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"*NEGRO* IS A NICKNAME THAT THE WHITES GAVE TO THE BLACKS": DISCOURSES ON COLOR, RACE AND RACISM IN RIO DE JANEIRO

by

ROBIN E. SHERIFF

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Anthropology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

1997

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April 24, 1997
Date

Chair of Examining Committee

23 April 1997
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THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

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For those who have fled and those who remain
and in memory of Frances Anne McNarney

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Being invisible and without substance, a disembodied voice, as it were, what else could I do? What else but try to tell you what was really happening when your eyes were looking through? And it is this which frightens me:

Who knows but that, on the lower frequencies, I speak for you?

Ralph Ellison

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1

Introduction: The Hill

Morro do Sangue Bom: Official and Unofficial Histories

> Twilight began while I was some miles in the woods, and a sensation of fear crept over me from recollections of stories of runaway slaves robbing stray wanderers after nightfall. Having no stick, I stepped aside at an angle of the path, and cut one from a paineira tree. While removing the spines with a knife, a tall Negro with an ominous-looking staff burst suddenly on me. He stood, gazed, passed on, and anon returned with club upraised. I tried to look bold, and asked what he wanted. He understood not the words, but comprehended my wants. Seeing I had got a poor branch -- one not worth dressing, and whose prickles had drawn blood from my fingers -- with a smile he drew near and offered me his. I hesitated, when he gently put it in my hand and went on his way. Ashamed of my suspicions, I called after him, and with difficulty got the kind-hearted man to accept a slight acknowledgment of his good will. It was dark when I arrived in the artificial world below (Ewbank, 1856:428-29).

The above passage was written by Thomas Ewbank, an English gentleman traveler who sojourned in the city of Rio de Janeiro in the early 1850s, more than thirty years before the abolition of slavery in Brazil. On the occasion Ewbank describes, he had hiked alone and unarmed into the dense tropical forests of Santa Teresa, a mounded series of steeply rising and nearly inaccessible hills, to make sketches of the vistas there, which then, as today, offered unparalleled views of the "artificial world" below.

It is small wonder that both Ewbank and the "kind-hearted man" that he met in the darkening woods sought, though for very different reasons, to escape from that world and to view it from afar. It was, by all accounts, one of enormous suffering, cruelty, voluptuous lethargy, absurd pageantry and easy death. Foreign travelers who wrote about Rio were

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impressed not only by the natural splendors of the wilderness that hemmed the city but by the human bodies that clogged its elite parlors and that ran, limped and collapsed -- and certainly despaired -- along its narrow, muddy and stinking streets.

Having escaped from Napoleon's armies in 1808, the Portuguese emperor lazily presided over the city and its elite families, "slovenly, flabby, his fingers sticky with chicken gravy." "It is a principle with them to sit and rest as much as possible," one traveler wrote of Rio's listless elite, "With this view of life, they eat, sleep, keep their temper and grow fat" (Stewart, 1857:274). "Calm and composed, quiet and noiseless" (Ibid) the bodies of the wealthy were pale and "very corpulent, from their living well and taking little exercise" (Gardner, 1970:4). Exceptions were made on holidays and Sundays when "in their best dresses, and in formal procession of two and two" (Ibid:295) "some of the fattest ladies and gentlemen" (Ewbank, 1856:274) were to be seen promenading in Rio's majestic parks and going to and from worship, followed by a retinue of liveried but barefoot house slaves.[1] "I would ... implore them to think," one writer remarked, "of the evil slavery brings, not only to the Negroes but to themselves, not only to themselves but to their families and their posterity" (Graham1824:228).

Not far from these pampered settings, Rio's auction houses sold "crockery-ware, old books, shoes, pickles, etc." as well as "living beings." "They were of every shade, from deep Angola jet to white or nearly white" (Ewbank 1856:282, 283). "Rows of young creatures were sitting," another writer observed, "their heads shaved, their bodies emaciated, and the marks of recent itch upon their skins" (Graham, 1924:227) The "anguish" of mothers who were "brought out, exposed, examined, and disposed of," was matched by "weeping" children, "obviously dreading to be torn away." (Ewbank, 1856:283) Others lay wasting from disease, hunger, and a gruesome journey across the Atlantic or the colony, "evidently too sick to sit up" (Graham, 1824:Ibid). Meanwhile, throughout the streets of the city, "coffee-bag carriers, their naked bodies reeking with oily sweat," arrived from the countryside, bearing on their backs their

[1] By law, slaves were forbidden to wear shoes so that they might be easily distinguished from freedmen.

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masters' exportable products while others, "tugging and hauling and pushing over the rough pavements heavily laden trucks and carts," transported for their urban masters "an overload for an equal number of mules or horses" (Stewart, 1956:72). Those who rebelled were submitted to the "heaviest and cruelest instruments of torture... doubling the bodies of the victims into the most painful and unnatural positions" (Ewbank, 1856:438).

Suicide among the enslaved was rife and many of those who fled from forced toil had, in fact, "reached the spirit land" (Ewbank, 1856:281). While the swollen wealthy dined on the best of everything the colony could offer, slaves stuffed themselves with dirt (Koster, 1817:213) and were buried in shallow graves in the woods or simply thrown upon the wide, crescent-shaped beaches of Rio, where dogs did "their work of abomination" (Graham, 1824: 111). Some evidently, escaped from this fate and fled to the wilderness of Santa Teresa. There, they "harbor[ed]... and prowl[ed] for means to live" and slaked their thirst from the legendary waters of the Mae d'Agua River (Ewbank: 428). They would have done so at, or close to, the site of the present-day community that I pseudonymously call Morro do Sangue Bom[2], a shantytown that clings precariously to the awkward tilt of Santa Teresa's highest peak.

Those who now live in Morro do Sangue Bom, most of whom know themselves to be the descendants of both urban and rural "*cativos*" or captives, tell the tale that their hillside community is built upon the bones of slaves. My nine year-old friend Tiago, one of the first to tell me this simple and unembellished story, only shivered and said, "Who knows?" when I asked him if the garbage-strewn, windswept plateau on which we had gone walking might be haunted.

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[2] Morro do Sangue Bom translates literally as "Hill of Good Blood." *Sangue bom* is a slang expression used to describe a person -- whether he or she is a old friend or one newly met -- whom one can trust, who does not put on airs, and who communicates in a warm, easy-going, open and unpretentious manner. Someone who is *sangue bom* is therefore said, by people in the community, to be "like us" or is "one of us." It connotes people who are *humilde*, or humble, itself a term which connotes both a kind of honesty and working class status. For many people as well, it is a favorable reference to "*pessoas de cor*" or people of color. Although my informants say that "the blood is the same," when referring to the inherent equality between whites and people of color, "*sangue bom*" invokes notions of race through the metaphor of blood but inverts the typically pejorative associations of blackness by giving them a distinctly positive spin.

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Even in the 1990s, Morro do Sangue Bom abuts, what is -- given its location in the center of one of the world's most densely populated cities -- a massive tropical forest. Tiago and his playmates feared the *lobisomem* or werewolf and as his elders knew, vicious gangsters and death squads sometimes dumped the bodies of their victims in the woods nearby. Still, no one, from what I could gather, spoke of the ghosts of slaves, but only commented on occasion, on their buried bones.

The story may well be apocryphal; I could find no confirmatory documents that hinted at a "cemetery of slaves" in the area. Given the careless lassitude with which deceased captives were apparently laid to their final rest, I had difficulty imagining that their masters would have had them carried so far, high into a place that held fear for so many. I like to imagine that the rumored dead were *quilombolas*, escaped slaves who, while not entirely free, would have worked and lived for themselves and for each other, and buried their own with feeling and respect.

The transport of Tiago's African ancestors to Brazil began in the late sixteenth century and continued openly until 1850, when the colony finally submitted to British pressures to abolish the transatlantic slave trade. After that year, slave merchants, most of them Portuguese, set anchor outside of the major ports and continued a reduced and clandestine traffic. The internal trade in Africans and *crioulos*, the sons and daughters of Africans, increased. It is estimated that during the entire length of the transatlantic trade, three and a half million Africans were sequestered in Brazil, more, that is, than in any other country in the world (Curtin, 1969; Klein, 1986).

The continuing vitality and reinterpretation of Brazilian syncretistic traditions[3] which originated in part in an amalgam of African traditions, is attributed to the constant influx of Africans into the colony (Ibid) and to the relative lack of control that Brazilian slave owners

[3] Although I refer to traditions that continue to be associated with Africa and Africans, many of the cultural elements that were historically associated with African-Brazilians, have been, as Fry (1982) cogently notes, racially and politically neutralized. As such they have been harnessed to the service of representing a mainstream, national Brazilian culture.

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were able to exercise over the cultural practices of slaves (Harris, 1964). The enslaved were primarily, like their counterparts in the United States and the Caribbean, from diverse ethnic groups in west Africa and southwest Africa, although Mozambicans arrived in the nineteenth century. Some were from Islamicized groups such as the Hausa; many commanded written Arabic and were thus more literate than their masters. The slave population was internally divided, not only in terms of differences, and at times oppositions, between Brazilian-born and African captives but in terms of ethnicity and religion, both of which played a role in some of the most dramatic slave uprisings, particularly in northeastern Brazil (see especially, Reis, 1988). Within the religious arena, the practices the "Nago" or Yoruba people emerged as the predominant national influence, as is evidenced by the contemporary popularity of Candomble and Umbanda, both of which are spirit-possession religions. Still, the slave population of Rio de Janeiro, as was true of the rest of the colony, was an ethnically diverse one. In 1952, during the height of Brazil's internal slave trade, and several years before Ewbank's visit to Brazil, there was an enormous influx of African-born slaves into Rio de Janeiro. Some were called "Minas," and were members of the Fanti-Ashanti peoples of West Africa, and many others, of unidentified ethnicity, were Angolan (Klein, 1971:577).

As the soils of the sugar producing region in the north of the country became exhausted in the early nineteenth century, the bulk of the slave population shifted southwards, to labor on coffee plantations in the states of Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Minas Gerais, and in the soon-to-be depleted mines of the latter state. By the early 1870s, the state of Rio de Janeiro had the largest slave population within the country, at approximately 300,000 (Graham, 1970:436; see also Klein, 1971; Russell-Wood, 1982; Stein, 1957). Free people of color were by then numerous and during the same period, approximately 38 percent of all people of color in the countryside of the state of Rio de Janeiro were freedmen; in the city of Rio, approximately 60 percent were freedmen (Klein, 1969: 36).

In the waning years of the nineteenth century a combination of declining profits among plantation owners, increasing abolitionist fervor (much of it centered in Rio de Janeiro) (Conrad,

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1972; Toplin, 1975) the increasing use, by escaped and physically abused slaves, of the legal intercession of the courts (Chalhoub, 1990; Andrews, 1991) and, significantly, the factor of slave rebellions, and the fear of rebellions (Moura, 1981; Reis and Silva, 1989) led to a series of half measures by which increasing numbers of slaves were or would be liberated. The most sweeping of these measures, the Law of the Free Womb, passed in 1871, granted freedom upon majority, to the children of all slave mothers. Slavery was finally abolished completely in 1888, making Brazil the last New World country to do so.

Convinced that newly liberated plantation workers would no longer work for their former masters, planters and politicians convened to recruit labor, mostly from Europe, through subsidized immigration (Andrews, 1991; Skidmore, 1993). This helped to set the stage for a competitive labor market, first in rural and then in urban areas, in which people of color were relegated to the bottom of the labor hierarchy. While some former slaves and their families quickly left the plantations where they lived and worked at the time of abolition, others remained. Several people in Morro do Sangue Bom told me that their parents, grandparents and great parents remained, if not on the very plantations on which they had been enslaved, then within the same rural neighborhoods. They recollected the crumbling remains of *senzalas* or slave quarters and the rotting stocks and other torture devices that had been used in the not so distant past.

For newly liberated agricultural workers, abolition would have produced few immediate changes in the way they lived and labored. The same was also true for Rio's urbanized former slaves, many of whom would have been, during the "time of captivity," what were called "*negros de ganho*," slaves who were hired out by their masters to perform skilled and semi-skilled labor as well as the most menial tasks of maintaining the urban households of the relatively well-to-do (Graham, S., 1988).

Capitalist formation, industrialization, bureaucratization, urbanization and the new forms of class consolidation they generated came earlier to Brazil's southeastern region -- of which Rio de Janeiro is a part -- than to the middle and northern regions of the country. In 1930, world

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prices for Brazil's agricultural products fell sharply and initiated increased investment in the industrial sector as well as a steady flow of rural workers into the major cities. Some would have been incorporated into the growing industrial working class while others would have pursued livelihoods through the secondary urban economy. For urban women of color, the performance of domestic servitude was a constant throughout the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

It was particularly during the decade of the 1930s that many of Rio's oldest "*favelas*" or hillside shantytowns were first settled. Precise dates are unclear but this was the period during which Morro do Sangue Bom became a recognized and named community (Prefeitura da Cidade do Rio de Janeiro, 1990). Whether the first settlers arrived before abolition as *quilombolas*, or not until the early 1930s as poor wage laborers incorporated into the expanding urban economy, many would have been *cariocas*, or natives of the city of Rio. Their numbers would have been slowly augmented by immigrants from the Rio countryside, as well as from the states of Minas Gerais and Espirito Santo.

Nearly everyone I knew in Morro do Sangue Bom who was under the age of forty had been born and raised in the community. Some of their parents had been *cariocas* but most were from rural areas; they had arrived in Morro do Sangue Bom as young adults or teenagers during the 1940s and 1950s. Unable to afford even the most substandard rental spaces in the city center, they were part of an ever-expanding population of urban poor who had no alternative but to build first crude shacks, and then small brick or wood houses on the city's hillsides. By 1949, 17 percent of Rio's population lived in such hillside communities. Extremely "rustic" houses could be built with the two or three month's worth of an average poor worker's salary. Among other factors, the relative ease with which the poor housed themselves -- albeit in conditions of "*miseria*" or misery -- contributed to the extremely slow growth in wages (Pearse, 1961).

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Many *favelas* (whose residents tend to prefer the softer, somewhat euphemistic term, "Morro," or hill to designate their communities)[4] began, of course, as illegal squatter communities. Several of Morro do Sangue Bom's older residents told me that their Morro had once belonged to a wealthy German family who sought to regain control of the land and to evict its home builders in the early 1940s. Despite the relative isolation of the community and the greater-than-average difficulties it posed in terms of transportation to and from the city center, the residents of Morro do Sangue Bom were desperate to preserve their foothold on the hill. They marched en masse, as the story goes (see also, Prefeitura, 1990), to seek the protection and patronage of Dona Darci, the sister of Brazil's charismatic populist dictator/president, Getulio Vargas. As Brazil had sided with the Allies in the World War that was then raging overseas, Dona Darci was moved to dispossess the Germans of the land and to donate it, free and clear, to the people of Morro do Sangue Bom.

When I was living in the community between 1990 and 1992, it had a population that I estimated at approximately 5,500; such figures are always, besides inexact, highly contested. Older adults, including those in their thirties and forties could recall a time in their childhood, when the hill was still "wild," almost "*mata*" or bush. Houses were relatively sparse; trees, some of them fruit-bearing, and small snake-infested gardens lay between them. Its real boom then, probably occurred as late as the 1960s and/or the 1970s, when newcomers from the northeastern states of Paraiba and Bahia arrived, along with a steady trickle of *mineiros*, people from both the urban and rural towns of the neighboring state of Minas Gerais. Other families and individuals relocated to Morro do Sangue Bom after originally settling in Rio's more centrally-located shantytowns, some of which were razed in the 1960s and 1970s to make room for the city's expanding middle class (see Perlman, 1976).

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[4] Throughout this dissertation I tend to follow local usage. For the most part, when I use the term *favela*, I intend it in the technical and generic sense, as it is used within a particular literature, or alternatively, to quote or index the speech of outsiders. In this latter sense, it is best translated as "slum" and like its English equivalent, it is, in the ears of those who live in Rio's *morros*, an extremely pejorative term.

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By 1970, there were approximately 300 *favelas* within the city of Rio de Janeiro; they housed approximately one million people, about half of them *cariocas*. In the same year, 30 percent were reported to be unemployed. Fifty percent of the employed worked in industry and civil construction, and another 20 percent were engaged in domestic service. More than half of the employed earned only one minimum salary, an amount well under $US100 per month (Nunes, 1976). By 1990, it was estimated that 25 percent of the city's population -- about one and a half million people -- were housed in hillside shantytowns. No firm count of the current number of *favela* communities within Rio exists, but it is now estimated at over 500 (Pedrosa, et. al., 1990).

No water was piped into Morro do Sangue Bom until sometime in the late 1970s. Before that time, I was told, water was fetched about two or three times a week, from a natural spring at the edge of the forest about three miles down the road. The able-bodied made these trips after work, and head-toting large metal canisters, returned after three o'clock in the morning, feeling their way gingerly up the steep hillside, for there was, at that time, no electricity to light their way. Because of the difficulty of carrying loads -- which might include anything from refrigerators, to metal barrels of cooking gas, to a week's worth of groceries -- houses at the bottom of the hill still tend to be considered more desirable. Those living at the top however, are compensated by a magnificent view of Rio-in-the-round.

