Revista Brasileira de História & Ciências Sociais – RBHCS
Vol. 16 Nº 33, Jul - Dez de 2024
Universidade Federal do Rio Grande – FURG

Interview

Regionalism, nationalism and the *Color of Modernity* in Brazil: Interview with Barbara Weintein[♦]

Regionalismo, nacionalismo e a *Cor da Modernidade* no Brasil: entrevista com Barbara Weinstein

Isabel Bilhão[*]

Interviewee: **Bárbara Weinstein** – Professor and researcher in the Department of History at New York University (NYU), working in the area of Latin American and Caribbean History. She has dedicated herself to the study of Brazilian history for over four decades, with a vast bibliography published in Portuguese and English.

Interview Date and Location: February 14-15, 2024, New York University (NYU).

Throughout her career, Barbara Weinstein has dedicated herself, with special interest, to studying the construction of modernity and the relationships between regionalism and nationalism in Brazil. In a previous interview, when asked about this choice, she mentioned the influence of Emilia Viotti da Costa who, in 1973, was hired by the Department of History at Yale University and became her advisor in her doctoral studies[1]. Weinstein commented: "Emilia, both as an advisor and as a historian, awakened in me a great interest in the history of Brazil. Because of her influence, I ended up changing my area of specialization from the Southern Cone to Brazil. It was one of the best decisions I ever made in my life" (XAVIER, 2008, p. 389).

Since then, Weinstein has dedicated herself to important studies on the Amazon region during the period of rubber exploitation and, in later works, she

♦ This interview took place within the scope of the Study Mission carried out at New York University, in February 2024, through PPG-Educação Unisinos, with CAPEX/Proex financing.
* PhD in History from the Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS). Professor and researcher at the Univeridade do Vale do Rio dos Sinos (UNISINOS).
[1] Historian Emilia Viotti da Costa was arrested and compulsorily retired in 1969, as a result of her opposition to the civil-military dictatorship in force in Brazil from 1964. She moved to the USA, where she worked as a Professor of History of Latin America, at Yale University, between 1973 and 1999. In the same year, the University of São Paulo (USP) granted her the title of professor emeritus (FERREIRA, Jr. 2006).

turned her focus to industrialization and the history of labor in São Paulo[2]. More recently, she conducted detailed research on the construction of the notion of whiteness and its intricate correlations with regional and national identities based on the analysis of the emergence of São Paulo, capital and state, as the main economic and political exponent of Brazilian modernity.

To this end, she focused on the event known as the Constitutionalist Revolution, which took place in 1932. Weinstein saw it as a way of analyzing both the construction of notions of São Paulo superiority during the event itself, and the iterations of this discourse in later moments, notably in 1954, during the celebrations of the IV Centennial of the founding of the city of São Paulo and, in 1957, when paulistas commemorated the 25th anniversary of the 1932 Movement uprising.

The book resulting from this research is called *The Color of Modernity*: São Paulo and the Making of Race and Nation in Brazil. Originally published in English, by Duke University Press, in 2015, it was launched in Brazil in 2022, published by Edusp[3]. In the interview that follows, this work was used as a guiding thread for the questions, seeking to perceive it both as a way of accessing the author's most recent concerns and approaches, and as an unfolding of her several decades of studies of Brazilian history.

1. IB - *At a certain point in the book (p. 204) you comment that your first contact with "the São Paulo war" occurred when reading A History of Brazil, published by Bradford Burns, in 1970. So, my first question is: How and why did this event become such a relevant topic in your research trajectory?*

BW - I had long been curious about the "Revolution of 1932"; in my research on industrialists and workers for my book on industrialists and workers in São Paulo, I could see how engaged many of the leading figures in FIESP were with the organization of the 1932 military campaign, and how concerned they were that their workers didn't necessarily share their enthusiasm for the "Guerra Paulista". What also impressed me was that the 1932 uprising was the very last regional rebellion in

[2] In relation to works published in Portuguese, we can mention, in addition her last book *The Color of Modernity*: Weinstein (1993, 1995, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2006, 2016). The author also has extensive production in English.
[3] In the Brazilian edition the book received the title *A Cor da Modernidade*: a branquitude e a formação da identidade paulista.

