not entirely negative) reception of the Haitian Revolution by some free Brazilians.

He discerns three positions regarding Haiti among nineteenth-century Brazilians, each of which had parallels in French thinkers: Abbé Guillaume-Thomas Raynal's criticisms of slavery and colonization and his famous speculation about a New-World black Spartacus; Abbé Henri Grégoire's critical but often enthusiastic support for the black revolutionaries; and Abbé Dominique-Georges-Frédéric De Pradt's condemnation of the Revolution's violence and fear that any tampering with slavery's status quo would spark a new revolution. Morel summarizes De Pradt's position as one of condemnation and silence (the "what should not be said" of this book's subtitle), and argues that this was the predominant view in nineteenth-century Brazil.

The second chapter examines these men's thinking (including their sporadic reflections on Brazil) and their connections with certain late colonial and early post-independence Brazilian intellectuals. Grégoire cited the anonymous anti-slavery pamphlet published in Rio de Janeiro in 1825 by Leonardo Correa da Silva, a little-known mulatto priest who had traveled in the Caribbean and had come to the attention of authorities in late-colonial Brazil for his radical ideas. Father Leonardo demonstrated a "poorly-disguised sympathy" (p. 185) for the Haitian Revolution (he blamed the violence on French colonists and troops), defended Indians' rights, denounced racism, and called for an (eventual) end to slavery.

The third chapter delves more deeply into expressions of sympathy for the Haitian Revolution. Some of this appeared among black and mulatto militiamen, like the Rio de Janeiro soldiers who allegedly wore lapel pins with Jean-Jacques Dessalines' portrait in 1805 (pp. 227-28) or the non-commissioned officer in Recife who challenged a police spy's assertion in 1818 that the Haitian revolutionaries had destroyed everything that the French had built (p. 233). Major Emiliano Felipe Benício Mundurucu, commander of Pernambuco's mulatto militia, joined the 1824 *Confederação do Equador* (Equatorial Confederation) rebellion, inciting the "sovereign people" to emulate "... Cristóvão [Henri Christophe] / This immortal Haitian" (p. 201). Himself a republican,

Mundurucu nevertheless apparently admired the Haitian king's anti-slavery stance, his opposition to whites, and his defence of Haitian independence. Mundurucu escaped the rebellion's defeat and made his way to the United States, Haiti, and Venezuela (where he published a memoir); an 1831 amnesty enabled his return to Brazil. Cryptic newspaper criticisms after he received a military post in 1837 called attention to his Haitianism without explicitly mentioning it (another example of the silences surrounding the slave revolution).

News about Haiti reached Brazil through different channels. The official *Gazeta do Rio de Janeiro*, founded after the Portuguese monarchy's escape to Brazil in 1808, frequently referred to Haiti in the context of celebrating French defeats; after 1814-15, it covered France's recolonization efforts. In the growing post-independence press, radicals sometimes invoked Haitians' determined defence of their sovereignty as an example for Brazilian patriots to emulate. Pierre Plancher, a French publisher who established one of Rio de Janeiro's main printing presses in 1824, exemplified another set of connections to Haiti. Before going to Brazil, he had advocated for the restoration of normal diplomatic and commercial ties between France and Haiti (Charles X would do so in 1825, the same year that his government recognized Brazilian independence) and had published favorable histories of the former French colony.

No one accused Plancher of Haitianism, but it is not implausible that he served as a conduit for positive information about Haiti. By contrast, a closely connected group of radical liberals frequently faced this allegation in the early 1830s. The political context included Emperor Pedro I's 1831 abdication in the face of liberal pressure and the slave trade's formal abolition (an illegal trade would continue until 1850). Accusations that an abolitionist Sociedade Gregoriana (Gregorian Society) – named after Abbé Grégoire – dedicated to killing whites and promoting racial mixture existed in Rio de Janeiro centred on Dr. Joaquim Cândido Soares Meirelles, a mulatto surgeon noted for his denunciations of racial discrimination. The capital's police unsuccessfully sought two Haitian

agitators seen among the city's slaves. The full complexity of this intrigue cannot be summarized in a brief review, but Morel highlights the interaction between print and oral communication; men like Meirelles may have been the tip of the iceberg of broader reflections on the Haitian Revolution.

Morel wrote this book with history teachers in mind. The first chapter – fully a third of the book – is a survey of the Haitian Revolution, with numerous references to literature and cinema, a fifteen-page chronology, and biographical sketches of leaders. This section draws heavily on French scholarship and Morel argues that the Haitian constitutions of 1801, 1805, 1806, 1807, and 1816 deserve a place in American constitutional history (a three-page table conveniently compares their principal provisions). While experts will find little new in this chapter, it is an important service to the Brazilian academe. Those most interested in the Haitian Revolution's impact on Brazil may want to start reading in the second chapter, where Morel begins to construct his important argument.

Hendrik Kraay is professor of history at the University of Calgary. His *Bahia's Independence: Popular Politics and Patriotic Festival in Salvador, Brazil, 1824-1900* is forthcoming from McGill-Queen's University Press. His is also the author of *Days of National Festivity in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 1823-1889* and *Race, State, and Armed Forces in Independence-Era Brazil: Bahia, 1790s-1840s*, both published by Stanford University Press. In 2018, he received the Distinguished Fellow Award from the Canadian Association for Latin American and Caribbean Studies.