Electricity also arrived in the late 1970s, through an arrangement that was brokered between residents and local political patrons. Some paid electric bills, while others, perhaps a majority, lighted their houses and operated their televisions, stereos and irons with pirated lines. During heavy rainstorms, which were frequent, the community often lost power for hours at a time and sometimes the water supply ran dry for several days. The community's largest drainage ditches, which carried both rain water and sewage, and served as a breeding ground for rats, remained open and often overflowed onto the busy footpaths until 1991, when they were finally sealed through a combination of municipal funds and local labor. All of these advances, called "*urbanizacao*" (urbanization) were the proud accomplishments of a group of men and women

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who were directly involved in, or closely associated with, the residents association, which had been in existence since the early 1970s. Operating within a number of overlapping, local political arenas, such as the city-wide "*coligacao*" or federation of *favelas*, these people had considerable political and bureaucratic savvy (see Gay, 1994; Leeds and Leeds, 1970; Perlman, 1976; Valladares, 1978; Zaluar, 1985).

It must be emphasized that *favelas*, particularly those in Rio, are often figured in both national and international contexts as Brazil's worst urban nightmare. They have always been associated with violence and what many writers have called "promiscuity." Although the late 1980s and 1990s have seen a dramatic increase in violence related to drug trafficking, making middle-class fears seem something like a self-fulfilling prophecy[5], criminal activity has always been and remains a much frowned-upon pursuit of a small minority of *favela* inhabitants. The frequency with which this fact is overlooked in everyday discourses is often reflected in the way in which writers have figured the "typical *favelado*" for their middle-class audiences, the vast majority of whom, of course, have never visited a *favela*.

In 1947, for example, one writer asserted that "the children and the adults live in horrible promiscuity, creating addictions of roguery and frequenting literal schools of crime" (Oliverira, 1947:52). Partially contradicting a stereotype that remains very much intact in the 1990s, another writer commented that, "the *favela* inhabitant, for the most part, is a good person who works or who wants to work," but he added that, "The child, normally, lives in promiscuity and as a product of this environment, grows up beaten down by the bad elements and through their examples, becomes, as time passes, a criminal (*marginal*)" (Abujamra, 1967:46). Even when it is acknowledged that people who live in *favelas* "may never turn themselves into criminals" they are believed to be "dangerous." In a book revealingly entitled, "Bandits and *Favelas*: A

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[5] Although journalistic reports on this upsurge in drug-related violence are ubiquitous in the Brazilian news media, they rarely if ever mention the degree to which middle-class drug consumers -- the obviously critical demand side of the equation -- contribute to the creation, maintenance and escalation of vicious entrepreneurial competition.

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Contribution to the Study of the Marginal Environment of Rio" (my translation), one writer remarked in 1984;

> .... The marginal is that individual who will not always be an infractor of the laws of conventional society but who becomes socially *dangerous* through the potential risks that he exhibits: faced with the structure of his personality, modeled within a climate of violence, having to live with crime, although he does not practice it, with narcotics, although he does not use them, with prostitution even though he does not exercise or favor it (1984:12; emphasis in original).

Notably, both the popular and the scholarly literatures that deal with *favelas* and their inhabitants are remarkably silent on the issues of color, race and racism -- despite the fact that Rio's *morros* are stereotypically associated with *negros* and with blackness. In strictly demographic terms, this association is justified. Through an informal survey, I estimated that at least 75 percent of the residents of Morro do Sangue Bom were of color. When it is argued that demographic realities strongly suggest the existence of *de facto* residential segregation however, (Telles,1992), many *cariocas* (including some of my informants on the *morro*) remark that there are whites living in *favelas* also. These whites are stereotypically associated, not with *cariocas*, but with impoverished and frequently illiterate and unskilled immigrants from Brazil's northeastern states. My work in Morro do Sangue Bom suggests that this is, once again, partly justified, for many of the community's white families are from the state of Paraiba.

Because people of color so obviously predominate in Rio's *favelas*, people in Morro do Sangue Bom occasionally refer to Morros in general as "*o lugar dos negros*" or the place of the blacks. Black militants often rhetorically compare the *favela* to the *senzala*, or slave quarters of the last century. I would argue that the historically entrenched figuring of *favela* residents (despite their objective incorporation, as a group, into formal economic structures and what could be regarded as thoroughly "mainstream values") and the figuring of Morros themselves as "exactly like" a "jungle," (Ibid:17) engages a dissimulating rhetoric within which notions of race are insidiously projected. While jumping ahead somewhat in my discussion, everyday

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discourses about Rio's hillside communities partake of very tangled notions of race and class and the weighty silence that conventionally surrounds the latter issue.

An Uneasy Peace

I first entered Morro do Sangue Bom in 1988, the centennial of the abolition of Brazilian slavery. I had been staying in a colleague's apartment in Santa Teresa, and I hoped, during my brief weeks in the country, to settle upon a fieldsite for future ethnographic research into the tangled meanings of color, race and racism in Rio de Janeiro -- a city which remains, despite its considerably tarnished reputation, Brazil's premier cultural showcase. I often took Santa Teresa's unpredictable, infrequent and jammed buses to and from the city. Chugging up the absurd twists and turns of the district's cobble-stoned streets, the bus sometimes seemed about to tip over the side of the mountain. At these times, my fellow passengers, nearly all of whom who were poor workers returning from jobs in the city center, would merrily lean to the side of the bus as if they were righting a wave-tossed sailboat, and exclaim in concert, "*Oba*!" (Oops!). In the midst of my breathless anxiety and claustrophobia, I would find myself laughing wholeheartedly, absorbed into a circle in which open smiles, snippets of friendly conversation, protectively steadying hands and overly burdensome packages were exchanged. A majority of these passengers took the bus to the last stop, from whence they would slowly wend their way up a narrow side street to Morro do Sangue Bom.

More than one Brazilian anthropologist told me that my desire to pursue research as a full-time visiting resident in a *favela* was "simply unrealistic." I decided to ignore the warnings -- the precise substance of which was never explicitly spelled out, in any case -- after my bus trips in Santa Teresa. By inquiring at the local bar and general goods store, I discovered that Morro do Sangue Bom had a residents association and I obtained the name of its president.

No one it seemed, took special notice of my arrival in the community -- those who saw me probably assumed that I was there to purchase a pinch of cocaine -- and within moments I found myself about to become lost in an intricate maze of narrow pathways. I approached a

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woman who was hanging her laundry to dry and asked her where I might find the president of the residents association. "Oh, that guy," she said, "he's never around. Go look for Jorge, his assistant. He's wearing white today." Seeing my uncertainty, she led me down a path and asked a woman leaning from a window if she had seen Jorge. She gave a shout to one person, who in turn shouted down the hill to another and soon, breathing heavily from the effort of running up the path, Jorge himself appeared, dressed of course, in white.

A stocky, frenetically animated, dark-skinned man in his late twenties, Jorge shook my hand and invited me into cool interior of the association's headquarters. I told him that I was a researcher and that within two years time, I hoped to live for a year or two in a community such as Morro do Sangue Bom. I apologized for my sloppy Portuguese -- he waved this aside with compliments and warm reassurance -- and I told him that my knowledge of his country was mostly limited to things I had read in books. I asked him if he might know of a family with whom I could stay for a few days, in order to meet people and learn about the community. It had been cold in Rio and I told him that I would bring my own blanket.

Later, when I met the president of the association, a light-skinned man who insisted on being addressed as "The Doctor,"[6] he asserted in a reprimanding and authoritarian manner that I must always speak to him directly, even if I had difficulty in locating him. Jorge, as I must surely understand, was "*sem cultura*," ignorant, and thoroughly lacking in the social graces necessary to deal with foreigners such as myself. I had, by then, already made up my mind about Jorge. In one of the most fortuitous decisions I was to make, I resolved to avoid The Doctor whenever possible and to place my complete trust in Jorge. I later learned that others in the community considered Jorge something of a rogue but his sensitive counsel, social tact, and what quickly became his warm and protective friendship, proved to be unfailing.

Several days later I was slowly climbing the steepest steps of the *morro*, carrying a new blanket and a fresh chicken, on my way to stay with Joia, Jorge's twin sister, who lived with her

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[6] In Brazilian Portuguese, the term "*doutor*" is an honorific that can be bestowed on anyone who is regarded as learned or literate.

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husband Daniel, her two sons, Alberto and Tiago, and her husband's brother, Guilherme. Joia and Daniel's small living room was dominated by a lumpy, aging couch on which I was to spend many hours in the coming years. Two small bedrooms led off to the right; I slept in Tiago's bed while he shared Alberto's. To the left was a kitchen and a bathroom with a cold-water shower. Outside in the yard stood what appeared to be a very old jack tree. One afternoon Alberto nimbly climbed it and cut down a ripe fruit; it was as large as a melon and sweeter than raw sugar. Under the tree a hen clucked and pecked in a small wooden and wire mesh cage. A rambunctious puppy raced back and forth between the house and yard, and tugged, growling and yipping at my shoelaces.

Joia and Daniel had purchased their house from an old woman, whom they believed had spent her infancy in slavery and along with the house came a reproduction of a painting which I could not fail to notice. It depicted the road to heaven, illuminated by crosses and to the left of it, the road to infamy, darkened by the symbols of weakness and bad deeds. "Which road do you take?" Joia asked on the afternoon of my arrival. She handed me the first of many *caipirinhas*, made from a sweet concoction of sugar and cane liquor. When I told her that I tried to stick to the middle road, she laughed approvingly and said that she did the same. Over the space of a week, Joia and I rather deliberately searched for common ground in the stories, jokes and opinions that we traded, and discovered that we were born only several months apart. I deferred to her much as would a younger, and obviously, foreign sister however, for she, and later, several of her closet female friends -- as well as her twin brother, Jorge -- would teach me everything I needed to know to live in their community.

During my initial visit on the *morro* I also spent time with Tiago (who was then only six) while Joia was off to her job as a domestic servant or doing errands in the city. I asked Tiago to tell me the Portuguese names for countless household items and many other things besides; neither of us seemed to tire of this activity nor of each other's company. In my conversations with Joia, then twenty-eight, I learned that she had begun *namorando* or dating her husband, Daniel, when she was fifteen, the same year in which her mother died. Like so many other

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couples I later came to know in the community, they had both been born and raised in Morro do Sangue Bom. Their first child, Alberto, was born when Joia was seventeen and Daniel was nineteen[7]. Daniel worked as an air conditioner and refrigerator repairman and although his skill placed him in a more secure position than some of the other men on the *morro* (who patched together a living through odd-jobbing), his income plummeted during the winter months when his middle-class clients did not use their air conditioners. He usually returned from work at dinnertime and left again soon after to drink beer and socialize with his friends on the *morro* -- a habit that irritated Joia, who after more than ten years of an occasionally difficult but solid and loving marriage, still craved his company. Alberto, then twelve, was a somewhat shy adolescent but he seemed already to have begun to adopt an adult's demeanor. We traded opinons on Brazilian and American music. Guilherme, Daniel's brother and the youngest of eight siblings, most of whom I would come to know, laughed easily but he often seemed to be observing conversations from the sidelines. During that week, Jorge climbed the steps to his sister's house several times. He joined with the others in insisting that if I were live on the hill, I must learn how to use *giria*, or slang and to swear. "*Palavroes*" or big words, Jorge carefully reminded me just before my departure from Rio, were only to be used among close friends, and even then, only in joking.

Joia and I exchanged letters over a two-year period until finally I wrote that I would be returning a few days before Christmas in 1990. During my first night of return the *morro*, I went with Joia, Daniel and a number of their friends to a *carnaval* rehearsal in the city. We returned

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[7] Many of the women I knew in the community had their first child at the age of seventeen but they differed radically from their mothers and grandmothers in their goal, and very often, their success, in limiting their families to two, or at the most, three children. Although many in Brazil's small black movement suggest that the extremely high number of tubal ligations performed in Brazil represents an attempt, by racist whites, to control the fertility of poor women of color, my informants expressed anger and frustration at the condescending assumptions and obstacles -- particularly the requirements that they be at least thirty years of age and in possession of their husbands' permission -- that they encountered in their attempts to arrange the procedure. So motivated were the women I knew to control their fertility that multiple abortions (which are both illegal, and for poor women, unsafe) were not uncommon; women who had more than three children were openly criticized by their female friends and kin.

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to the hill just after dawn and Joia led me over a rubble-strewn short-cut to the house of Varena, her closet friend since childhood, where I would stay until I found a place of my own. We paused to catch our breath and watched the sun pop up over the Atlantic. We could see straight down into Rio's glittering south zone, crowded by middle-class and elite apartment buildings, crescent beaches, and the granite mountain, called the Pao de Azucar, which rises abruptly from the sparkling aquamarine bay. "Look, it's just like a mirror," Joia said of the sky's reflection on the water. People on the *morro*, as I later learned, never tired of their view, ever-changing and sometimes graced by rainbows. Nor did they ever forget its irony.

Later that afternoon, we celebrated Alberto's fifteenth birthday, and while it was a more informal affair than a girl's *festa de quinze*, Christmas, which fell two days later, was, in comparison, a dispirited and dreary day. For some, such as Varena, who missed the husband that she had angrily ejected from the house three years before, Christmas was, in fact, a tearful time, to be endured quietly and with the help of cheap cane liquor. Varena was also angry with Rosemare, a tall, husky-voiced girl of thirteen who had knocked at her door two months before, asking to be taken in by anyone who would adopt her in exchange for domestic work. Rosemary's parents had died within a month of eachother, Varena told me, and she had run away from the orphanage where she was preyed upon by sexually aggressive staff people. Mirroring Varena's sour mood, her fifteen year-old son Adair, and eight year-old daughter Lucinda, remained sullen and withdrawn throughout the holiday. No presents were exchanged.

On Christmas night, Varena and I went out in the rain to visit one of her many friends and on the way, she introduced me to Carlos, a man in his early twenties. Carlos and Varena began to talk in solemn tones that were nearly drowned by the rain, about Carlos's brother. He had been killed by an off-duty police officer several days before. Varena remarked on the fact that he had been shot in the back while fleeing. Carlos insisted that shot in the back or not, he had deserved it, because he had just stolen the officer's watch. "Later, you will feel very sad and miss him," Varena said. "Oh yes, you will, of course you will. Even if it is months from now. He was your own brother and you will miss him," she gently insisted when Carlos denied it. Varena

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was right of course, but Carlos's assertion that all criminals -- whether strangers or kinsmen -- deserved whatever they got, was one that I was to hear often.

Christmas passed with very little celebration at Joia's and Daniel's house as well. "Papai Noel," or Santa Claus was, in Joia's opinion, "a son of a whore." She had revealed to Tiago that he was a figment of someone else's imagination and that the presents he received were not determined by his goodness but by his parents' meager salaries, which must somehow serve the unconscionable but relentless demands of inflation. When she explained such things, Joia told me with a kind of sad pride, Tiago always said, "It's okay Mom, I don't really need anything."

After several days of soft but ceaseless rain, the community seemed to come alive again on New Year's Eve, which *cariocas*, after the French, call the *reveillon*. I had wanted to go to Copacabana Beach, less to see its famous fireworks than to eavesdrop on the rituals of Umbanda. Dressed in white, the supplicants of Yemanja, the goddess of the sea, would wade into the warm surf and throw flowers into the waves. Varena and Joia refused to accompany me. Like so many of their friends and relatives, they called Umbanda by the pejorative term, "Macumba," and while they might turn to it in times of crisis or special need (see Burdick, 1993), they publicly denounced it as "black magic" and superstition. There were however, other, more deeply personal reasons for their avoidance of Copacabana. Although it had happened many years before, they both told me on separate occasions that they could not erase the memory of having seen a close friend run over by a car and killed at the Copacabana *reveillon*. Such accidents are common in Rio and Varena was to lose another close friend in the following year. I resolved to borrow a pair of white pants from Joia and to stay with them on the hill. The community's resident gang, Nova Epoca, was hosting an enormous party.

Most of Rio's Morros have what is called a "*boca de fumo*," literally a "mouth of smoke" where marijuana and cocaine are sold, much of it to Rio's hip middle class. The *bocas* are controlled by gangs of "*traficantes*" and like the larger communities within which they operate, these gangs have their own unique histories. They are built, for the most part, upon complex and shifting negotiations and battles with other gangs, and with the police, and sometimes, upon local

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mythologies and the personal charisma of their "*chefes*" or bosses. Delson, a native son of Morro do Sangue Bom, was credited with drumming up a corps of young and fearless men who six years before had expelled, after considerable and graphically recalled bloodshed, the previously incumbent gang. "Those guys," people said, habitually unwilling to speak the name of the previous gang aloud, "would beat your door in, rape your daughter and steal whatever they liked." The war had been a dark time and everyone I knew had a story to tell about how close they, their children, or their friends had come to catching a stray bullet.

The victory however, was decisive and Nova Epoca instituted an entirely different kind of local governance. As the community's *de facto* leader, Delson dispensed emergency loans, mediated disputes and regularly hosted dances to which the entire community was invited. He was said to have five wives, a car, a telephone and behind the inordinately high walls of his Morro home, a small swimming pool. He owned goats, pigs and several head of stubborn cattle that roamed the community at will, lending it a somewhat pastoral air. Despite his wealth, people said that Delson remained a "simple man," generous and without pretension. Still, no one I knew envied him or wanted to be in his place. However glamorous his possessions, and however heroic his achievement in seeming to give the community back to itself, he remained a criminal, and apart from his people. "It would be best if there were no gangs at all, anywhere," as Joia said, but given the seeming inevitability of their existence, Delson and his men were regarded as by far the lesser of many evil possibilities.