Brazil, and it occurred in the economic center of the country. And yet because it wasn't the usual revolt initiated by the popular classes or those allied with the popular classes, it was unintelligible, maybe even uninteresting to many social historians. Of course, the military phase of the movement was also very brief—less than three months, which made it even easier to dismiss. (Though how long a revolt is doesn't automatically determine how much interest it generates—the 1835 Malê Revolt in Bahia only lasted a couple of days, if that.) But my supposition was that the revolt against Vargas resonated strongly with significant sectors of the paulista population, that it could be described as a mass movement despite its limited appeal to industrial workers, and that it was worth investigating *how* people in those sectors came to embrace the goal of overthrowing Vargas and restoring São Paulo's position as the pre-eminent center of Brazilian political power. The resolution to take up arms against the national government—even one portrayed as illegitimate—is always a very serious decision, one that requires a great deal of discursive justification.

Therefore, it seemed very likely that the 1932 uprising was a moment that produced an abundance of written and imagistic expressions of regional identity, including arguments for why São Paulo had the "right" to challenge the Vargas regime. I should also say that I assumed, from the outset, that some of these arguments would reflect a racist perspective. Of course, not anything as explicit or reductive as "we are whiter than the rest of Brazil so therefore we should be the dominant region." I was interested in the more subtle ways that whiteness informed the consolidation of regional identity at that moment. Though let me say that some of the assertions from 1932, such as in a separatist manifesto that referred to the "invading" federal forces as "sons of the slave quarters and misery, victims of destructive climates, encrusted with the grossest ignorance, a people who are losing human form, such is the physical degeneration that ravages them" were not subtle at all. [p. 185]

2. IB - *The number and variety of scholars mentioned in the acknowledgments of The Color of Modernity make clear your participation in a wide network of researchers into Brazilian history, which has been established in recent decades. What are your perceptions about the possibilities and limits of the formation of these exchange networks between Brazilian and American*

intellectuals? Do you observe changes over time? What factors have enhanced and which have hindered this academic collaboration?

BW - I think I was particularly fortunate, as a "brasilianista," to make contacts and create friendships with historians in Brazil early in my career. One advantage I had was that my doctoral advisor at Yale was Emília Viotti da Costa, who had been forcibly "retired" from USP by the dictatorship, and this helped me make connections with academics in Brazil, especially in São Paulo. For example, thanks to the kind intervention of Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, who spent a few months at Yale as a visiting scholar when I was a doctoral student, my very first scholarly publication appeared as an appendix in *O Bravo Matutino* (1980), co-authored by Maria Helena Capelato and Maria Lígia Prado, who then became life-long friends. Lígia, in particular, is probably my most important interlocutor for anything I write about the history of Brazil.

My experience may have been a little unusual, but I do think that the Brazilianists whose careers began around the time of the *abertura* and the final years of the dictatorship, and the cohorts that formed over the next two decades, tended to develop more collegial and personal relationships with Brazilian scholars than previous generations of North Americans, partly because of analogous intellectual interests and partly beause of similar political perspectives. With some important exceptions, US-based historians in the generation before me tended to be less theoretical, less political, and more empiricist in their work. As I noted in my "Am I Still a Brasilianist?" essay, starting in the 1980s there was a kind of convergence—US-based scholars were becoming more theoretically inclined and Brazilian-based scholars were becoming more immersed in archival research. Whereas in earlier decades, there were often clear differences in the scholarly studies of Brazil being written by Brazilian historians and the work being done by US-based historians, I think that started to be less and less the case from the 1980s on.

