

2011

Review of: Joshua Goode, *Impurity of Blood: Defining Race in Spain, 1870-1930*

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Recommended Citation

Ortiz, David (2011) "Review of: Joshua Goode, *Impurity of Blood: Defining Race in Spain, 1870-1930*," *Bulletin for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies*: Vol. 35 : Iss. 1 , Article 18.

<https://doi.org/10.26431/0739-182X.1031>

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.asphs.net/bsphs/vol35/iss1/18>

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Goode, Joshua. *Impurity of Blood: Defining Race in Spain, 1870-1930*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2009. 218 pp.

E.P. Thompson famously wrote “class is a relationship and not a thing” in his classic *The Making of the English Working Class*. Since then, regarding identities, historians take the relationship between ideas and their social construction as axiomatic. Indeed, Laura Tabili’s article (*JSH* 2003), “Race is a Relationship, and not a Thing,” underscores Thompson’s proviso, extending it to social constructions of racial identities. Joshua Goode’s *Impurity of Blood* approaches racial thought, and its practical application in turn-of-the-century-Spain, similarly. Those familiar with social theory will not find novelty in Goode’s approach. They will quickly discover the conscientious, intelligent, and thorough research of a professional historian who did the legwork – no mean feat where racial thought is concerned. In chapter one, they will also encounter, arguably, the clearest available introduction to contemporary racial theory.

Impurity of Blood is a path-breaking history of the development of racial thought in Spain. It dispels common assumptions about the study of race, most notably, that “historians of Europe have focused on race through the lens of the Nazi regime, forming an implicit and often explicit comparison between any manifestation of racial language and the Nazi genocide performed in the name of a supposed racial purity” (p.3). In this, one calls to mind the old comparisons of industrial development that modeled England as the archetype against which most other states could only be seen as later, typically lesser, imitations. Goode’s work understands race as “a process, as a mode of thought, a system of (il)logic, rather than a fixed and clear idea” (p. 5). Consequently, “What Spain’s manifest notion of racial fusion proves is that the structure of racial thought—the logical connections between ideas and social deployment of these ideas—is a constant in the formation of racial ideas, regardless of the definition”(p.5). Goode thoroughly examines the origins of Spanish racial thought, connecting Spanish racial theory to a Europe-wide discussion of race during the fin-de-siglo period.

Goode’s book unfolds like an ensemble drama, each chapter introducing a key historical actor to the story. Each actor’s role (originator, popularizer, politicizer, data-gatherer) is important in the production and application of racial thought in Spain, all associated, in some way, with the burgeoning field of Spanish anthropology, the source of racial theory. This is so well done that I found myself liking (Aranzadi, early Pulido) or disliking (Antón, Olóriz) the

historical actors based on my own thoughts about race and ethnicity as they collided with those of Goode and his characters. This combined with the hilarity factor, for example; the continued use of craniometry as a credible scientific basis for making racial distinctions, made *Impurity of Blood* an enjoyable read that I highly recommend. Goode's narrative captures and holds the reader's attention with his story's adept combination of biography, history of anthropology, intellectual history of racial thought, and socio-political history of racial thought's deployment in Spain.

The litmus test of good history is its relevance and *Impurity of Blood* is impressive here as its narrative development of racial thought consistently couples historical and contemporary relevance. The reader learns that racial thought is a continuum that includes, but is not the same as, racist thought, is socially constructed and changes over time depending on historical context. Goode suggests that Spanish racial thought, expressed as racial fusion, may have been more dangerous than overtly racist thought because it was more malleable and readily manipulated to serve a particular social, political, even economic purpose. Spanish anthropologists were the fountainhead of racial thought and they borrowed, mimicked, and reinterpreted European racial thought in order to support and advance their study of race in Spain. Their fluid cross-cultural contacts with European racial theorists provided Spanish racial thought with a continuity that aided in its diffusion into Spain's political and social discourse. Finally, anthropologists and other scientists that produced Spanish racial discourse linked Spain securely to European racial discourse, rather than differentiating Spain from it. Thus, the reader will also learn that discussions of race and racial theory were common to the cultural milieu of European societies and that a discourse of racial thought and its relationship to state and social development was 'in the air' in Europe between 1870 and 1930.

Goode begins *Impurity of Blood* with an anecdote about General Francisco Franco's screenplay *Raza* to highlight the Spanish axiom that, especially on the topic of race, Spain is different, not racist. I know of no place on the planet where racial/ethnic identity is not a problematic component in socio-political discourse. Despite Franco Regime and later Spanish efforts to paper over problems of race in Spain, one idea that clearly permeates the pages of Goode's work is that, racial fusion or no, on the matter of racial thought and its inclusive/exclusive dimensions, *España no es diferente*.

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