During the first days of my fieldwork, behind the scenes and unbeknownst to me, Jorge had approached Delson on my behalf. He sought and gained permission for me to conduct my research and to live on the hill for as long as I liked. Jorge explained after the fact that "no one would mess" with me. Like any resident, I was under the protection of Nova Epoca, although their presence would most likely remain so discrete, and my security on the hill so complete, that I would never know it. I learned that I had arrived in Morro do Sangue Bom at a particularly opportune moment, which people called an "*epoca de paz*," or period of peace. I left my

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windows open and my door unlocked, walked undisturbed up and down the hill at any hour of the day or night and shed the habits of caution that I had developed in New York City.

Beyond Morro do Sangue Bom however, another, very different kind of era was congealing around a new and very different kind of gang. Putting down roots in the larger *morros* of the South Zone, groups like the Red Command, far too large and imperialistic to be called "gangs," were amassing a collection of automatic weapons said to outstrip in their number and ferocity the combined arsenal of Rio's military and civil police. With conquered territory as far distant as the city of Sao Paulo, they represented a threat, however distant it seemed during the *reveillon* of 1991, that Nova Epoca could hardly hope to hold at bay with firepower alone. Delson's calculated diplomacy, political savvy and what I imagined must be an ability to bluff his way through the ranks of some of Rio's biggest criminal kingpins, were critical, not to only to the well-being, but to the very survival of the community.

Although such concerns were probably not far from Delson's mind on the night of the *reveillon*, they would have been suppressed by the streams of people making their way down the hill to the *barreira*, a flat asphalted lot where parties, dances and pick-up games of volleyball and soccer were held. A full moon was rising and nearly everyone was dressed in white. Women had marcelled their hair and put on lipstick and even Tiago was persuaded to wear shoes instead of his usual rubber sandals. To start the long night of festivities, Nova Epoca had organized a beauty pageant[8]. First preadolescent girls and then teenagers strutted in bathing suits and home-made dresses up and down a flood-lighted catwalk constructed that morning and

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[8] I attended four beauty pageants during the twenty months I spent in Rio. Notions of feminine beauty are heavily racialized in Rio (see Simpson, 1993) and poor people of color often feel that it is necessary to insist that "black women can be beautiful too." Everyday discourses on color and beauty embody striking contradictions for "the mulata" and/or "the morena," (browned-skinned, or possibly, black women) as abstract types are thought to represent a uniquely Brazilian ideal of sensuous beauty. The association of blackness with ugliness is however, no less pervasive in everyday discourses, so much so that the master of ceremonies at a city-wide beauty pageant called "Beauty Comes Down from the Morro," reminded the audience that "beauty has nothing to do with color." This comment was, in many ways, the implicit message of the entire event. Beauty pageants that involve poor women of color as contestants involve a peculiar mixture of ideological conservatism and subversion.

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decorated with palm fronds. They were judged by radio personalities and journalists, who were embraced awkwardly by Delson and his highest ranking lieutenants. The latter were encumbered by automatic rifles that were polished to a high shine which set off the elegance of their crisply ironed white shirts.

The next morning I heard that I was one of the few people who had collapsed before dawn. In the wee hours of the morning, Joia had had a rare fight with Daniel. She had matched him blow for blow but the next day her fury was unabated. Varena gently reminded her that she and Daniel loved each other, and besides, she had no mother to run home to. Daniel, who remembered almost nothing of the fight, vowed to drink less and spend more time at home, and for a time, he did.

After the New Year, the adults on the hill succeeded in drowning out the American pop music that their teenage children favored with the new *samba* tunes that would animate the upcoming carnaval. One blindingly bright day followed another and it was during this period and only during this period that I heard relatively frequent and unelicited allusions to racism. Morro do Sangue Bom had once had an award-winning *bloco*, or carnaval group, but the municipal funds that had supported it had dried up. A decade before, the Sambodromo, a stadium-sized exhibition center was built in Rio and what had once been a famously democratic street festival became a spectacle staged for television cameras and a live, well-heeled paying audience. Daniel had been among the most photographed of the Sambodromo's performers but he could no longer afford the inflationary prices of the costumes, nor could he, or anyone else I knew on the hill, pay for the entrance tickets, the cost of which was upwards of half of a minimum monthly salary. Samba, as people on the Morro correctly argued, had been invented by *negros*, and middle class and even wealthy whites had stolen it from them and corrupted its spirit. Even the floats had become dominated by skinny blonde women who seduced the cameras by imitating voluptuous *mulatas*, the traditional muses of carnaval. "This is a bad controversy," Joia told me one day when she was showing me her collection of special-edition carnaval magazines in which Daniel's photograph appeared for the last time;

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> It is because they are preferred. They're all white and they have these nice bodies, you know? None of them are dark. It's bad you know, because samba is a black thing, it began with the *negros*. Look at them, they're all white, very pretty, but can they samba? No, they can't samba at all!

I thought that such conversations might set the stage for my research but they were sporadic, and days, and then weeks would pass before I would hear explicit statements about racism.

During the six weeks I spent at Varena's house, I wrote copious field notes, which in direct terms, had almost nothing to do with the issues of color and race, and very little to do, generally speaking, with anthropology. Aside from the peculiar silence surrounding the issue of racism, and the uncertainty and hesitation it provoked in me, I was becoming increasingly concerned about Varena's depression, anorexia and sleeplessness. She explained that the vise-like pressure she felt in her head could not be relieved by the American pain relievers I offered her because it was caused by *saudades*, an ambivalent but unremitting longing for her husband. I could do nothing it seemed, but tuck her into bed at night and in the morning, nag her to eat.

One morning at dawn, I was awakened by the drone of a low-flying helicopter and wrapping a towel around myself, I stood by the window. Bearing an uzi which he waved over the area surrounding Varena's house as if it were a flashlight, a member of the civil police leaned from the helicopter's open door. He was so close to my window that were it not for the whirlpools of dust that stung my eyes, I could have winked at him. Varena stepped quietly into the room and pushed me gently away from the window. "You don't know what this, do you Beth?[9]" she said. I could see that she was searching for a way to explain. "Yes, I do know," I said, "It's terrorism!" "They are looking for the guys in Nova Epoca," she said. At a symbolic level, of course, far more was occurring for she added sarcastically, "They are saying, 'Good morning, *favela*.'"

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[9] Joia and I had settled on this *apelido* or nickname for me; my American name was too difficult to pronounce and remember.

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These *batidas*, or police shakedowns, were to happen perhaps half a dozen times during my stay on the Morro. They marked a breakdown in relations between Delson and the police; he sometimes resisted the increasingly inflationary kickbacks that the police periodically demanded of him. Although these abrupt shifts were no doubt more complicated than my friends' whispered explanations seemed to suggest, not even middle class people believed that *batidas* were based on the impersonal strategies of state-sanctioned law enforcement.[10] Money, machismo and personal vendettas worked like a bellows on relationships whose details were best left unknown, and if known, unspoken.

Later that day, I learned that one of Delson's wives and a son had spent the night in jail. The police had also stolen his television and VCR. The story, as it passed through the community grapevine, was accompanied by muffled laughter, that had a smirking "I told you so" cadence. Although Delson and his men were thought of as protectors, they, like all who had voluntarily surrendered their virtue to the spoils of crime, would inevitably have the sword turned against them. Today or tomorrow, people implied, they would come to a bad end.

Speaking in unnaturally loud voices and full of deliberate swagger, half a dozen of Delson's men spent the remainder of the morning smoking marijuana, polishing their guns and fingering their ammo outside of the residents association. Such displays -- including the public use of drugs -- proved to be extremely rare during the time that I lived on Morro do Sangue Bom; they simultaneously communicated a palpable fear and uncertainty among Delson's men and represented the public denial of vulnerability, loss of face and threatened control.

While I was still living with Varena, the Gulf War exploded and I stayed glued to the television, which carried exerpts of the CNN "coverage." Varena told me that I should unplug the television and have a drink because there was no point in making myself nervous over

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10 Antagonism between the city's working poor and the police is historically entrenched in Rio. Aluzio Azevedo, one of Brazil's most renown novelists of the early twentieth century, wrote in *O Cortico* (first published in 1926) that because of their "excesses," "... the police were objects of special hatred to the tenement dwellers." "It was therefore an ancient feud," he continued, "and a firm determination to protect what was their own that animated the laborers in their resistance" (1928:167-68). See also, Flory, 1977; Jakubs, 1977; and Holloway, 1993.

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something that was happening on the other side of the world. Others also tried to disengage me from my preoccupations. "Don't cry, Beth," Joia's husband said, "You are here with Daniel." One evening Joia ordered me to sit in a chair she had carried into the kitchen and said, "Beth, your country is at war but you need to know that there is a war here also. Right here on the Morro." Down in the city, Nova Epoca had killed a young man, who while a resident of Morro do Sangue Bom, had consorted with a rival gang and done something stupid and unforgivable. Joia feared that the rival gang would retaliate and through a process of escalating vendettas, initiate another full-scale war on home territory. "Varena didn't want to tell you," Joia explained, "but Jorge and I feel that if you are going to stay here, you need to know everything that is happening."

The home-based skirmishes that Joia feared never arrived, and the rival gang, small and localized like Nova Epoca, could hardly muster the threat of groups like the Red Command. I moved into the abruptly abandoned house of the murdered man's sister. Mice nested in my drawers, lizards raced up and down the walls in pursuit of insects, and gallons of muddy rainwater flooded the cement floor at every storm but I finally had the solitude that everyone I knew on the Morro sought always to avoid. Despite the tragedy that preceded my occupation, I stayed there contentedly for many months until my landlord told me that a kinsmen would be moving in to take my place.

I went to look at a tiny airless hovel, a basement, really, with an uneven dirt floor and no electricity or running water. It's owner, Seu Arnaldo, promised to cement, paint and wire it within a month and when he did so with great efficiency, I was ashamed of the unconcealed skepticism with which I had greeted his proposal. Tucked into a dark and extremely narrow blind alley between the rear walls of two-story houses, I lost my postcard view of Guanabara Bay. After a time, an affectionate pregnant cat moved in and chased the mice away. Perhaps because I was childless and distant from my kin -- both rather pitiable circumstances in the view of most of my friends and neighbors -- they listened indulgently to my frequent reports on the cat's amusing habits and my anxieties concerning her future. I came to know Dona Janete, Seu

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Arnaldo's wife, and their two sons, the eldest of whom, Jacinto, lived with his family in a nearby house that I began to visit often, forming for the first time, relations that were independent of Joia's and Varena's network of close friends and kin. I became less jealous of my solitude and divided my time between an expanding number of households, where I might drop in unannounced to eat dinner, trade news and gossip, and watch the *telenovelas*, or soap operas, that occupied the quiet week-day nights of so many on the hill.

In April of 1992, I was approached by two journalists while I was waiting to see the doctor who donated his services to the community on Wednesday mornings. They were from one of the major Rio papers and had heard about me from Joao, a friend and informant in the black movement. The newspaper article they published about me led to others, which then led to several brief spots on national and international television. My encounters with these journalists and the choices they made in editing their material were among the most revealing experiences that I had in the field. During my first months in Rio, I combed the papers for articles that made reference to racism in Brazil; finding next to nothing, I desisted. My interviews with journalists allowed me to view, from close up, how the major news media might construct the issue. Only one reporter, who collected material for a popular radio program that was directed towards a working class audience, appeared to be sincerely sympathetic to my work and my views. Himself from a working class family, he rejected the notions, so commonly articulated in the everyday discourses of middle-class people, that poor people of color who live in *favelas* (his own wife's kin, for example) are all *marginais*, a term which connotes not only social marginality but criminality and immorality as well.

My encounters with other journalists were far more difficult, and the politeness and interest with which I greeted the first reporters quickly turned to sarcasm and a feeling of distrust that I made no attempt to conceal. The television reporters especially, were concerned with manufacturing a sensationalist story; I was concerned with making explicit denunciations of racism on national television. The ironies that emerged in my attempts to negotiate with them appeared by turns, hilarious and repulsive. The greatest absurdity, I felt, lay in the fact that the

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reporters themselves seemed entirely blind to these ironies. They were less interested in the community and in my professional work and its implications, than with what they clearly viewed as the shocking audacity of my decision to live in a *favela*. One broadcast was previewed several times, over the space of two hours before it was aired. "A middle-class American woman came to Rio and guess where she decided to live?" a newscaster asked with "Hard Copy"-style drama, "In a *favela*!" All of the reports, regardless of their medium, emphasized my color and inaccurately at that: I was described with what seemed an irresistible compulsion, as a "blue-eyed blonde." "You are turning me into Xuxa on the Morro," I snarled at one reporter, referring to Brazil's saccharin-tongued, angel-blonde megastar (see Simpson, 1993). My middle-class background was also emphasized, as was the fact that I came from "the richest country in the world." I was said, with great drama, to be living "*no meio dos negros*," or among the blacks.

Most of the reporters argued with me, some more aggressively than others, about the validity of my claim that systemic racism exists in Brazil. Moments after approaching me, one of the first to arrive, a young woman, said with unconcealed skepticism, "Do you really believe that there is racism in Brazil?" I gently lifted her mirrored sunglasses onto her forehead and said, "I can't even see your eyes. Tell me really, what do you think?" She quickly replaced her sunglasses, smiled sheepishly and said, "Well, yes, I guess there is a little bit." A male cameraman sat on my bed and lectured me for twenty minutes, insisting in a fashion which is thoroughly conventional in Brazil, that prejudice and discrimination in his country are based entirely on class and have nothing to do with race or color. His manner was dripping with both passion and condescension. I reminded him that I was a professional anthropologist and had been talking, for nearly a year and half, with people who held opinions very different from his own. The fact that their knowledge and authority were routinely dismissed by people such as himself was, I suggested to him, part of the problem. The female reporter, who was from a neighboring country, attempted to interrupt several times and to mediate what was becoming an increasingly acrimonious dispute. I knew that their story would be broadcast on Spanish-speaking networks as far north as the United States and I told them that if they intended to build

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it only around me and not around the political issue of racism in Brazil, then I would refuse to cooperate. I insisted further that they interview Joao, the black movement militant who had casually set the media machine in motion. As the camera rolled several days later, Joao spoke for nearly an hour. To my surprise, the clip that was finally broadcast included his telling comment that foreign researchers received the public's attention while Brazilian militants' steadfast attempts to focus awareness on racism were routinely dismissed and ignored. As I fully expected, none of the ironies of the media blitz were lost upon Joao.

Later, when I spoke with Joao privately, he was reassuring. Clips in which I denounced racism and referred to my informants' experiences were brief but to the point and included comments about police brutality. The racist sensationalism, on one level at least, had defeated itself. People whom I had never met formally on the Morro told me that they were pleased that I had "spoken well of the community." Only a few people however, referred to my comments about racism. Several of those who did, such as Dona Janete's son Efraim, warned me about the death squads, particularly those that were made up of out-of-uniform police officers. These "types," along with the "X-Nines," a species of masked police informer, were known to occasionally prowl about the hill in the dead of night. "The police are not going to like what you said," Efraim warned me, "You must be very careful what you say in Brazil."

It was precisely the fact that the existence of racism is routinely denied, heavily qualified and/or noticeably unmentioned in everyday discourses in Brazil that motivated my research in Rio de Janeiro. Although middle-class Brazilians, including academics, characterized me either as extremely brave or "crazy" to live in a *favela*, my concern had never been with the shantytown as such. My decision to live on a Morro was based on the fact that it was a bounded, close-knit community in which poor people of color -- the principle victims of racism -- predominated. My description of the Morro and what I might call its "internal politics," besides its aim of contextualizing my research within a particular community and a particular historically moment, is intended to suggest that like so many of Rio's poor people of color, my informants are

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increasingly subject not only to the more directly readable forms of racism, but also to its more indirect, but profoundly consequential forms.

To my mind, the significance of the fact that my data were "collected" in a *favela* lies not in the reputed exoticism and inherent cultural marginally of such communities but in the fact that Morro do Sangue Bom (like many other "hills" in Rio) is situated within what has became a maelstrom of all-too-real violence, over which my informants had no control. That the people of Morro do Sangue Bom -- a very clear majority of whom are law-abiding and hyper-critical of criminal activity -- should have become the principal victims of this violence is rarely noted. That their vulnerability is, however indirectly, itself one of the consequences not only of poverty, but of the racism that keeps them impoverished, is conventionally ignored. A year after I left Morro do Sangue Bom, the "*epoca de paz*" collapsed entirely and the peaceful, densely populated community that I describe here no longer exists. Because I remain convinced that the apparently unique histories of small places have a bearing on our attempts to understand the larger issues with which this dissertation is concerned, I continue this discussion in a brief epilogue.