Aside from the converging academic and intellectual trends, we've witnessed technological innovations over the last four decades that have dramatically transformed the ability of scholars separated by large distances to stay in touch, to participate in symposia even when it's impossible to travel, and to continuously exchange ideas. I cannot overstate what an incredible impact e-mail had on my

scholarly existence. The ability to communicate instantaneously, without spending a fortune on long-distance phone calls; the ability to transmit a draft of a paper or an article I was writing (or receive one from a colleague in Brazil) and have it arrive within seconds (rather than weeks) dramatically transformed aspects of transnational academic life. And starting with Skype, and now with Zoom, it has become possible to participate in dissertation defenses and in other activities without the enormous expense (not to mention the contribution to carbon emissions) of air travel. To be sure, nothing fully replaces the experience of being physically present somewhere, but when that's not financially or logistically possible, email, YouTube, and Zoom are excellent alternatives. I should also mention, as someone who studies labor history, that these innovations—not surprisingly—have produced what factory workers would call a "speed-up." The increased pace of circulation also means increased demands and expectations. But for me, that's a small price to pay for the heightened sense of connection.

Another relatively new aspect of academic life in Brazil that has made it easier to initiate transnational working relationships is the availability of resources to fund Brazilian researchers who wish to spend a few months or a year as visiting scholars at an overseas university, whether it be the bolsa sanduiche[4] for doctoral students or the postdoctoral fellowships for faculty. Over the last three decades I have had the pleasure of serving as supervisor or sponsor for about 45 Brazilian history professors and doctoral students, and this has not only immensely enriched my own intellectual experience (and hopefully, theirs as well!), but has also created a network of intellectual support and exchange that has benefited my students and colleagues at NYU and elsewhere.

Of course, there will always be scholars who, in one way or another, are "patrolling the borders," and who are on the look-out for the slightest sign of eurocentrism or hegemonic thinking among US-based historians of Brazil. That is to be expected. But it's a minor tendency: these days, given how much collaboration and interchange takes place between scholars in Brazil and in the US, I think it would be difficult to draw the boundaries, never mind guard them.

[4] This is a scholarship granted by the Brazilian government through the Programa Institucional de Doutorado-Sanduíche no Exterior (PDSE), of the Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior (CAPES), which allows doctoral candidates from Brazilian institutions to carry out part of their doctorate abroad.

3. IB - *Throughout your career, you have sought to publish both for the Brazilian public, in Portuguese, and for the American public and other readers, in English. Does this, while allowing greater circulation of research results, also require writing strategies that make texts intelligible in these different contexts? How did you deal with this issue when writing The Color of Modernity?*

BW - First, any author publishing in another language needs to have an excellent translator. I have written a few articles directly in Portuguese, and even those required a great deal of editing to be publishable. Translating an entire book into Portuguese would be well beyond my capacity. So I was fortunate that Edusp paired me with Ana Maria Fiorini, who took great care with the translation, and then worked closely with me (though at a distance—this was during the pandemic) to make sure that she had translated idiomatic phrases correctly, and that we were using the original Portuguese version of quotations that appear translated in the English version. It took me a while to find the original version of Martinico Prado's famous statement, "Immigrants with money are of no use to us"—which I, like many other scholars, found already translated (correctly) into English in Michael Hall's dissertation on Italian immigration. Several works translated this back into Portuguese, rendering it as "Imigrantes com dinheiro não têm utilidade para nos." I was pretty sure that Martinico Prado, speaking in the 1880s, didn't use the word "utilidade." I finally obtained, through inter-library loan, a volume with the speeches in the São Paulo provincial legislature, and there was the original quote: "Imigrante com fortuna não serve para nós." Now that's something I could imagine Martinico Prado saying.

And then there's the issue of how much contextual and explanatory material one should include. For the English version, I had to assume that even well-educated readers might know very little about Brazilian history, and so every name and event—Getúlio Vargas, the Modernist movement, the fact that São Paulo can refer to both the state and the state capital (like New York, NY)—required at least some brief explanation. Then the question is, how much of that should be removed from the Brazilian version? Certainly much of it can be deleted, but even some Brazilian readers may need a little contextual information for what might seem like basic facts. There is no "rule" for this, so the author and translator have to use their judgement.

Thanks to a testy remark in a review of the Portuguese version, I know I made at least one error of judgement. In the epilogue, where I discuss the "regionalization" of voting patterns in Brazil since the 2006 presidential election, I note that Brazil has direct voting—that is, no electoral college—so that regionalization doesn't have as extreme an impact on election results as it does in the United States. The reviewer pointed to this comment (which was purely explanatory for the English-language reader) as indicating that I regarded the US electoral college as normative, and the hegemonic model for elections everywhere. I read that claim with horror because (as I mention below) I regard the electoral college as one of the most anti-democratic features of political life in the United States, and I would enthusiastically celebrate its abolition. I am hoping that other readers won't (mis)interpret my very brief reference to the electoral college that way.