Research, Race and Racism

A great deal has been written about race and racism in Brazil but paradoxically, there is very little within five decades of scholarship that systematically attempts to analyze and/or incorporate the discourses and perspectives of poor people of color. There are a number of reviews of the scholarly literature related to race in Brazil (for English-language sources, see for example, Fontaine, 1980; Saunders, 1972; Skidmore, 1992; Winant, 1992). I review those areas of the literature which have a direct bearing on my own project within separate chapters. Here I will provide only a brief and schematic overview, in order to locate my research within a corpus of overlapping literatures and to introduce several key issues that animate Brazilianist studies, chief among them: the notion of *democracia racial* (racial democracy)and the celebration of

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miscegenation; the debate over the respective significance of, and relationship between, race and class; and the ideology of whitening.

Gilberto Freyre, Brazil's preeminent sociologist, historian, and novelist, published *Casa Grande e Senzala* (translated into English as *The Masters and the Slaves*) in 1933. It is, arguably, one of the greatest masterpieces of Latin American literature. Throughout his long career, Freyre sought to construct what he called an "intimate history" (now called social or cultural history) of Brazil, and he defined that history as the product, above all, of the collision between, and blending of, European, Amerindian and African cultures. Under the tutelage of Franz Boas at Columbia University, Freyre challenged the racist theories then current in Brazil and elsewhere, and through an artful mixture of historical research, more or less casual observation, literary musing and voluptuous prose, he defended the "African contribution" to Brazil's culture and reconstituted the country as a "*democracia racial*" or racial democracy. Largely because the Moors of Africa had once conquered and ruled the Portuguese, Freyre argued, those who settled Brazil were, unlike their English counterparts to the north, relatively free of most onerous and distancing forms of racial prejudice. What Freyre typically described as a "lubricious" (if occasionally sado-masochistic) eroticism between Portuguese, and then between Brazilian masters and their slaves, was called to serve as both a metanym of, and a metaphor for, the uniquely harmonious and sensuous character of the nation. The notions of mixture, merging, hybridity, and a promiscuous and mutual attraction between blacks and whites were at the center of Freyre's writing (1959, 1986). His perspective however, was almost unfailingly that of elite white men such as himself;

> Every Brazilian, even the light-skinned, fair-haired one, carries about with him on his soul, when not on soul and body alike -- for there are many in Brazil with the mongrel mark of the *genipap* -- the shadow, or at least the birthmark, of the aborigine or the Negro.... In our affections, our excessive mimicry, our Catholicism, which so delights the senses, our music, our gait, our speech, our cradle songs -- in everything that is a sincere expression of our lives, we almost all of us bear the mark of that influence. Of the female slave or "mammy" who rocked us to sleep. Who suckled us. Who fed us, mashing our food with her own hands. The influence of the old woman who told us our first tales of ghost

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> and *bicho*. Of the mulatto girl who relieved us of our first *bicho de pe*, of a pruriency that was so enjoyable. Who initiated us into physical love and, to the creaking of a canvas cot, gave us our first complete sensation of being a man. Of the Negro lad who was our first playmate (1986:278).

Although Freyre wrote that he had "no pedagogic intention" (Ibid:lix) in writing *Casa Grande e Senzala* and confessed that much of it was based on "highly personal intuitions" (Ibid), the book continues to serve as a kind of master narrative of Brazilian culture, particularly in the tangled area of "race relations." In the 1930s, Freyre clearly had his finger on the pulse of public discourses of self-representation in Brazil. His "intuitions" whatever their origins, remain compelling, even maddeningly so, for in the 1990s, Brazilians still echo the tropes of mixture and hybridity, and insist that racialized prejudice and discrimination, whatever their significance, pale beside the more sincere sentiments and behavior that produced and are produced by "*mesticagem*" or miscegenation. Freyre codified a dream that is at once an intimate and a private one, as well as a distinctly communal and nationalistic one. In arguing that his country had avoided the "race problem" through lubriciousness and an unconcerned color-blind fraternity, Freyre asserted the existence of an abiding moral superiority among Brazilians. This assertion, has, if anything, grown more poignant, if chimerical, in the decades since his masterpiece was published.

Freyre's romantic depiction of what later came to be called "the myth of the friendly master," as well as the "myth of racial democracy" continue to animate a number of overlapping scholarly debates that span several disciplines, most notably sociology, anthropology and history. While adding a few contextualizing remarks of my own, I will only review what are typically regarded as the central arguments and highlights of the literature.

The bulk of ethnographic research on Brazilian race relations was conducted in the 1950s and 1960s. Much of this early research was supported by UNESCO, which sought, with what must have been a fragile but driven post-war optimism, to map and confirm Brazil's status as a beacon of racial harmony. The American anthropologists, Harris (1956, 1963, 1964, 1970; Harris and Kottak, 1963) Hutchinson (1957, 1963), Kottak (1967), Pierson (1942), Wagley

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(1963(a), 1963(b)) and Zimmerman (1952) focused on race relations within small rural towns in Brazil's northeast, while Brazilian and French scholars pursued research in the urban centers of the southeast.

There is much in the early American accounts that offers, in descriptive terms at least, a challenge to the notion, so forcefully argued by Freyre, that Brazilians tend to eschew racism. In a relatively short article for example, Harris (1963) devotes five pages to the quotation of colloquial expressions that figure people of color as sub-human. Nevertheless, the American researchers in particular argued that it is principally class-based prejudice and discrimination, and, by extension, the maintenance of the material disadvantages of the lower-classes, rather than color or race that structure inequality in Brazil. As is true of so much of the early writing on race relations in Brazil, this assertion echoed the understandings and discourses of Brazilians themselves -- particularly those of the upper and middle classes. Despite their documentation of racialized prejudice and discrimination then, the Americans concluded that "racial identity is," in the words of Harris (1964:64), "a mild and wavering thing in Brazil," and they upheld the descriptive claims made by both the popular and scholarly proponents of *democracia racial.* In the introduction to *Race and Class in Rural Brazil*, a collected volume published by UNESCO, Wagley asserted:

> .... racial origin has not become a serious point of conflict in Brazilian society. Brazilians can still call the society a racial democracy... Brazil remains as a lesson in racial democracy for the rest of the world (unnumbered pages, preface to the second edition, 1963).

Echoing the language and arguments of Freyre, Wagley continued;

> Brazil is renowned in the world for its racial democracy. Throughout its enormous area of a half a continent race prejudice and discrimination are subdued as compared to the situation in many countries. In Brazil three racial stocks -- the American Indian, the Negro and the European Caucasoid -- have mingled and mixed to form a society in which racial tensions and conflicts are especially mild, despite the great racial variability of the population... It could almost be said that "race relations" do not exist in Brazilian society. (Ibid:7, 14).

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While such comments may seem hopelessly naive (and incompletely justified by the very ethnographies on which they were based) a presentist reading must take into account two factors which have influenced shifts in the way in which American scholars have viewed the issue of race and racism in Brazil. Schooled in the political as well as the theoretical convictions of the Boasian tradition, Wagley and his associates conducted research well before the American civil rights movement and shortly after the European Holocaust. Although none of these scholars stated explicitly how they defined racism, Wagley refers to residential segregation (cf. Telles, 1992), lack of voting rights, prohibitions against interracial marriages, and racially motivated violence. Jim Crow laws, lynchings, and the quotidian forms of violence that characterized race relations in the United States in the pre-civil rights era (and somewhat more distantly, the horror of genocide) clearly constituted the model by which American anthropologists assessed the degree to which notions of color and race represented a "serious point of conflict" in Brazil.

In related terms, mention must be made of significant theoretical shifts (within which I locate my own project) that inform presentist readings of the UNESCO studies. Echoing the programmatic statements of a number of his associates, Wagley wrote,

> The existence of color prejudice and even of discrimination does not mean, for several reasons, that the Brazilian racial democracy is a myth. First, there is obviously a wide gulf in Brazil between what people say and what they do, between verbal and social behavior. The emotional tone surrounding color prejudice is generally lighthearted and amused, and mixed with a liberal sprinkling of earthy appreciation (Wagley, 1971:126)

The assumption that "verbal behavior" is distinct from, unrelated to, and far less significant than, other forms of "social behavior" is insistently repeated in these texts and it is one of the central criteria by which the American UNESCO scholars argued that *democracia racial* represents an appropriate (if technically inaccurate) depiction of race relations in Brazil. This assumption, of course, appears to be increasingly dubious as both old (Bakhtin, 1981; Volosinov, 1973) and new (e.g., Bourdieu, 1991; Foucault 1972, 1980; Fowler, 1985; Fowler et. al., 1979) theories of discourse and language use occupy center stage in anthropology and

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cultural criticism. Despite their questionable assumptions and conclusions however, these anthropological accounts remain valuable as sensitive ethnographies of the northeastern rural world of the 1950s and 1960s.

Those who studied urban race relations in southern Brazil -- sometimes referred to as the "Sao Paulo School" (Azevedo, 1953; Bastide and van den Berghe, 1957, Bastide and Fernandes, 1951, 1955, Cardoso and Ianni, 1960; Costa Pinto, 1953; Fernandes, 1965, 1969, 1972; see also 1979; Nogueira, 1955; Pereira, 1967) -- were more divided in their views than the Americans. All of them however, made significant inroads into urban ethnography and confirmed the existence of racialized prejudice and discrimination, while offering varying degrees of qualification.

In its essentially Marxian analysis of the systemic relationship between race and class, the synthesizing and historicizing efforts of Ianni (1966, 1978) represent perhaps, the most consistent challenge to the argument that race plays only a negligible role in the structuring of inequality in Brazil (see also, Azevedo, 1975). The ambitious work of Fernandes however, has received far more attention; it represents both a benchmark in the descriptive ethnography of race relations in urban Brazil and a theoretical position against which many contemporary scholars align themselves. While courageously exposing racism, Fernandes described what he considered the "pathological" tendencies of urban black families in a manner remarkably similar to that of American culture-of-poverty proponents. He differed from them however, and from Ianni, in predicting the demise of the "dilemmas" produced by the presence of a large population of color. Racial discrimination and prejudice he argued, were archaic cultural holdovers from the era of slavery and they would wither away with the development of modern forms of capitalism. Racism, Fernandes believed, was an "irrational" ideology, and as such, it was antithetical to the processes of capitalist class formation.

Although it does not fit within a particular "school" or phase of Brazilianist research, Thomas Skidmore's *Black Into White: Race and Nationality in Brazilian Thought* (1993; originally published in 1974), also represents a benchmark in discussions of race and racism in

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Brazil. In it, Skidmore traces the historical development of the "whitening thesis" -- variously called *embranqueamento* or *embranquecimento* in Portuguese -- as it was promulgated by the Brazilian elite in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Both seduced and threatened by the racist theories then current in Europe -- which emphasized the notion of black inferiority as well as the progressive degeneracy of "racially impure" or mixed populations -- many members of the Brazilian elite struggled with what was, at best, a pessimistic vision of their nation's future. Skidmore documents the often contradictory intellectual and ideological exchanges whereby elites crafted an ideological compromise with racist theories. Brazil's population, they began to argue, was becoming increasingly "whiter" through the process of miscegenation (cf. Nascimento, 1979). Blacks and blackness would eventually disappear -- sooner rather than later, many believed -- and Brazil would thus resolve its "race problem." Despite the obvious racism that motivated the elite promotion of miscegenation, it was touted as an anti-racist stance, and as such, as evidence of Brazil's moral superiority vis-a-vis the more industrialized nations. As Skidmore notes, Gilberto Freyre played a key role in codifying and, to an extent, popularizing, the nationalist thrust of discourses on miscegenation.

The practice of miscegenation and a different, more popular notion of whitening certainly existed well before abolition, and was less a reaction to racism than a direct product of it. Probably since its inception as a colony of Portugal, both whites and people of color have engaged in discourses that emphasize notions of "cleaning the blood," "lightening the family" and "improving the race." Although many continue to argue that miscegenation is evidence of *democracia racial*, it remains, for many poor people of color, a self-conscious goal which is directed towards upward mobility (Shapiro, 1996).

In the 1970s, a number of researchers began to critique some of the central assumptions that animated Brazilianist scholarship on race relations -- particularly those that erased the significance of race in the structuring of material forms of inequality in Brazilian society. Two of the most important and prolific of these researchers, Carlos Hasenbalg, (see for example, Hasenbalg, 1979, 1985, 1994; Hasenbalg and Silva, 1990, 1993; Silva, 1981, 1985; Silva and

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Hasenbalg, 1993) have challenged Fernandes's assertion that racialized prejudice and discrimination are incompatible with capitalism. As Brazil's economy shifted from an essentially agrarian slavocracy to a modern form of capitalism, both have argued, racism has remained intact although its political-economic functions have shifted. Far from withering away within the context of capitalist structures, what Hasenbalg calls the "cumulative disadvantages" produced by modern racist practices have, if anything, tightened the noose of racialized forms of inequality;

> In reference to the stratifying effects of racial ascription, race as a socially elaborated attribute may be conceptualized as related mainly to the subordinate aspect of the reproduction of social classes. That is, it is linked to the process of distributing individuals into positions of the class structure and dimension of social stratification (1985:27).

The work of Hasenbalg and Silva also represents a departure from previous discussions of racism in Brazil in its engagement with the "hard data" of demographic statistics. If Fernandes's argument, and more broadly, the thesis of *democracia racial*, is correct, Hasenbalg (1985) asserts, then the supposedly "color blind" practices of Brazilian society ought to produce similar intergenerational trajectories within the educational, occupational and income profiles of whites and non-whites. Analyzing statistical census data collected in 1976, Hasenbalg concluded that in all of the relevant measures of "status attainment," non-whites continue to lag far behind whites. While significant, this fact is hardly surprising; far more conclusive is Hasenbalg's finding that when the levels of status attainment of the sons of equally positioned, upwardly mobile white and non-white fathers are compared, the non-whites suffer a significantly higher degree of "social demotion" (Ibid:36). Even when they apparently "start off" with equal socio-economic advantages, in other words, non-white sons have access to fewer opportunities to reproduce or maintain the status attainments of their fathers. Furthermore, the economic gap between whites and non-whites is not ameliorated by equal or higher educational achievement among the latter. As Hasenbalg notes, "the mean income of nonwhites with college education is smaller than that of whites with junior high school education" (Ibid:39). This data, as well as

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that analyzed by Silva reveal that color itself, and not merely class and education, structure the processes by which people of color are systematically denied access to the opportunities that produce and maintain trajectories of upward mobility.

The impact of Hasenbalg's and Silva's work lies not only in its theoretical emphasis on the political economy of racism and in its cogent refutation of Fernandes's misplaced optimism, but also in the distinctly empirical blow it strikes against the assertion that color plays, at most, a negligible role in the organization of social relations in Brazil. These researchers have been joined by an expanding cadre of scholars who have deepened and broadened the discussion of the systemic, functional relationship between race and poverty in Brazil (e.g., Andrews, 1992(b); Fontaine ed., 1985; Gonzalez and Hasenbalg, 1982; Lovell, 1989; Lovell and Dwyer, 1988; Oliveira, et.al., 1985; Porcaro, 1988; 1985; Telles, 1992; Wood; 1990; Wood and Carvalho, 1988; Wood and Lovell, 1992). Often engaging penetrating analyses of demographic data (itself only sporadically produced within contexts of political controversy; see Skidmore, 1992) these researchers have illustrated and documented, in particularly stark and disturbing terms, the racialized structuring of material forms of inequality in contemporary Brazil.

Departing for a moment from academic writing and its audiences, I would note that to an extremely limited degree, the arguments of these scholars have found their way into Brazil's popular press. In 1988, in recognition of the one-hundredth anniversary of the abolition of slavery, the major news magazine Veja published a cover story in which the opening paragraph read,

> One hundred years after abolition, there are in Brazil two distinct citizenships -- the white and the black. It is not only a question of color but of the quality of life. The *negro*, when he is born, has a thirty percent less chance of completing five years of age. As he grows up, his chances of leaving school before learning to read are double [those of whites]. When he dies, he ends a life whose expectancy is 50 years. If he were white, he would have a life expectancy of 63 years (Veja, 1988).

Such statements however, are rarely made in public arenas and generally speaking, the Brazilian news media remain remarkably silent about the issue of racism in Brazil, while

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conscientiously reporting the details of events involving racism that occur elsewhere. With a few recent exceptions, other vehicles of public representation, such as the *telenovelas* or soap operas, rarely portray people of color, and when they do, they tend to be either domestic servants or criminals.

Despite the continuing silence that surrounds the issue of racism within Brazil's public arenas, it has, particularly during the last decade and a half, attracted the attention of scholars whose disciplines and interests are increasingly wide ranging. Approaching the critique of *democracia racial* through the analysis of culture and/or ideology, other anthropologists, historians, sociologists and political scientists have recently analyzed continuities and shifts within the politics of race over the course of Brazil's *abertura*, or recent period of re-democratization and/or have focused on the development of black militancy (Andrews, 1992(a); Burdick, 1992; Covin, 1990; Dzidzienyo, 1971; Fontaine, 1981, 1985; Gonzalez, 1985; Hanchard; 1993, 1994(a), 1994(b); Hasenbalg and Tavares, 1991; Mitchell, 1985; Skidmore, 1985; Soares and Silva, 1987; Turner, 1985).