4. IB - *Throughout the book, you present several reflections that point to paradigmatic changes in contemporary social history. Please discuss the importance of discussions about the different forms of constitution of whiteness and the denaturalization of racialized notions within social discourses as examples of these transformations.*

BW - Prior to the 1990s and the cultural turn, scholars working in the vein of the "new social history" tended to focus on subaltern groups—workers, Blacks, women—whose identities were treated as self-evident, with certain pre-determined expectations (consciousness, political behavior) attached to them. Within that framework, "whiteness" was never a category to be interrogated. It was a kind of "default category." With the cultural turn, attention shifted to how these identities were constructed and under what circumstances they might be consolidated or destabilized. Can we talk about what it means to be "Black" if we don't consider what it means to be "white"? Similarly, can we interrogate notions of femininity without analyzing masculinity? And for a historian, there is the crucial question of how identities consolidated at a particular moment in time reflect the larger field of cultural circulation as well as the interests of those who are actively engaging in the process of identity formation. In the case of São Paulo, my point was that constructing an identity of regional exceptionalism and modernity linked to

whiteness was not just a question of attracting European immigrants but of constructing a historical narrative that distinguished São Paulo from other regions of Brazil, especially the Norte/Nordeste. I also wanted to emphasize that this association of São Paulo with whiteness was not simply a racist explanation for that region's emergence as the dynamic center of the Brazilian economy (i.e., its "locomotive"), but instead that ideas about São Paulo's exceptional past and present were constitutive elements of a project of regional hegemony. For me this was absolutely central to the process of denaturalizing racialized explanations for São Paulo's "exceptionalism."

5. IB - *In the same line as paradigmatic transformations, you mention, on pages 205 and 206, that it is necessary to move away from the commonplace that "winners write history", as at different times the losers can write their versions, transforming defeats into triumphs, as exemplified in the case of the São Paulo narrative about the Constitutionalist Revolution. But, in this case, I would like to ask you about the conditions of production and dissemination of narratives among the different social groups participating in the movement. Could we say that among them some were more defeated than others both in the production of meanings and in accessing the benefits of the triumphalist narrative?*

BW - Before replying directly to this excellent question, permit me to say that I would go even further and argue not only that sometimes the "losers" get to write history, but often it is difficult to determine who it was that won, and who it was that lost. The "opposing sides" in any conflict—especially once the conflict is over—are never as stable as they might seem. Everyone knows the Union defeated the Confederacy in the US Civil War, but the historians whose writings constructed the dominant narrative of postwar "Reconstruction" (that it failed because the freed slaves "weren't ready to become citizens"), and were based at northern universities like Columbia, shared the southerners' investment in White Supremacy. The Union army was victorious, the Confederacy was defeated, but the ideology of White Supremacy survived and thrived after the Civil War and the abolition of slavery.

In the case of the 1932 uprising, it is interesting to consider that the two main sources for the history and memory of the Constititutionalist Revolution (a label that

already implies a struggle over memory), both celebratory and critical, are products of São Paulo. Not much has been written about this episode by journalists and scholars from other parts of Brazil (with the exception of writers who had come from other states to fight with the paulistas). One large contingent of memory makers are the men (and a few women) who were "veterans" of the war, and who cultivated various means to maintain that memory—names of streets, names of buildings, mausoleums, monuments, school curricula, veterans' clubs. As for scholarly studies, most emerged from universities in São Paulo, and they have ranged from scathing critiques that portray the "revolution" as the product of elite manipulation, to more nuanced discussions of the motives for the uprising and the issues at stake. Especially noteworthy was the excellent collection of facsimile posters and documents issued by the São Paulo state archive to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the uprising, which provided a sense of the range of participants and perspectives, and managed to be critical without being dismissive. And there was a trend in the years following the issuing of the 1988 Constitution to emphasize the "constitutionalist" aspect of the Guerra de São Paulo, and the revolution's emphasis on restoring the rule of law. But in a São Paulo with a militant labor movement and millions of residents originally from the Nordeste, the 1932 uprising did not offer a unifying historical narrative. Instead, I think the memory of this episode has been captured by the right, and has become a kind of "meme" for the forces of regional resentment.

6. IB - *One of the key points of your analysis is the consideration that "São Paulo's economic success cemented the widely accepted association between whiteness and civilization, between whiteness and modernization, between whiteness and productivity" (p 44). What would be the main characteristics of this whiteness constructed in the 1932 narrative? What elements does it encompass? Which ones does it leave out?*

BW - One aspect of the 1932 uprising (and the months of mobilization against the Vargas government that preceded "9 de Julho") that made it so interesting to study is that we not only have access to the way the paulista press—with its dozens of publications—reported on the movement and the uprising, but we also have many chronicles and commentaries published in book form just before, during, and

immediately after the conflict. There is a mountain of material that allows us to perceive how paulistas with access to modes of publication were constructing or reinforcing certain elements of regional identity. So, for example, descriptions of battles always compared the modern, disciplined paulista combatants, the "fine flower" of paulista youth, with the "thugs" ("jagunços") recruited from the Nordeste by the pro-Vargas forces. Even Mário de Andrade, who ultimately decided that the 1932 revolt was a mistake, described São Paulo at thet time of the uprising as a "European Christian civilization" and its "invaders" as "primitive indigenous hordes." Representations—in word and image—of the conflict also gave special attention to the various modern weapons of war being used by paulista troops, and made much mention of the "armored train" and the rebel airforce. (In reality, one of the reasons the federal troops secured victory so quickly was São Paulo's shortage of modern, accurate weapons). Although the phrase "Constitutionalist Revolution" would become the semi-official name of the conflict, those writing about it at the time portrayed it as a "war" in the modern sense, complete with steel helmets and machine guns and grenades. In line with this tendency, the newspaper published specifically for distribution to the troops was called *Jornal das Trincheiras*.

As for what qualities associated with whiteness were left out or received less emphasis, I would say that explicit expressions of white supremacist discourse were relatively rare. To be sure, they were not absent, especially among those paulistas with separatist inclinations. But at least some spokespersons for the insurgent paulista government insisted that all were welcome to take up arms for São Paulo and pointed to the Legião Negra as evidence that the movement was not a racist one. Aside from the separatists and some other extreme regional chauvinists (Alfredo Ellis, Paulo Duarte), the only description of the movement that *overtly* linked it to the concept of white supremacy was (predictably) one written by the US consul to São Paulo, who declared that the paulistas were fighting to defend their "white man's culture."

There is another discourse that frequently circulates in a context of struggle between "white civilization" and "savage hordes"—the need to protect the honor of white women—that was almost entirely absent from the many writings and reporting about the 1932 uprising. In the fourth chapter I discuss the construction of the figure of the Paulista Woman/Mulher Paulista, and while that figure is idealized in a

number of stereotypical ways (devoted wife and mother), she also has some features that are not so typical. The Paulista Woman is repeatedly represented as "almost virile" and as more civic-minded than the frivolous women from other regions of Brazil. I recount an incident in which women protested because a paulista recruiting post depicted men who didn't volunteer as feminized cowards, wearing women's underwear. The protesters felt this was an insult to the many paulista women who had shown great courage in supporting the movement and serving as nurses on the frontlines of combat. These images of female strength and courage were incompatible with clichés about "protecting the little ladies from harm."