Anthropologists and historians in particular have refocused attention on the issues of racism and black culture in Brazil; the publication of a number of Brazilian-authored works in both disciplines coincided with the centennial of abolition in 1988. Ethnographies have tended overwhelmingly to focus on rural communities and subcultures (e.g., Baiocchi, 1983; Bandeira, 1988; Vogt and Fry, 1982, 1996; Winddance Twine, 1996, 1997) and the practice and/or politics of religion -- one of the few arenas in which notions of "*cultura negra*" or black culture are at times, explicitly articulated (e.g., Brown, 1994; Birman, 1980; Burdick, 1993; Dantas, 1988; Hale, 1995; Maggie, 1991; Shapiro, 1996; Wafer, 1991). In recent years several researchers have turned their attention to transnational influences on Brazilian (especially Bahian) "black culture," within which foreign stylistic elements, rather than highly politicized and distinctly oppositional conceptions of black identity, tend to be incorporated and manipulated (e.g., Barcelar, 1989; Sansone, 1992, 1993, 1994; Viana, 1988; cf. Lewis, 1992). Historical analyses have focused on and reinterpreted issues related to slavery, forms of black resistance, elite

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ideologies of race, and race relations (e.g., Algranti, 1988; Andrews, 1991; Azevedo, 1987; Chalhoub, 1990; Filho, 1988; Giacomini, 1988; Karasch, 1986; Lozada, 1991; Moura, C. 1983; Moura, R., 1983; Reis, 1988; Silva, 1989).

Despite the recent emergence of a debate surrounding what are called race/color "categories," and their relationship to both census methodology and the analysis and measurement of material forms of racialized inequality (Harris, et. al., 1993, 1995(a), 1995(b); Kottak, 1992, Silva, 1996, Telles, 1995, Wood, 1990) there are, to date, very few studies that attempt to examine how poor people of color within distinctly urban environments use race/color terminology within everyday contexts and, by extension, how they construct race/color meanings (Pacheco, 1986; Sansone, 1992, 1993, 1994). Although there are, within these newer literatures, discussions which concern local stances towards racism within urban communities (e.g., Burdick, 1993; Hale; 1995; Pacheco, 1986; Sansone, 1993, 1994) there are, paradoxically, very few attempts to systematically detail the ways in which people of color experience, interpret, and talk about (or variously, do not talk about) the practices and discourses associated with racialized prejudice and discrimination. While inserting her study of "elite" families of color in Campinas within discussions of the "disorganized black family" (cf. Fernandes, 1979), Barbosa (1983) explores the question of whether there "exist special socialization mechanisms which prepare black children to confront a world in which they are discriminated against" (Ibid: 15). Winddance Twine (1996, 1997) investigates how upwardly people of color within a rural town in the state of Rio de Janeiro construct their understandings of racism; she gives particular emphasis to the roles of work, leisure and gender in these constructions.

The ethnographic scenarios and conclusions articulated in all of these studies provide bases for comparison with my own research, but none systematically explore and analyze the range of discourses by which poor, urban people of color construct the meanings of color, race and racism and self-consciously locate the significance of these meanings -- and the varying levels at which they are articulated and/or muffled -- within their everyday lives. None of these

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studies, moreover, attempt to both compare and contextualize the discourses of poor people of color within larger discursive arenas.

My research in Morro do Sangue Bom -- supplemented by interviews with middle-class whites in the district of Santa Teresa and black militants in the city of Rio -- addresses these gaps in the literature on color, race and racism in Brazil. Located not only within Brazil's southern region, which has historically been characterized by heavy industrialization, foreign investment and European and internal immigration, but also within what is arguably Brazil's "multicultural" showcase, my research is highly situated within a diverse and enormous nation.

While Brazilians recognize and celebrate the uniqueness and glamour of Rio de Janeiro, they also view it as more or less representative of the nation in terms of the "*questao de cor*" or question of color. When *cariocas* or natives of Rio talk about their city, they contrast it with Salvador, a city in the northeastern state of Bahia, where people of color outnumber whites. Traditionally associated with the survival of so-called "pure" forms of African culture, both ordinary Brazilians and scholars now associate Bahia with a "black renaissance" (see Sansone, 1992, 1993, 1994 and Winant, 1992). *Cariocas* also contrast their city with the extreme southern region, sections of which have been settled by Germans and other non-Portuguese Europeans, who are characterized not only as culturally influential in their home states and cities but as "more racist" than easy-going *cariocas*. Rio is further compared to Sao Paulo, whose supposedly straight-laced, business-minded and "whiter" population is said to eschew what are regarded as the more authentically Brazilian obsessions that animate *carioca* culture: "*samba, futebol, e mulata*" (*samba*, soccer, and brown-skinned women). In symbolic terms at least, Rio is therefore positioned at a midpoint with respect to the "question of color"; roughly half white, and half people of color, and sharing the Brazilian heritage of "mixed" ancestry, divided by the boundaries of an urban class structure but reputedly united within a shared and vibrant melting-pot culture, *cariocas* see themselves and are seen by others -- including foreign observers -- as authentically and quintessentially Brazilian.

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While my understanding of racism is informed by approaches that emphasize the articulation of racialized identities with objective and processual class structures, and by extension with historically shifting modes of production, distribution and consumption that operate within transnational contexts, my project is directed towards the more distinctly symbolic and cultural arenas within which power is articulated. Sharing many of the foci and analytical methodologies of approaches that are referred to by turns as "emic," "experiential" or "phenomenological," my attention is primarily directed towards the ways in which poor people of color articulate the meanings of color, race and racism in their lives. Directly following my informants in Morro do Sangue Bom, I emphasize what might be called the "moral dimension" of racism which, while invoked in all discussions of domination, emerges most clearly and explicitly in those discussions which focus not on the disembodied structures through which power is distributed but in those that describe, ponder and interpret what is often dismissed as "subjective" experience.

In related terms, I focus less directly on the distinctly material consequences of racialized oppression in Brazil -- for they are very ably and amply documented by the researchers I have cited above -- than upon what tend to be called the "cultural" or even "psychological" consequences of racial entrapment. These consequences, as I hope to demonstrate, impinge not only on the dominated but on the dominant as well (Crapanzano, 1986). In addition, I write against what I would argue is an often unexamined privileging of the former dimension of oppression within the social sciences. Whether treated literally or metaphorically, wounds to the physical body and imbalances in the body politic tend to be viewed as more significant, more consequential, more deeply damaging -- and, in a word, more "real" -- than wounds to the literal or metaphorical self, consciousness, mind, psyche, or spirit. That the latter should be functionally and causally predicated on the former is, of course, undeniable, yet this fact alone can neither account for nor justify the relative dearth of discussions that focus on the ways in which racism -- among other forms of domination -- enact predations against the morally and culturally constructed self.

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While I disagree with many of James Scott's conclusions -- which depict in my view, an overly optimistic scenario in which the oppressed are never so deeply oppressed as they might appear to be, and domination is never as successful as we might have feared -- I support his contention that the critique of domination requires the descriptive elaboration of what he calls the "shape of personal domination" (1990:112);

> Once we have named the condition of subordination such as wage-laborer or slave, it remains to specify the particular ways in which the subordination is experienced by those who occupy the status. We know relatively little about a Malay villager if we know only that he is poor and landless. We know far more about the cultural meaning of his poverty once we know that he is particularly in despair because he cannot afford to feed guests on the feast of Ramadan, that wealthy people pass him on the village path without uttering a greeting, that he cannot bury his parents properly .... While the daily indignities [that he suffers] all flow from his class position, they tell us far more about what it feels like to a poor man in a particular culture with particular ritual decencies at a particular moment in history. It is these experienced indignities that form the bridge between his condition and his consciousness (Ibid:113).

While my research and analysis may well have a bearing on discussions such as Scott's that explicitly tackle the problematic concept of "consciousness," for the most part, I ground my discussion in the direct quotation and analysis of observable, context-specific forms of discourse. I conceptualize discourse as both a method and a focus of study, and as a complex and fluid -- and at the same, time, thoroughly "common sense" -- unit of analysis. While my understanding of the larger significance and dialectical functions of discourse are informed by writers who emphasize the intersection of language use and power (e.g., Bakhtin, 1981; Bourdieu, 1991; Foucault, 1972, 1980; Fowler, 1985; Fowler et. al., 1979; Volosinov, 1973) I am concerned, quite simply, with the ways in which my informants talked about, alluded to, invoked and/or avoided color, race and racism in everyday discourses; how they characterized and accounted for their own talk and their silence, as well as the talk and silence of others; and how they articulated their understandings of, and described their encounters with, racism.

My focus upon and understanding of the significance of talk continually meshed with that of my informants who constantly engaged in metadiscursive commentary, and who referred,

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over and over again, to the discursive dimension of racialized identities and racism. Although these commentaries and references took different shapes (and were directed towards differently imagined audiences) within the three groups that I listened to -- poor people of color, middle-class whites and black militants -- they all circled around the notion that the ways in which Brazilians talk and do not talk to each other define, no less than the material structures in which talk is embedded, the peculiar and contested character of racialized inequality in Brazil. While all ethnographies are inherently collaborative projects, I have tried, to a greater than usual degree, to preserve, or at least to represent, the authority (Clifford, 1983) of my informants.

Plan of the Dissertation

In Chapter Two I focus on the ways in which people in Morro do Sangue Bom use the Brazilian vocabulary of color and race. I focus on three distinct discursive registers within which race/color terms are used and I argue that each of these registers serve different communicative functions and embody different, if overlapping cultural meanings. Significantly, I challenge conventional understandings of "racial categories" and "racial classification" in Brazil; I argue that they are based on a fundamental misreading of the discursive bases of notions of identity, and the larger meanings associated with color and race.

Chapter Three presents an analysis of the pervasive silence surrounding the issue of racism in Morro do Sangue Bom. I suggest that cultural censorship is an understudied area and I focus on the ways in which people in Morro do Bom account for, in directly experiential terms, their avoidance of open discussions about racism. This chapter includes an analysis the legend of Escrava Anastacia, a popular saint; I argue that she symbolically represents both racialized oppression in Brazil and the silence surrounding it.

Chapters Four and Five concern my informants' narratives of racism. Chapter Four focuses on the ways in which people in Morro do Sangue Bom describe encounters with racism

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that occur on the *asfalto*, or asphalt, of the city's public arenas. Chapter Five describes encounters with racism that occur closer to home -- within the community, that is, or within the family. These chapters contribute to what remains an incomplete understanding of the ways in which the subjects of racism experience, describe and analytically account for racialized oppression. The value of my informants' narratives is given as well by their location within a cultural and political universe in which the existence of racism tends to be persistently denied.

The sixth chapter focuses on the discourses of middle-class whites who live close to Morro do Sangue Bom. It illustrates, in very direct terms, what are typically referred to as "mainstream" or "dominant" discourses of color, race, and racism in Brazil. Although my middle-class white informants did not deny the existence of racism in their country, they qualified it through narrative strategies that directly align themselves with *democracia racial*. In larger terms, I intend this chapter as an ethnographic contribution to the emerging concern with the social and cultural construction of whiteness.

Chapter Seven focuses on the discourses of militants involved in Brazil's emergent *movimento negro*, or black movement. Although people in Morro do Sangue Bom remain largely unaware of the existence of this movement, my description and quotation of movement discourse spells out the larger discursive arena in which the meanings associated with color, race and racism are contested, and it offers additional insights into the complexities involved in the construction of racialized identities in Brazil.

The eighth and final chapter is highly provisional. In it, I pursue a brief discussion of the larger meanings and contradictory functions attached to the varied discourses of *democracia racial*. I argue that in focusing exclusively on its mystificatory character, recent scholars have misjudged the extent to which *democracia racial* also represents -- for Brazilians of all colors and social classes -- a passionately embraced dream. Racism in Brazil, no matter how fruitfully we may locate it within global continuities, remains culturally distinct.

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In an epilogue, I describe the historical events -- including international ones -- which led to or surrounded the destruction of the community Morro do Sangue Bom and I describe some of the personal responses to, and outcomes of, its aftermath.

A Note on Translation and Quotation

Carioca, or Rio Portuguese, is known for its informality and among those of the working classes especially, for its inattention to what lettered people call "correct grammar" (Koike, 1992). The conversations I had with my informants were, like nearly all conversations, full of half-uttered starts and stops, repair work, small leaps in which words seemed to be left out, laughter and occasionally, emphatic outbursts. The beginnings and ends of sentences were sometimes marked less by grammar than by the need to pause for breath, and at other times, brief periods of awkward silence occurred. It is also a habit among some *cariocas* to tell first the major outlines of a story, and its narrative climax, and then to retell it twice more with added details, especially those related to emotional response. Although some of my informants noticed this habit in others and were sometimes annoyed by it, it was, of course, a particularly felicitous one for a foreign researcher.

In my translations, I have favored a more directly literal style, rather than offering substitutions in what could arguably be considered a more equivalent, colloquial and informal English. (I make exceptions with certain Portuguese expletives, which if translated literally, would call more attention to themselves than they did in the original conversations.) Whatever stylistic nuance may be lost in such an approach is, I believe, compensated by attention to accuracy and context. In some cases, I have provided the original Portuguese in parentheses. In cases where the meaning and/or flow of the original Portuguese is unclear in its direct English translation, I have enclosed grammatically suggested but unspoken words in brackets. Ellipses indicate unclear speech, excessive repetition, tangential asides, or in a few cases, my edited arrangement of thrice-told stories or viewpoints. In dialogical quotations, double dashes that appear at the beginning and/or end of conversational phrases are used to indicate interruptions

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and conversational overlap. In my quotations I have preserved many of the starts, stops and repair work and I have noted the conversational moments at which laughter, pauses and emphasis were used as indexical markers of meaning and feeling. In some cases I have, for the sake of clarity, used verb tense more consistently and/or "correctly" than it was used in the original Portuguese.

Most of my quotations are verbatim in the sense that are taken directly from audio recordings. There are exceptions however, for in a number of cases, comments and conversations have been reconstructed from highly detailed fieldnotes. Where such reconstructions are extensive, I have noted the fact in the text.

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2

Talk: Discourses on Color and Race

> .... it is an incontestable fact there was early and extensive miscegenation between the Portuguese and both the Indian and the Negro. The *mameluco*, the progeny of a Portuguese father and a Negro mother, and the *mulato*, generally the son of a European father and a Negro mother, soon became important elements in the Brazilian population and race mixture continued for 400 years (Wagley, 1963:7).

Extensive miscegenation is both an "incontestable fact" and a kind of myth of origin in Brazil. While scholars have documented widespread and historically entrenched miscegenation in other countries of the New World, Brazil is renown for the extent to which its national discourse portrays "*mistura*" or mixture as a defining and celebrated feature of the nation. That Brazilians also tend to use a plethora of terms to describe or name a person's color or "racial" characteristics, is also an incontestable fact, one that remains much remarked upon both in everyday discourse and in the scholarly literature on race and racial classification in Brazil.[1]

The claims made in everyday discourse and in much of Brazilianist scholarship suggest that these incontestable facts -- widespread miscegenation and the existence of multiple categories of color -- have virtually erased the boundaries of racial identity in Brazil. While 400 years have left some of predominantly European descent *branco*, or white and even fewer of

[1] What might be called the "Brazilian model of race relations" is, in fact, less unique than the literature and Brazilians themselves often imply. Brazil serves as a much-discussed exemplar of cultural patterns that are eveident (with some variations, obviously) throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. Although my discussion in not explicitly comparative, it is located within and informed by similar discussions of the discourses and meanings associated with color and race in other Latin American and Caribbean nations (see for example, Alexander, 1977; Godreau, 1994, 1995; Khan, 1993; Lancaster, 1991; Martinez,1974; Segal, 1993; Stutzman, 1981; Wade, 1993; and Wright, 1990).

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predominantly African descent *preto*, or black, the majority of Brazilians are said to be "*bem misturados*," or quite mixed, the descendants that is, of Europeans, Amerindians and Africans.

Moreover, because Brazilians tend to attribute racial or color characteristics to themselves and others on the basis of appearance rather than descent, "racial" identity -- understood in bipolar or triadic terms at least -- is said to be difficult, if not impossible to define for the those who are "*nem preto, nem branco*" (neither black nor white). As Harris (1970) and others have noted, it is quite possible and even common in Brazil for siblings to "belong" to different "racial categories." In addition, while the plethora of race/color terms apparently attests to as well as encourages the perception and differentiation of rather minute variations in skin color, hair type and facial features, it has been suggested that Brazilians are quite willing, in certain circumstances, to ignore physical characteristics in their attribution of (what are usually thought to be) race/color terms. Thus, as a number of Brazilianist scholars are fond of noting, "money makes white"; a person of intermediate color may, if he or she has sufficient power or wealth, be defined as "*branco.*"

The interpretation of the larger sociological and political significance of these incontestable facts lies at the heart of the debate on how best to characterize "race relations" in Brazil. Many Brazilians and Brazilianist scholars argue that the existence of many racial categories, and the internal ambiguity of many of the categories, can be taken as evidence that Brazil has avoided the ideological essentialism that plagues countries such as the U.S. and South Africa. Lacking such rigid essentialism and leaning always towards fluidity, ambiguity and the blurring of racial boundaries, Brazilians, it is asserted, have neither the ideological conviction nor the stable target necessary to create and maintain a truly racialized social structure and consistently racialized patterns of oppression.

Other scholars and most of those involved in Brazil's *movimento negro* argue on the other hand that color is always sharply distinguished from whiteness and the qualities and privileges associated with it. The close correlation between color and class structure -- another incontestable fact -- is taken as sufficient evidence that the multiplicity of racial categories

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serves as a mystifying ideology that not only conceals the racialized nature of oppression but also prevents the development of racially-based social movements.

The precise object of this debate requires clarification. Racial categories are always, of course, cultural constructs par excellence. They both produce and are produced by social structures and they are historically contingent. In the case of Brazil however, it is necessary to go beyond such truisms and to ask, what in fact constitutes "racial categories"? Setting aside for the moment the issue of "official" categories imposed by the state, what in fact are we speaking of when we refer to "racial classification" or "racial categories" in Brazil?

Ultimately, I would argue, what is being referred to is not the physical diversity of Brazil's population nor the cultural acceptance of miscegenation (as Wagley seems to suggest), nor the cultural construction of "racial" perception, nor even, indeed, the "racial ideologies" of Brazilians. Seen from the ground, racial categories are abstracted interpretations of patterned discourses which occur in a variety of contexts: in the home, at work, on "the street," in the offices of bureaucrats, and in interviews with census takers and social scientists, to name only a few. Taking the analysis of racial categories in Brazil back a step, it becomes clear that questions should be directed not only to the semantics of what are a priori assumed to constitute racial categories, but also to the contexts in which racial or color terminology is used. If it is already clear that "racial categories" are themselves internally ambiguous - if there is at best only a low level of consensus on what terms such as "*moreno*" mean, for example -- it is necessary to ask not only what *moreno* means in a static, referential sense, but also how this meaning is constructed in the multiple and shifting contexts of discourse.

Taking as a point of departure my belief that racial terminology is best conceived as embedded within discourses that relate to description, identity, value and hierarchy, (rather than as constituting the object of a "classification system" or in Harris's terms, a "cognitive calculus") this chapter focuses on the ways in which the people of Morro do Sangue Bom use and manipulate the complex vocabulary and semantics of race and color. As a foreigner attempting, as a first step, to learn the meaning of race/color terms, it quickly became clear to me that the

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process of eliciting answers to what might appear to be simple questions proved to be a rich source of information on the ways in which people actively constructed these meanings. This chapter concerns not only everyday discourses in Morro do Sangue Bom, but also the many lively discussions in which informants conveyed their own interpretations of what is for them, and not only for anthropologists, a tangled and thorny issue.

The following section represents a brief foray into the literature on racial classification in Brazil. My aim in this section is to highlight the methods and assumptions that have informed and, in fact, structured the discussions and debates concerning racial classification in Brazil. In this section, I question the extent to which the data generated in these studies can be said to constitute a "system of racial classification." I refer as well, to the possibility that what have been called "racial categories" in Brazil are, in emic terms, neither "racial" nor "taxonomical."

The third section of this chapter briefly reviews the historical development of race/color terminology in Brazil. Relying primarily on Jack Forbes's *Black Africans and Native Americans* (1988) this section emphasizes the pre-colonial and colonial origins of Brazil's contemporary race/color vocabulary. While Forbes argues that this vocabulary has shifted considerably over the centuries of slavery, emancipation and the post-abolition era, I emphasize the significant discursive continuities that a comparison of his historical and my ethnographic data suggests. I argue that many words have been used in an indexical or pragmatic, as well as a referential fashion. I also emphasize the polysemy of a number of terms and call attention to their dual signification of race and color -- two concepts that tend to be erroneously conflated in discussions of racial identity in Brazil.

The fourth section is simultaneously directed towards an explication of the referential semantics of the most commonly used terms in Brazil and it describes what I call the "discourse of description." Because so many of my comments are later qualified with reference to both semantic ambiguity and the different registers in which race/color terms are used, this section is both provisional and heuristic. The section also describes the ordinary conversational contexts in which the discourse of description tends to be used and emphasizes the fact that broadly

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speaking, references to race and color tend to avoided.

The fifth section focuses on the word *negro* (and some of its variants). I believe that both the history and contemporary usage (and avoidance) of this term provide a key to understanding the discursive ordering of race/color meanings. I emphasize the indexical power of the "hard words" that are most closely associated with blackness and slavery and argue that their force is rooted not only in their semantic and connotative functions but also, and perhaps more significantly, in their indexical and performative power.

The sixth section focuses directly on what I call the "indexical discourse on color" as well as the "discourse on race." I argue that the former is, in fact, the dominant register within race/color terms are used in Morro do Sangue Bom, although previous researchers have focused almost exclusively upon, or have theoretically prioritized, the discourse of description. In this section, my challenge to the assumption that race/color terms constitute "racial categories" is clearest. I end by arguing that underlying all discourses which figure color as a fluid continuum there are significant discursive registers within which race is framed as a bipolar and oppositional identity. Unlike other registers, these ones are, in fact, both taxonomical and distinctly racial. My argument in this section represents a significant departure from conventional understandings of racial identity in Brazil.

Questioning Brazil's "System of Racial Classification

Marvin Harris's seminal article, "Referential Ambiguity in the Calculus of Brazilian Racial Identity," published in 1970, set the stage for subsequent assumptions and debates about the way in which Brazilians conceptualize race and, by extension, race relations in their country. More than two decades after its initial publication, Harris's article remains among the most frequently cited works on race in Brazil; it has strongly influenced historians, demographers and anthropologists working not only in Brazil but in Latin America and the Caribbean region as well. While Harris's arguments concerning the relative insignificance of race in determining the structural features of Brazilian society have since been challenged by a number of scholars, his

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depiction of "the Brazilian system of racial classification" remains intact and it is viewed as fundamental to an understanding of racial identity in countries where a multiplicity of "categories," rather than bi-polar (black and white) notions of race appear to be the norm.

Although scholars who cite the article fail to note the fact, "Referential Ambiguity in the Calculus of Brazilian Racial Identity," was a product of the theoretical and political preoccupations that characterized anthropology in the 1960s and 1970s. In theoretical terms, Harris's article explicitly challenged the assumptions of componential analysis, also known in the 1960s and 1970s, as the "New Ethnography." Harris summarized this approach as one based on the theoretical assumption that, "culture is the manifestation of a finite shared code, the code being a set of rules for the socially appropriate construction and interpretation of messages" (1970:12). If such an assertion is correct, Harris rightfully argued, then Brazilians as a group, should share a "racial calculus," i.e., when presented with a particular set of phenotypical characteristics, individual Brazilians should demonstrate a significant degree of agreement regarding the appropriate race/color designation.

In order to test this assumption, Harris devised "a deck of 12 full-face drawings constructed out of a combination of three skin tones, three hair forms, two lip, two nose, and two sex types" (Ibid:2). The deck was then presented to a cross-section of 100 Brazilian adults, who were asked to name the *qualidade* (quality), *tipo* (type) or *raca* (race) of the "person" depicted in the drawings. The sample was neither random nor statistically representative of the Brazilian population; more than three quarters were Northeasterners, nearly half were of the urban upper or middle class and nearly two thirds were apparently white or light-skinned (Ibid).

In his often-cited conclusion, Harris writes,

> In a strictly lexical count, the sample responded with 492 different categorizations. Twenty-five percent of the sample responded with 15 or more categorizations, with a range extending from two to 70 categorizations per respondent. The diversity of response is the salient characteristic of the cognitive domain under study (Ibid:5).

Thus, Harris's informants not only produced an enormous number of race/color terms;

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they also demonstrated a pronounced lack of consensus in their attribution of race/color terms. Harris thus questions the assumptions of the New Ethnography, which do not allow for such ambiguity. His conclusion represents both a critique of componential analysis and a cogent socio-political interpretation of the ambiguity of racial classification in Brazil;

> .... the prime social function of the rules is not the maintenance of orderly distinctions but the maintenance or even maximization of noise and ambiguity. Brazilian racial categories appear to constitute such a domain.... given the highly stratified nature of Brazilian society, there may be a positive, conservative structural reason for maintaining and maximizing the noise and ambiguity in the calculus under discussion. Objectively, there is a correspondence between class and race in Brazil... the more *negroid* the phenotype, the lower the class. Prevention of the development of racial ideology may very well be a reflex of the conditions which control the development of class confrontation (Ibid:12).

Despite the obvious strengths of this article, it begs a number of critical questions which revolve around the nature of language and language use. Despite their overwhelming ambiguity, Harris maintained that the words his informants provided for highly abstract black and white drawings constituted "racial categories" (the term he used most often) or "raciological taxonomies." His methods, he suggested, tapped a particular "cognitive domain," and the "categories" or "taxonomies" that his informants ostensibly produced constituted, in fairly direct terms, the Brazilian "calculus of racial identity" or "system of racial classification."

There is, I would argue, little justification for assuming that the "ambiguous output" of Harris's informants constituted either taxonomies as ordinarily conceived, or truly racialized notions of identity. Although Harris's well-known distinction between etic and emic modes of analysis is defined and clarified in other contexts, it is far less clear in his discussion of "racial categories" in Brazil. If he intends his use of the term "racial categories" as an etically constructed concept, the obvious question is, how does he extrapolate, in analytical and theoretical terms, from his data to the notion of a "Brazilian system of racial classification"? Although "categorization," "classification" and the production and reproduction of "taxonomies" would logically seem to be located within "cognitive domains" and to involve what could be called a cultural "calculus," I would argue that in a fundamental sense, they are contextually-

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specific, and discursively produced acts. Within an explicitly etic mode of analysis, we could certainly argue that Brazilians engage in such acts without being fully conscious of the fact, yet Harris's methods remain extremely distant from the natural contexts in which such acts tend to occur. Stated simply, there is a theoretical and analytical hiatus between the data generated by Harris's method and his rather facile claim that this data reflect or represent a "taxonomical system."

If Harris intends the term "racial categories" to refer to emic understandings of "racial identity" then we might ask not only whether his informants believed themselves to be engaged in the act of classification, but to what extent they conceptualized their own words as constitutive of specifically racialized notions of identity. It is important to note the fact that American researchers in particular, have a tendency to conflate the notions of race and color; the essentialism that underlies notions of race further contributes to the assumption that descriptive vocabularies and cultural taxonomies are synonymous. Even before Harris's seminal article, Brazil's race/color vocabulary was and continues to be compared to the American categories of "black" and "white" as though both "systems" were identical in their functions and in their cultural and cognitive statuses. If this were the case, of course, one would have to argue that the terms "*preto moreno*" and "*preto sarara*," (two of the 492 terms collected by Harris) represent separate races in the minds of Brazilians. They do not, in fact. Such terms, I would suggest, while obviously "racial" in an indirect sense, may well be provisional descriptions of the color and appearance of individuals, rather than the classificatory names given to "types" which are thought to be "racially" distinct from other such "types."

Roger Sanjek's article, Brazilian Racial Terms: Some Aspects of Meaning and Learning" (1971) closely followed Harris's article, although it has received less attention from Brazilianist scholars. As though the collection of race/color terms had become a competition, Sanjek reported that he had elicited 116 terms, "the largest corpus of terms collected in a single locale" (1971:1127). Sanjek was less critical of the New Ethnography than Harris and argued for methodological refinement. He suggested that Brazilians possess a "cognitive map" that is shared

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to a much greater extent than Harris argued. Through statistical means, he demonstrated that most terms cluster around a much smaller set of "primitive" or basic terms, and he argued that there is a relatively high degree of consensus regarding the meaning of these terms. Nevertheless, Sanjek concurred with Harris's assertion that there is a great deal of ambiguity and lack of order within the "semantic domain" of race/color terms. Like Harris, he referred to informants' responses to black and white drawings as "racial types" and "racial categorizations," although he also refers, more accurately, I believe, to a "racial vocabulary" and a "racial lexicon." Unlike Harris, Sanjek commented explicitly on the relationship between his research methodology and sociolinguistic practice;

> I was not immediately concerned with the actual usage of terms by actors in "natural" situations, but rather with working in the opposite direction, attempting through "experimental" methods to control the environmental factors which intervene upon cognitive structure in actual behavior.... I would argue for the logical priority of the kind of analysis I am about to present, insofar as it provides controls for an examination of the situational and sociological variables involved in "natural" verbal usage of the racial lexicon(Ibid:1128).

This is not the place to engage in an extended critique of the assumptions of componential analysis. It is notable however, that Sanjek gives "logical priority" to the notion of "cognitive structures" -- "environmental factors" do not shape and construct these cognitive structures but rather "intervene upon them." Although Harris makes no such qualification, it would appear that he was working from similar assumptions. Such assumptions, of course, are entirely contrary to contemporary approaches in cultural anthropology and sociolinguistics which emphasize what is now called the "contextualization" of cultural meanings. It is precisely the "environmental factors" that Sanjek hoped to control that constitute the subject of cultural interpretation.

Despite its apparently dubious and dated assumptions, however, I would suggest that Harris's and Sanjek's research remains valuable for a presentist reading of the meanings associated with race and color in Brazil. While the concepts of "cognitive structures" and "cognitive domains" are resistant to ethnographic grounding, Harris and Sanjek did tap, to a

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degree, at least, the strictly referential and semantic dimensions of race/color terms. In a sense similar to that suggested by Sanjek moreover, it could be argued that the referential dimension of language is logically primary -- a "structure" that is, which is manipulated, "intervened upon," as it were, within specifiable contexts. From such a perspective, the fundamental error within the racial classification studies was their assumption that this referential dimension of race/color terms is their most significant, if not their sole dimension, and that a "racial calculus," "racial categories" and the "system of racial classification" can be adequately defined without reference to the use of race/color terms in ordinary conversational contexts.

I would note in closing this section, that Harris and Sanjek might never have intended for their data to be treated, as it has been, in such a reified fashion. In several footnotes to this chapter, I will note only a few examples in which the notions of "category" and "classification" remain unchallenged while the details of the ethnographic record (I refer here not only to my own research but to a larger literature) continue to suggest other interpretations of the language associated with color and race.

The Language of Race and Color: Historical Considerations

The proliferation and use of race/color terms among the Portuguese occurred in the context of slavery but did not begin, as is often assumed, in colonial Brazil. A variety of Iberian color terms can be traced as far back as the thirteenth century. In *Black Africans and Native Americans* (1988), Jack D. Forbes traces the development and evolution of color terminology among the Portuguese, Spanish, English and Dutch imperial powers of the pre-modern era. While Forbes's central preoccupation is with the continuing presence of Amerindians and those of Amerindian descent in both the Old and New Worlds, his extensive historico-linguistic analysis provides illuminating information on the description and classification of African and African-descended peoples caught in the nexus of the Portuguese empire.

As Forbes notes, slaves of very diverse origins were common in both Portugal and its colonies from the late sixteenth century onwards. The transcontinental mobility of slaves, as

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well as the buying and selling of socially displaced individuals precluded their classification by ancestry or regional origin. The Portuguese terminologies associated with color then, developed in the context of the transnational movement of enslaved peoples, particularly Africans, and the need, among Portuguese and other European slave owners and merchants to identify and control them. The physical appearance of slaves, Forbes argues, rather than notions of ethnicity, race or regional origin was the organizing concept around which terminologies of color developed during the earlier centuries of Portuguese imperialism.

According to Forbes, notions of race, at least as they are conceptualized in contemporary terms, developed more slowly than those related to color. Although Linneus's classificatory schemes were disseminated throughout Europe in the eighteenth century, they were evidently slow to take root in the colonies. Although I would argue, to a somewhat greater degree than does Forbes, that there was considerable semantic overlap between notions of race and color embedded within the terms that were in use by the nineteenth century, the distinction between them is critical to both a historical and a contemporary understanding of Brazilian constructions of identity.

Forbes research suggests that many race/color terms -- even when their semantic parameters are analyzed within specific regional and historical contexts -- were ambiguous and polysemic. Many terms referred not only to culturally and subjectively constructed notions of color but also to social status. Below I will summarize Forbes's historical analysis of several race/color terms that continue to be used by my informants in Morro do Sangue Bom.

One of the early terms that was used throughout Spanish and Portuguese Latin America was "*negro.*" In line with his argument concerning the tendency to classify according to appearance rather than ancestry, Forbes asserts that on the Iberian peninsula of the late medieval period, the term *negro* was used to describe perceived color and did not refer to racialized concepts. Although translated literally as "black," the term *negro* was not reserved for those whose skin color was especially dark. Jesuit missionaries residing in Brazil in the sixteenth century for example, frequently referred to the native peoples there as "*negros.*" When

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distinguishing between Africans and Amerindians, the former were usually called "*negros da Guine*" (blacks of Guinea) while the latter were called "*negros da terra*" (blacks of the land) (Ibid:69). Evidently, the lumping of the two groups under the term *negro* reflected ordinary usage among Portuguese colonialists and traders as well.

Forbes offers two commentaries which are especially notable for our purposes, on the generalized usage of the term *negro* among the Portuguese. In a conclusion totally contrary to the contemporary notion of multiracialism (as opposed to racial bi-polarism) in Brazil, he writes;

> The Portuguese also tended to use the term *negro* to encompass many non-Africans, people whose skin color was a shade of brown. It would appear that, in this sense, black can be conceived of as opposite to white and in a dualistic mode of thinking all humans must logically fall into one of two categories. In this usage, *negro* or moor becomes almost equivalent to "non-white" or "Third World" in recent usage (Ibid:66).