7. IB - *You also highlight that these definitions of whiteness, modernity and productivity are produced in opposition to an "other", which in this case is the Northeast region. What would be the main discursive operations and updates of memory throughout the periods studied to allow the construction of this opposition?*

BW - I started conceptualizing what became *The Color of Modernity* in the late 1990s, and in 1999 Durval Muniz de Albuquerque Jr. published his pathbreaking book, *A invenção do Nordeste e outras artes*. I had already noticed the frequent negative references to nordestinos in the chronicles of the 1932 uprising, and reading Durval's book not only convinced me that this was a key trope in the mobilization of paulistas against Vargas, but that it also drew upon previous pejorative stereotypes of nordestinos. Perhaps the earliest "hints" of this hostility toward the Nordeste can be detected in the republican movement (1870s-80s) and its call for federalism/decentralization, which reflected a perception that certain stagnant or declining regions were able to maintain unwarranted political dominance under the highly centralized imperial system. And then it became an instrument for justifying São Paulo's privileged position under the First Republic, or simply distancing paulista identity and society from "backwardness." Sometimes the nordestino was a figure of ridicule, a "cabeça chata" unprepared to navigate the modern world of São Paulo, and at other times an impediment to any attempt to sanitize, modernize, and develop Brazil. When Vargas - perhaps as a deliberate provocation - appointed the pernambucano tenente João Alberto Lins de Barros as interventor of São Paulo (1930-31), these images of the nordestino as "out of place" in cosmopolitan São Paulo

became particularly popular. And then, once the armed conflict began, the dominant stereotype was the figure of the mindless, savage jagunço, lifted from the pages of Euclides da Cunha's *Os sertões* and rendered in the most negative light.

What was also evident to me was the instability of the nordestino as a racial category. Sometimes the nordestino was a "cabeça chata," or a mestiço of one sort or another, but at other times he was a mulato or negro. In other words, "nordestino" was certainly a racialized category, but it was not always racialized in the same way.

8. IB - *When analyzing the organization of events alluding to the IV Centenary of the city of São Paulo, in 1954, and the role of the Constitutionalist Revolution in that context, you mention that the organizing committee still saw "Paulistaness" as the property of a specific social group [elite , white and cultured] (p. 426). However, at that moment the disputes and re-elaborations of meanings around the date became more visible. What factors would explain these new tensions?*

BW - In the paragraph where I make that comment, I make two other points that I think are especially relevant for your question. First, I note the obvious disdain manifested by the members of the organizing commission toward activities or events of a "popular" character. They regard it as a necessary concession to the "masses," but these events evidently ran counter to their mission to present São Paulo as a modern, sophisticated city whose residents—at least the ones who "count"—have good taste and discernment. But I close the paragraph by noting that it was virtually impossible for the organizing commission, whatever their aesthetic preferences might have been, to cater exclusively to the educated middle and upper classes, given the rapid changes in São Paulo, including in the political sphere, from the 1940s on.

Two incidents are particularly illustrative of this dilemma. Jânio Quadros, who was mayor of São Paulo in 1954, was also running for governor of the state, and evidently decided to distance himself from the festivities associated with the IV Centenário—he managed to be traveling abroad during certain key events, so that the vice-mayor, Porphyrio da Paz, assumed many of the ceremonial functions. Jânio also fired Cicillo Matarazzo as head of the commission after the carnaval procession was completely mismanaged. But the biggest "scandal" was a comment by Jânio's

campaign manager at a rally in the interior in which he reportedly rejected the claim, cherished by many self-styled "quatrocentões," that the bandeirante inheritance was the basis for São Paulo's exceptional prosperity and modernity. Instead, the manager claimed that the region's progress was attributable to the (European) immigrants who flooded into the state after abolition, and ended by declaring that "I don't see any reason to take pride in being descended from Fernão Dias' harem." ["Não vejo honra nenhuma em descender do harém de Fernão Dias."]

The other incident involved the effort by representatives of São Paulo's Black community to convince a very reluctant organizing commission (now headed by the Modernist poet Guilherme de Almeida) to officially sponsor and subsidize the festivities for the inauguration of the statue honoring the "Black Mother" (Mãe Preta). Once again, it was evident that the members of the commission had little enthusiasm for the event, and were inclined to refuse the request. It was also evident that the Afro-Paulista leadership understood the reasons for the reluctance: in one letter they noted that every group that had contributed to São Paulo's greatness had been celebrated during the IV Centenário "with the exception of the blacks."

I think both of these episodes demonstrate how difficult it had become for a small segment of São Paulo's economic and intellectual elite to impose its vision of the region's past, present, and future. Whether it was the tension between the celebration of whiteness and the notion of Brazil as a racial democracy, or the dispute over the causes of São Paulo's "exceptionalism" (which can be abbreviated as "bandeirante vs. imigrante", with the afro-paulistas entirely omitted), the organizing commission repeatedly found itself to be the target of denunciations and criticisms.

9. IB - *Still in relation to the 1954 festivities, you present a series of events, covering different audiences, some with a more educational nature, others more focused on fun. Regarding the historical exhibition, coordinated by historian Jaime Cortesão, you note his intention to present an exhibition that was "both edifying and entertaining, as well as acceptable from an academic point of view" (p. 476). When reading this passage, I was thinking about the persistence of difficulties in relations between academia and society, at the same time that we follow the emergence of new perspectives such as, for example, public history. How do you analyze this issue?*

BW - I regard the transformation of "public history" into a major field of expertise (both in Brazil and in the US) as a very positive and welcome development. Over the last 20 years, the field has become much more respected, rather than being viewed as "History-Light." It has become more creative and it has become a significant source of prestige to curate a major historical exhibit. But it is still a challenge to figure out how to make historical *interpretation* appealing and intelligible to a larger public. In other words, how do we make it clear that even narratives are a form of interpretation? How can we indicate in exhibits that there isn't one "correct" story-line, and that the way historians think about certain issues has changed dramatically over time? I just finished teaching an undergraduate course on post-independence Latin America and in the evaluations of the course, several students said the aspect of the course they most enjoyed was the discussion of how approaches to various issues (abolition of slavery in Cuba and Brazil, the rise of populism in Argentina, etc.) have changed over time. But these students spent 35 hours with me in the classroom over the course of the semester; there was plenty of time to discuss why and how thinking about certain issues had changed so radically. When mounting an exhibit or some other platform for public history, you have to prioritize elements that grab the public's attention, and you have to be careful to portray historical figures, episodes, questions in a way that is not too confusing. If you're working with people from a particular community, you have to take into consideration their sensibilities and historical traditions. And if you acknowledge the instability of historical interpretation, a certain portion of your audience will wonder whether History has any value if historians can't tell us exacty what happened and why (even though every field of academic research experiences shifts in interpretation and perspective—that is why scholars do research). In other words, I think doing really good public history is a serious challenge, but I also think that public history is crucial for convincing the public that History is a field of inquiry that deserves their support.

10. IB - *In the epilogue you argue that "the negative images of northeastern people should not be seen as 'remnants' of a previous conflict but rather as changeable visual and verbal tropes that circulate widely in Brazilian society and*

that were available to be revived, reconfigured and used whenever hierarchies considered 'natural' were called into question" (p. 572). So, to conclude, I would like to ask you how you perceive the exacerbation of racist narratives and the resurgence of regional hierarchies observed in Brazil in recent years? In your opinion, what aspects of the regional and national were highlighted in this contemporary political arena?

BW - When I wrote the epilogue, about ten years ago, the regional divisions in Brazilian politics were not yet so obvious. Lula left office in 2011 with an approval rating of more than 80 percent, so there seemed to be a general agreement across the Brazilian nation that Lula's presidency had been good for all of Brazil. Even so, when I looked at the electoral maps for Fernando Henrique's two elections and Lula's first election to the presidency, I was impressed by how "national" the vote was. Almost all of the states gave a majority of their votes to FHC in both 1994 and 1998. And in 2002, only Alagoas did not give a majority of its votes to Lula. In other words, regionalization was definitely not an inevitable or predictable feature of electoral patterns in Brazil. What accounts for this recent and troubling development, I would argue, is the assumption that PT policies have been most beneficial for the poorest Brazilians, who are concentrated in the North and Northeast of the nation. (Without going too far into the question, I should say that I think millions of Brazilians who moved into the growing middle class in the first decade of this century did so precisely because of PT policies that favored consumerism and expanded access to higher education—it is by no means only the poorest Brazilians that benefited from PT programs.) This assumption reinforces support for the PT among lower-income voters, but it alienates many middle- and upper-class voters who resented the purported redistribution of resources, especially when a decline in the economy made their middle-class status more precarious. And this type of resentment almost always is coupled with a discourse that disparages the poor, that portrays them as in some way responsible for their own poverty (they're lazy, they have too many children, etc.) And such discourses, with their emphasis on intrinsic qualities, typically rely as well on racist language and images. Of course, the political divisions in Brazil (as in the US) are not entirely "black and white," both in the literal and metaphorical sense. Certain issues, such as violent crime, cut across social class, region, and racial