Forbes asserts then, that from the early colonial period, the term *negro*, while it was perhaps used in certain contexts to describe those whose color was perceived to be especially dark, was also often used to distinguish all "non-whites" from Europeans or "whites." Although he fails to explicitly note the fact, such a conception -- or perhaps more properly, discourse -- is extremely similar to racialist constructions of difference.

His second commentary on the use of the term *negro* in the Portuguese empire addresses what might be called the pragmatics of the word *negro* rather than its strictly descriptive or classificatory function. Forbes notes that a Portuguese dictionary of 1712 equated the term, *preto*, which also means black, with the expression, "*escravo preto*," or black slave. A Portuguese-French dictionary of 1784 includes under *negro* the entries "*escravo*" (slave) and "*Tratar alguem como hum escravo; i.h. feramente, muito cruelmente*" (To treat someone as a slave, that is, brutally, cruelly) (Ibid:74.) What is especially interesting in this dictionary definition is the suggestion that to use the word *negro* is to "treat" someone in a particular manner. The act of description, in this sense, appears to be secondary to the pragmatic act of domination. In referential terms, it is clear that from the eighteenth century onwards (and probably earlier) the term *negro* was associated not only, or not even necessarily, with dark skin

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color but also with slavery, servitude and/or extremely low status. Indexically, it could be said that the word *negro* not only marked that status but, in effect, played a role in the discursive structuring of status.

Although using the quote to demonstrate a point different from my own, Forbes provides additional evidence for the referential and indexical use of the term *negro* for non-whites of low status. He cites a Portuguese law applied in 1775 to the Amerindians of Grao Para and Maranhao in Brazil:

> Among the many regrettable practices.... which have resulted in the disparagement of the Indians, one prime abuse is the unjustifiable and scandalous practice of calling them *negroes* [sic]. Perhaps by so doing the intent was no other than to induce in them the belief that by their origins they had been destined to be the slaves of whites, as is generally conceded to be the case of blacks from the coast of Africa.... The directors will not permit henceforth that anybody may refer to an Indian as a *negro*, nor that they themselves may use this epithet among themselves, as is currently the case (Ibid:72).

It would appear then, that the Portuguese crown was engaged in a dispute with Brazilian colonialists that was linguistic in nature as well as explicitly political and ideological. A constant sore point between Jesuits, colonialists and the Portuguese crown, the contested legitimacy of the enslavement of Amerindians provided a context in which the liberal use of the term *negro* could develop. Those who wrote the law voiced their suspicion that colonists used the term in order to consciously and strategically manipulate not only the *de facto* status of Amerindians but also the ideological association of color (or "non-whiteness") with enforced servitude. Such an appraisal may have been correct yet it seems likely that the application of the term *negro* to any person of color was a standard practice in the colony.

The reference to the use of the word *negro* as an epithet makes it clear once again that its original semantic referent -- the relative darkness of the other vis-a-vis the European -- had become, in such discursive contexts, secondary to the pragmatic use of the term *negro* as a way of "treating" someone. As Forbes notes, "In so far as the term *negro* in the Portuguese Empire became synonymous with 'slave' or with servile status, it, of course, lost any mandatory color reference and became a general term of abuse.... Unfortunately many English-speaking authors

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tend to translate *negro* as "black" rather than as "nigger" or "slave" and have failed to see the implications for Brazilian history of the above distinctions" (Ibid: 75). The fact that indigenous people had begun to "use this epithet among themselves" (Ibid) is especially notable. The history of a particularly pernicious form of linguistic and ideological domination is encapsulated in this short passage. As will be seen not only later in this chapter, but throughout the dissertation, similar discursive practices and the ideologies and social structures associated with them continue to operate in contemporary Rio de Janeiro, and no doubt, throughout Brazil.

By the eighteenth century then, the term *negro* encompassed a number of referential meanings as well as indexical functions. It could be used as a descriptor, to refer to those who were perceived to be dark. Clearly in such cases, the typically light color of Europeans was always the primary point of reference, although the term could also be used to distinguish darker people of color from those who were lighter. It could also be used to describe any person of color who was not "white" in a fashion similar to contemporary racialized discourses. Finally, it could be used pragmatically, as an epithet with associations similar to, or synonymous with, "slave." While it is likely that the term *negro* was used in all three senses in colonial Brazil, it is also evident that in some contexts, at least, the meaning of the term was a matter of contention. Furthermore, it is clear that by any definition, being *negro* was not a desirable "condition." Color and subservience were closely associated and their association was reinforced, indeed, codified by the polysemy and multiple functions of the term *negro*. Calling someone a *negro* in eighteenth century Brazil -- and perhaps even earlier --signified the profound disrespect and at least the imputed dominance of the speaker over the hearer. *Negro* was a word used not only to describe and to classify, but also, and perhaps primarily, to wound.

Forbes notes that the word *moreno*, the most commonly used of all Brazilian race/color terms in contemporary Brazil, originated among the Mozarabes of the late medieval period. The Mozarabic word, "*mouro*," according to Forbes' sources, was associated with both dark skin color and with north Africans. Forbes provides little additional information on the development of the term *moreno* in Brazil, although his comments on its use in Spain and the Spanish colonies

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are suggestive. During the colonial period, the Spanish use of *moreno* may have implied a free *negro*, although it also apparently referred more specifically to darker shades of brown, as was the case with the Mozarabic form. An English dictionary of 1599 translated *moreno* as "murrie colour, browne, darke, duskish....a man of swartish hue" (Ibid:122). While Forbes prefers to interpret *moreno* as brown, i.e., as distinct from the term *negro*, he admits the possibility that it could have been used, in some contexts, as a euphemism for *negro*. Referring to the Spanish colonies generally, he presents both possibilities;

> Today *moreno* serves as a euphemism for *negro* among some Spaniards and several writers have supposed that this usage commenced at an early date, especially as the word *negro* came to be equivalent to "slave." Indeed it may be true that some *negros* who were free could have been so denominated, but after a generation or two it is also likely that large numbers of slaves must have been of mixed American and African origin, to one degree or another, and there may have actually been some slight lightening of skin color.... (Ibid:121).

What Forbes does not note is the fact that to be an effective euphemism, the term *moreno* would ideally be associated with both non-slave status and with shades of color lighter than that associated with the descriptor "*negro*." The function of a euphemism, after all, is to conceal or "soften" one thing by seeming to refer to another. It seems likely then that the primary descriptive or classificatory referent of the term *moreno* during the colonial era would have been free people of intermediate shades, and such being the case, the word could be euphemistically stretched to refer to darker people as well. Thus, as was the case with the term *negro*, *moreno* could, in certain contexts, serve as a pragmatic marker within a "system" of cultural (or discursive) etiquette. A person of dark color, in other words, could be called *moreno* to avoid "treating" him or her as a "*negro*." As will be seen in later sections, the term *moreno* certainly carries these two separate but related associations and functions in contemporary Brazil.

Like *moreno*, the term *pardo* is of considerable antiquity. Forbes's sources trace it to the Latin *pardus*, derived from the Greek, *pardos*, or leopard. The Portuguese word *pardo* thus "relates its meaning to the obscure color of that animal" (Ibid:115). Forbes writes that by the

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fifteenth century, the term *pardo* referred to "dusky non-*negro*ids" such as north Africans, as well as people of mixed descent in Portugual (Ibid).

By the seventeenth century, the term *pardo* was used for those of mixed ancestry as well as those perceived to be "dark, obscure, gray, brown, blackish, leaning towards black" (Ibid:119). In the eighteenth century, *pardo* appears to have been equated with *mulato*, another common term which is briefly discussed below. The term *pardo* then, could be used to describe a person of a certain color but it might also, in some contexts, refer to specifically racialized conceptions of mixture. Concluding his comments on the evolution of the term in Brazil, Forbes writes,

> It seems quite clear that *pardo* in Portuguese... proved to be a very adaptive term. Its ambiguity allowed it to evolve in the direction of becoming a class term, especially in Brazil. That is, from being a general range of darker, brownish shades, (between black and white) *pardo* has gradually acquired other connotations which make it not only an equivalent of *mulato*, cafuzo, mestico, and so on in Brazil (as well as still retaining color properties) but also an equivalent of "colored" in English and kleurlingen in Dutch (Ibid:120).

While *pardo* is not, in fact, frequently used as a description of color in everyday contexts in contemporary Brazil, as Forbes seems to imply, it is nevertheless true that it tends to connote a color, as well as class position intermediate between privileged whites and disadvantaged blacks. In addition, as an historian rather than an ethnographer, Forbes' fails to note the fact that when *pardo* is used, it is often treated as synonymous with terms such as *moreno*, and in a similar fashion, it can serve, in pragmatic terms, as a "softening" euphemism for those with very dark skin.

Finally, the term *mulato* and its cross-linguistic equivalents, while being common throughout the New World, is of obscure origin. One etymological theory has it that the term derives from the Spanish *mulo*, or mule. In such a case, *mulato* would have connoted the offspring of parents of different species, i.e., a hybrid, and would have implied a conception at least analogous to that of race mixture (Ibid: 131-140). It has been suggested also that the association between mules and human *mulatos* may have been one of color, i.e., a person could be said to be the color of a mule --just as the etymology of *pardo* suggests that it was a referent

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to the color of a leopard (Ibid:148). On the other hand, Forbes suggests that the term *mulato* may be derived from the Arabic words *maulas* and/or *muwalladun*. The former term referred to liberated slaves or those who converted to Islam, while the latter term referred to those who were the offspring of an Arab and a non-Arab parent. It is possible in addition, that the term *mulato* may be derived from the overlapping associations of all of these words.

By the late sixteenth century the term *mulato* was used among both the Spanish and the Portuguese to describe a range of intermediate colors, as well as one who was "mixed blood or having the appearance (color) of mixed blood" (Ibid: 158). Forbes also suggests that from the same period, *mulato* may have been used to refer to slaves who were neither black nor white (Ibid:159). Thus, it seems that since the early colonial era, the term *mulato* could connote a person of intermediate color, the offspring of parents of different ancestry and/or a slave who was lighter than a *negro*. In the context of his discussion of the possible derivation of *mulato* from the word mule, Forbes notes in addition that among the Portuguese of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, "racial-sexual overtones had apparently come to be associated with producing human *mulatos* and with *negras* and *mulatas* as sex-objects" (Ibid:138). As will be seen in the following sections, all of these associations continue to adhere in the contemporary use of the term *mulato* in Brazil.

While it is difficult, if not impossible to know with true precision, how race/color terms were used in everyday conversations during Brazil's colonial era, the historian, Russell-Wood provides some suggestive comments on the issue.

> Apart from the self-evident fact that some designations existed purely in the eye of the beholder and possessed little referential value for anyone else, there was the further problem that overtly ethnic classifications were subject to moral overtones and behavioural factors. In changing circumstances, designation of an individual as a *pardo* might be altered to *mulato*; the latter generally possessed a pejorative connotation, and was often qualified by such adjectives as lazy or good-for-nothing... Finally, despite the plethora of racial terms not only was there ambiguity surrounding their applicability but there was uncertainty as to

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> their relationship to each other. That a *mulato* was viewed as morally inferior to a *pardo* was accepted, but there was doubt as to whether he was darker-skinned (1982:25).[2]

Although Forbes's and Russell-Wood's analysis of the pragmatic use of race/color terms is obviously less explicit than my reading of their work suggests, it seems clear that the ambiguity of such terms is determined not only by semantic polysemy but also by the use of words as "ways of treating" someone. What Russell-Woods calls "moral overtones and behavioral factors" (Ibid) refer, in fact, not only to the semantic associations of these words -- complicated enough in themselves, to be sure -- but also to the pragmatic potential of the terms. In colonial Brazil, the choice between the terms *negro* and *moreno* may have been, in many contexts, determined not by the relative color of a person, but by the active construction of hierarchy and value within everyday conversations. To humiliate, to wound, to respect, to cajole or flatter, to assert familiarity or distance, these and many other acts or strategies could be chosen and performed through race/color terminology.

While *negro* (and *preto*), *moreno*, *pardo* and *mulato* can be thought of as the "backbone" of race/color terminology in Brazil --encapsulating that is, not only the most commonly used terms for non-whites, but also the central semantic referents of race and color -- many other terms were used in the colonial era, and continue to be used in contemporary Brazil. Some of these words invoked, in a fairly direct fashion, the notions of race and "racial mixture," while others, in strictly semantic terms at least, engaged relative color as a primary referent. Many words, depending on the precise contexts of their usage signified both color and race.

Although Forbes emphasizes historical shifts within the race/color vocabularies of the New World, I would argue that three very significant features of this vocabulary have been, since the eighteenth century at least, historically constant in Brazil: 1.) the context-dependent

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[2] Despite his awareness of the ambiguities and context-dependent nature of of race/color terms, it is notable that Russell-Wood chooses to refer to them as "ethnic classifications." The tendency to freeze, reify and decontextualize such terms, beside distorting our understanding of the cultural construction of color and race in Brazil, reveals a peculiar linguistic ideology (Crapanzano, 1992), the limits of which may well have a bearing on a number of unexamined assumptions in social science writing.

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function of many words, such that they can be used either referentially or pragmatically; 2.) the high degree of semantic ambiguity and polysemy of most if not all of the words in the lexicon, which is compounded by their contextually-defined functions and 3.) the cultural embedment of these terms within notions of both race and color, which are at times distinct and at others, overlapping and interpenetrating.

Color and Context in Morro do Sangue Bom

Soon after I arrived in Morro do Sangue Bom, I began an informal survey, in order to introduce myself to the community as well as to get a sense of household composition, employment, religious affiliation, origin and race/color identification. Before beginning the census interview, I asked several friends, including Joia, to make sure I was wording my questions properly. The word *raca*, or race she said, would "shock" people and would not do. "*Raca* is a word used for dogs and so on," she said, referring to the word's double meaning of "race" and "breed." Her brother-in-law, Guilherme disagreed. "No, it's a normal word, we say *raca branca* (white race) and *raca negra* (black race)," he said. "Everyone understands it." There was a great deal of meaning embedded in their apparently simple disagreement and it defined, in some ways, the shape of the puzzle that I was to confront throughout my research on the *morro*. I decided to take Joia's advice however, and asked people, "Which is your color?" or "How do you call your color?"

Asking people to name their color may be an unusual request in Morro do Sangue Bom but as I discovered, it is not an entirely unfamiliar one. Several informants told me that census takers had asked them to identify their color, although none could recall the names of the organizations conducting the census. In the past, birth certificates included information about race and color and the identity cards issued to young men who performed mandatory military service carried this information as well. Almost inevitably it seemed, people of color were designated as "*pardo*," an intermediate term which connotes "racial mixture." While it is rarely used in everyday discourse, the term *pardo* is a preferred term on official documents. Most of

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my informants seemed to be aware of this fact. Generally speaking, my question about color seemed to produce a certain degree of embarrassment among some informants but only two, who identified as white, appeared to be offended; their color, they suggested, was obvious.

Although I interviewed people in all areas of the hillside, as a scientifically valid research instrument, my survey was clearly inadequate. Truly random sampling was precluded by a number of factors. More to the point however, is the fact that, as Harris and other researchers emphasized, the "Brazilian system of racial classification," whatever it may be, is exceptionally ambiguous. Moreover, because I asked interviwees to provide a term both for themselves and the other members of their households, there was a discrepancy between those who engaged in self-identification, and those who were "classified" by others. I found it impossible to conduct all of the interviews in private and the discussions that my questions sometimes provoked were, in fact, particularly revealing. It became immediately evident that my question about color was neither a simple nor a straightforward one. The survey thus proved to be a valuable tool in my attempts to understand the local race/color vocabulary and the nature of the ambiguities surrounding its use.

Beginning my survey interviews, the first people I approached were two women sitting outside their dilapidated home, enjoying a cigarette in the sunshine. The older woman had fairly dark skin and tightly kinked hair, which people usually call "*cabelo ruim*," or "bad hair." The younger woman's skin was a medium-light shade of brown, and her hair was curly, what people often call "*cabelo razoavel*," or "reasonable hair." When I asked how they identified their colors, both said "*morena*."

On the same day, I interviewed a young woman who was sitting on the steps outside her home. Her thick black hair was pulled into a tight knot, her skin was a very light shade of brown and her nose and lips were narrow. In her arms, she cradled an infant, lighter than herself with soft downy black curls. I predicted that she would refer to herself as "*morena*" or "*parda*," both of which are conventionally viewed as intermediate terms. However, when I came to the question, she said "*branca*," (white) and then quickly reversed herself and said, "*negra*" (black).

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She had entirely bypassed all of the intermediate terms. "Which is it, *branca* or *negra*?" I pressed. "*Negra, negra*," she said, "and my son is *negro* also." I counted her, her son, and her father as *negros*, or blacks, although so many, considerably darker than she, I counted as *moreno* or *pardo*.

Another young woman served as an interviewee while she sat in her home with her two year-old daughter and a friend. She gave her own color as *branca* (white) and her husband's color as "*pardo*." Her daughter had the same light, yellowish complexion as she did, but her hair was more "crespo" or rough. "I think my daughter is *branca*," she said. Her friend said, "No, she is *parda*." "You think so, really?" the child's mother asked. "Yeah, she's *parda* for sure," the friend confirmed. "All right, put down "*parda*" then," the interviewee said.