identity. To return to a topic mentioned earlier, because Brazil has a more democratic electoral system (no electoral college, voting is mandatory) than the United States, political regionalization does not have as severe consequences in Brazil. But at the same time, it certainly played a role in Bolsonaro's 2018 electoral victory, as well as the alarmingly close presidential election results in 2022.

References:

BURNS, Bradford. **A History of Brazil**. New York, Columbia University Press, 1970.

FERREIRA, Jr. Amarilio. **Prefácio**. In: Hayashi, Carlos Roberto (Org.). **Inventários 1**, Coleção Emília Viotti da Costa. São Carlos, Unidade Especial de Informação e Memória / CECH / UFSCar, 2006. Disponível em: https://www.ueim.ufscar.br/colecoes/colecao-emilia-viotti-da-costa Acesso em: 12/11/2023.

CAPELATO, Maria Helena e PRADO Maria Lígia **O Bravo Matutino**: imprensa e ideologia no jornal "O Estado de São Paulo". São Paulo: Ed. Alfa-ômega, 1980.

WEINSTEIN, Barbara. **A borracha na Amazônia**: expansão e decadência. São Paulo, Hucitec.Edusp, 1993.

WEINSTEIN, Barbara. As mulheres trabalhadoras em São Paulo: de operárias não qualificadas a esposas profissionais. **Cadernos Pagu**, n. 4, p. 143.171, 1995. Disponível em: https://periodicos.sbu.unicamp.br/ojs/index.php/cadpagu/article/view/1766/1821 Acesso em: 10/12/2023.

WEINSTEIN, Barbara. A pesquisa sobre identidade e cidadania nos EUA: da Nova História Social a Nova História Cultural. **Revista Brasileira de História**, v. 18, n. 35, p. 227. 246, 1998. Disponível em: https://www.scielo.br/j/rbh/a/9tvXk99bv8YsLdkZn67RNJv/# Acesso em: 25/11/2023.

WEINSTEIN, Barbara. **A (re)formação da classe trabalhadora no Brasil (1920-1964)**. São Paulo: Editora Cortez, 2000.

WEINSTEIN, Barbara. Experiência de pesquisa em uma região periférica: a Amazônia. História, Ciências, Saúde. **Manguinhos**, v. 9, n. 2, p. 261.272, maio-ago. 2002. Disponível em: https://www.scielo.br/j/hcsm/a/cFFmQ3hJRJRzVRhj4npXfKM/ Acesso em: 25/11/2023.

WEINSTEIN, Barbara. Racializando as diferenças regionais: São Paulo X Brasil, 1932. **Revista Esboços**, v. 13, n. 16, p. 281.303, 2006. Disponível em: https://periodicos.ufsc.br/index.php/esbocos/article/view/133/177 Acesso em: 26/11/2023.

WEINSTEIN, Barbara. Sou ainda uma Brazilianist ? **Revista Brasileira de História**, v. 36, nº 72, 2016, p. 195-217. Disponível em: https://www.scielo.br/j/rbh/a/nFbH9zvyDSqsXxfcbRPsfsf/?format=pdf&lang=PT Acesso em: 27/02/2024.

WEINSTEIN, Barbara. **A Cor da Modernidade**: A Branquitude e a Formação da Identidade Paulista. São Paulo, EDUSP, 2022.

XAVIER, Regina. Entrevista com Barbara Weinstein. **Revista Anos 90**, v. 15, n. 27, p. 387-404, jul. 2008. Disponível em: https://seer.ufrgs.br/index.php/anos90/article/view/6750/4052 Acesso em: 12/11/2023.

Received in August 2024
Approved in August 2024