A teenage boy who was a very eager interviewee, paused when we came to the color question. In a gesture I had come to recognize as common, he held his arms out before him, looking from one to the other. His skin was a bronze color and his hair was dark and very curly. He chuckled and finally said, "*moreno*." "And the others who live with you?" I asked. As if having established himself as a point of reference, he quickly answered, "One is dark (*escuro*), one is *morena*, my mother is darker than I am, my stepfather is white and his son is *mulato*."

During the early days of my research, my confusion seemed to intensify. It was only after I had been in the community for several months that I began to realize that each of the cases I describe above exemplified a larger pattern. Much of the literature on racial classification echoes Kottak's claim that, "Through their classification system Brazilians recognize and attempt to describe the phenotypical variation that exists in their population." If this were true, the first two women I interviewed should have chosen different terms to describe or "classify" themselves, for they were markedly different in appearance. Harris's claim that "Brazilians will call any combination of facial features" *moreno* is more accurate, though it is, like Kottak's generalizing comment, devoid of any reference to the contextual and cultural framing of the term. Despite abundant references to the term *moreno* in the literature on racial classification, its usage remained puzzling

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In the second case I describe, a light-skinned young woman "classified" herself and her family as "*negros*." If Kottak's claim were accurate she should have chosen from among the large number of intermediate terms. Even during this early stage of my fieldwork, I recognized the fact that few of my interviewee's neighbors would be inclined to refer to her as a *negra* in ordinary conversation and I had an impulse to contradict her. It was only later that I realized that she had not been referring to her "*cor*" or color at all, but to her "*raca*" or race.

In the third case I describe, the mother was clearly uncertain about how she ought to "classify" her own daughter. Although brief, the discussion between my interviewee and her friend fascinated me and it was a scenario that I would observe over and over. This fact also seemed to contradict claims made in the literature on racial classification. Hutchinson, for example, wrote of his Bahian informants that,

> .... one may instantly recognize the difference between a "pure" white and a mixed white-Indian, white-*Negro*, or *Negro*-Indian, but they do not let it go at that. They classify or minutely describe each person; they classify according to skin color, according to hair form and according to facial features, and their classification of racial types are used in everyday conversation (1963:25).

Despite his awareness of semantic ambiguity, Hutchinson's comments suggest that race/color terms should be ready-at-hand; one should certainly know, he implies, how to classify one's own daughter.

In the fourth scenario I describe, the teenage interviewee also revealed uncertainty about his own color. His description of his family is notable although hardly unusual: "One is dark (*escuro*), one is *morena*, my mother is darker than I am, my stepfather is *branco* and his son is *mulato*." This information used a combination of words that are conventionally understood in the literature as "classificatory terms" (*moreno*, *branco*, *mulato*) with comparative descriptions. He does not classify his own mother at all but says simply that she is "darker than I am." His response (and so many others that I heard) indicate that part of the semantic ambiguity surrounding the vocabulary of race and color is based on the fact that their meanings shift according to both implicit and explicit points of reference. Moreover, this informant, and many

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others apparently understood my question not as a request to "classify" himself and his family but to describe them, in terms of color. As I will demonstrate, this distinction is critical.

As my research progressed, I came to feel that the gaps in the literature on racial classification in Brazil are a result not only of a failure to anchor claims about the "system" within the ethnographic contexts of its use, but are also a result of the extreme difficulty in describing ambiguity. This ambiguity operates at a number of different sociolinguistic levels, and speaks to far more than semantic confusion and/or lack of consensus.

Later in my fieldwork, I asked informants to list all the race/color terms they could think of, and to define them and tell me which terms were considered pejorative. I also asked them to provide terms for specific individuals in their networks, and then to "reclassify" these individuals using only the terms that are typically used in Brazilian census instruments. To my relief, I discovered that my informants were themselves aware of the ambiguity surrounding their use of race/color terms. They were able, often through humorous asides, to articulate their own perspectives on this ambiguity and they frequently did so in terms that were far clearer than those I had found in the literature. When I asked Joia's and Daniel's son, Alberto, to define a list of terms that he provided, he took a deep breath and said, "All right, I will try but I must tell you, it's like the Portuguese of Portugal to me." Alberto began with what seemed to be a fairly straight-forward description of the physical features that are associated with each of the terms he had listed. Most of his descriptions jibed with what other informants had told me, but as was often the case, some appeared to be more idiosyncratic. When I asked which of the terms were thought to be pejorative, he began, like so many other informants, with the comment, "Look, it depends on how it is said."

In describing how words are said, and in tracing shifts in the way their meanings are both constructed and constructing, it is necessary to suppose, at least for a moment, that there is a sociolinguistic level at which words and their meanings are relatively stable. As I have noted in the previous section, the literature on racial classification in Brazil tapped, or attempted to tap, the referential functions and meanings of race/color terms, and to ignore what Sanjek called "the

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situational and sociological variables involved in 'natural' verbal usage of the racial lexicon" (1971:1128). My strategy is similar in this section, although I attempt to contextualize and, in the process, redefine, what previous researchers have called a "system of racial classification." When race/color terms are used in a purely referential fashion, they constitute what I call a "discourse of color description."

Despite the fact that some of my informants interpreted my question about color differently than others, and the fact that many informants appeared to be uncertain or in disagreement about correct designations, my survey data help to introduce local understandings of color. In objective terms, the people of Morro do Sangue Bom do reflect the phenotypical diversity for which Brazil is known. It is no doubt true as well, that Brazilians tend to recognize subtle differences in color to a greater degree than do white Americans. As is indicated in the racial classification literature, "race," (or "type") when it is treated as a supposedly objective characteristic, is determined by a combination of skin color, the shape of the nose and lips and the texture of the hair. Among people in Morro do Sangue Bom, I discovered, hair texture is viewed as particularly significant, perhaps more so than skin color. When informants listed and defined race/color terms, some even distinguished between those whose skin was shiny and those whose skin had a matte quality. Eye color, i.e., the difference between "*olhos claros*," or light eyes, and dark eyes is also viewed as a significant feature of one's *cor*, or color, as is the color (and not merely the texture) of one's hair.

Hutchinson states explicitly that his informants "classify or minutely describe each person." His conflation of classification and description is noteworthy; he goes on to assert that "their classification of racial types are used in everyday conversation." Although people in Morro do Sangue Bom do use race/color terms in everyday conversations, they use far fewer terms, and use them far less frequently than Hutchinson and others suggest. This comparatively truncated vocabulary was evident in my admittedly artificial survey as well. In conducting the survey, I spoke with at least one member of each of 72 households; in this way, color terms were provided for 419 individuals. Below I list these terms, their provisional English glosses and the

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percentage at which each term was represented in the total collection of 419 responses.

Branco (white) ..... 22 percent

Moreno (brown) ..... 20 percent

Pardo (brown) ..... 19 percent

Negro (black) ..... 13 percent

Escuro (dark) ..... 6 percent

Mulato (mulatto) ..... 5 percent

Mistura (mixture) ..... 2 percent

Claro (light) ..... 2 percent

Castanho (chestnut brown) ..... . 2 percent

Canela (cinnamon) ..... .2 percent

Mais ou menos (more or less) ..... .2 percent

Although Harris collected what he called "492 different categorizations" in various areas throughout Brazil and Sanjek collected 116 terms within a single village, my informants in Morro do Sangue Bom used a total of only eleven terms to describe themselves and the members of their households. The number of ready-at-hand terms appears even smaller when it is noted that each of the last three terms were used by only one informant. Seventy-six percent of the total were described with non-white terms. Within this non-white group, 63 percent were referred to with terms usually thought to denote intermediate colors, while 37 percent were called either "*preto*," "*negro*," or "*escuro*" -- terms usually denoting someone who is very dark. The fact that people in Morro do Sangue Bom use what appears to be a very truncated race/color vocabulary vis-a-vis Harris's and Sanjek's informants is further revealed by the data I collected in focused interviews. When I asked informants to list all the race/color terms they could think of, they produced a modal average of only eight terms.

A number of factors might account for the remarkable difference between my own and other researchers' data. The most obvious factor is the difference in methodology. Presented with a stack of drawings and asked to define the "quality" or "type" of person represented, it may

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well be that Harris's informants felt that they were being asked to produce as many distinguishing terms as possible. Given my own informants' fondness for "giria" or slang and the pleasure they take in verbal bricolage and linguistic invention, I can well imagine their creative response to Harris's interview protocol. In my survey, however, I asked my informants to identify themselves and others; they understood, naturally, that I was attempting to census the community rather than to "collect" race/color terms. The existence of regional variation in race/color vocabularies is also a probable factor. Most of Harris's and all of Sanjek's informants were Northeasterners. It is worth noting that the two most "exotic" terms I was given, "*castanho*" (chestnut brown) and "*canela*" (cinnamon) were provided by Northeasterners, both of whom searched their memories for the words. An additional explanation is the possibility that Brazilian race/color vocabularies may be shrinking through time as Kottak's (1992) recent work suggests.

Leaving these issues aside however, I will proceed to a provisional and largely heuristic description of the semantic or referential meanings of the terms that my informants used most commonly. This description is based not only on my survey and interviews but on participant observation.

Although *branco* was the single most commonly used term in my survey, those who call themselves whites are a minority vis-a-vis those who describe themselves as "*da cor*" or of color. Harris and others have suggested that *branco* is the least ambiguous of all "racial categories" in Brazil, and while this may be true, my informants often qualified the term. Those with skin that is "*bem claro mesmo*," or "really very light," green or blue eyes and straight hair are often called "*branco de branco*," or "white of white." In similar terms, they can be called "*branco verdadeiro*" (true white), or "*branco mesmo*" (really white). Those who have hair that is not straight but "*razoavel*" (reasonable) or "*cacheado*" (curly), dark eyes, and yellowish or tannish skin are often called "*puxado por branco*" (leaning twoards white) or "*quase branco*" (almost white). Whites, particularly those who are "true whites" are described as having "*tracos finos*," narrow or fine features, or alternatively, as having "*feicao de branco*" or white features.

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Together, the terms *pardo* and *moreno* are, in strictly referential terms, virtually synonymous in Morro do Sangue Bom. As I have noted, *pardo* is rarely used in everyday discourse but is ubiquitous in censuses and official documents. Although the term *pardo* connotes the notion of "racial mixture" to a greater degree than *moreno*, both terms are associated with intermediate colors, shades of brown that is, that range from light to medium. The terms *mulato*, *mistura*, *castanho*, *canela*, and *mais ou menos* likewise suggest intermediate colors. My use of the term "intermediate" matches the ways in which my informants conceptualized these colors, for they are very frequently defined as "neither black nor white." Although words such as "*castanho*" (chestnut brown) and "*canela*" (cinnamon) were not commonly used in Morro do Sangue Bom, I heard similar ones, such as "*jambo*" (a reference to the color of the tropical fruit, *Eugenia malaccensis*), and *marrom bom-bom* (best translated as "pretty brown"). These words describe what are thought to be particular shades of brown. While all of these words can function grammatically as either nouns or adjectives, other words that function in an exclusively adjectival fashion, are used to describe a person's skin color. A person who is said to be *morena*, for example, can have *pele achocolotada* (chocolate-colored skin), *pele avermelhada* (reddened skin) or *pele amarelada* (yellowed skin).

When intermediate terms such as *moreno* and *pardo* are used in a strictly referential sense, they tend to describe those who have hair that is "*cacheado*" (curly), *razoavel* (reasonable) or *mais ou menos* (more or less). The facial features of those who are said to be *moreno* or *mulato* seem to be extremely variable. Within everyday discourse, *morena* is the most commonly used of all race/color terms and, without a doubt, the most ambiguous. As I will argue later in this chapter, much of the ambiguity surrounding the term *moreno* is produced by the fact that it serves distinct functions within different discursive registers. Significantly however, the term is highly ambiguous even at the purely semantic level. Harris was certainly aware of the ambiguity surrounding the term *moreno* (as well as the term *mulato*);

> If there an orderly principle by which *morenos* or *mulatos* are distinguished from *brancos*, *pretos*, *serararas*, *alvos*, *claros*, and *cabo verdes*, it is an extremely

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> complex one. At the moment it seems as if Brazilians will call almost any combination of facial features by the terms *moreno* or *mulato* with a high but unpatterned frequency (1970:12).

Even a brief examination of the conversational contexts in which the term *moreno* is used helps to dispell some of the mystery surrounding its meanings. Several of those I asked to define the term said that *moreno* is "*bem claro*" (quite light), or more specifically, "*clara mas nao e branca*" (light but not white). In this sense, the term *moreno* can be used to distinguish those who have a tannish or yellowish complexion from the "*veradeiro branco*," or true white. Others, implying that *moreno* is "almost white" used a descent-based definition, saying that a *moreno* is a mixture of "white with *mulato*." When the term *moreno* is used in these senses, the *branco*, or white, is the point of reference. Revealingly, several of those who called themselves "*branco*" in my survey interview qualified the term by saying they were "really *moreno*" or "a bit *moreno*." This suggests that my informants viewed the terms "*branco*" and "*moreno*" not as mutually exclusive categories, nor necessarily, as categories at all, but as provisional descriptions of their appearance.

In a rather different usage of the term, *moreno* signifies one who is "*nem branco, nem preto*" (neither white nor black) or "*uma mistura de preto com branco*" (a mixture of white with black) or variably, "*entre excuro e claro*" (between dark and light). While a number of informants used these rather vague definitions, others were more specific. A very dark woman who referred to herself a *preta*, or black, for example, said that *moreno* is "my color but with good hair, mouth and nose." Another woman said that the *moreno*'s "hair is neither good nor bad, it's reasonable. They're a chocolate color." This meaning closely matches that suggested by Sanjek for rural Brazilians in the Northeast: *moreno* often connotes a person with medium brown skin and "good" or "reasonable" hair. When used in this sense then, *moreno* occupies an intermediate position between black and white. The points of reference are the extreme poles of the color scale. As I have noted above, there are many terms that connote intermediate colors and for many informants, these terms are referentially interchangeable. As is the case when the point of reference is *branco*, or white, there is no reason to assume that *moreno* and other terms

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used in Morro do Sangue Bom, such as *sarara* and *pardo*, and the more characteristically northeastern terms that Harris gives, such as *cabo verde*, are mutually exclusive. All such terms, I would suggest, are used less to classify types than to describe the color of individuals.

It should be noted moreover, that the Brazilian expression "*morenidade*," literally, "morenity" or "morenism," connotes the notion of racial mixture. Although people on the *morro* do not use this expression, and while they tend to use the word *moreno* as a description rather than as a classification, they are certainly familiar with the notion of the *moreno* as an ideal cultural type. The *mulata* is celebrated as the felicitous and sexually attractive offspring of "race mixture," and in a similar manner, the *moreno* can be viewed as a kind of abstract figure, as the "typical" Brazilian, and in culturally significant terms, as the representative of the Brazilian "tradition" of miscegenation. To be neither black nor white is, in a sense, to be "*sem cor definida*" (without a defined color), and thus "average" and unmarked.[3] For this reason as well, the fact that *moreno* is a term that is used both with high frequency and a high degree of semantic flexibility should not be surprising.

In yet another and related sense however, blackness --referred to by such terms as *negro*, *preto* and *escuro* -- can be the point of reference when defining who is, and who is not, *moreno*. As one woman said in trying to define the word, "*Moreno* is not *negro*, it's *moreno*." Another woman said that "*moreno* is lighter than *preto*," while a young boy said that *moreno* is "a little

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[3] I believe that it is in this more distinctly symbolic sense that can be suggested by the term *moreno* that Yvonne Maggie refers to when she writes,

> This category is like a key for speaking of color and race without speaking of color and race, because moreno contains within itself, color, as much as the absence of color.... It is a category par excellence, which speaks in our particular everyday fashion of races and oppositions, without speaking of them (1992:10).

"Category" in this sense may refer less to a reified "racial category" than to a cultural trope that could be said to be located in discursive registers that engage a much greater degree of abstraction than is the case with the discourse of description in Morro do Sangue Bom. *Moreno* in this sense may more closely resemble other abstract cultural types (such as the *malandro*, or rogue) than it does most other color terms (with the exception of *mulata*). Nevertheless, my informants may well draw upon such abstractions, particularly in the indexical discourse of color, which I discuss later in this chapter. More generally, I agree with Maggie's comment that discourses on color speak of "races and oppositions without speaking of them." I enlarge on this paradox in the following sections.

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bit lighter than *negro*." *Moreno* then, can refer to a color that is quite dark, but not as "*fechado*" or "closed" as the very dark color of the "*verdadeiro preto*," or true black. It was in this sense that the term *moreno* was used when a woman with medium-dark skin and stereotypically "black features" called herself "*parda*" and then added, "a little bit *morena*." Thus, when comparing a person with dark skin to one who has a medium-brown complexion, one might say that the former is "more *moreno*" -- darker, in other words. When I asked my informants if *moreno* is darker or lighter than *mulato*, the majority said that *moreno* is darker, in some cases, "much darker," and a smaller number of people said that *mulato* is darker. Regardless of their responses, a number of my informants seemed to require a moment to reflect on my question. This might suggest that quite aside from the issue of the lack of consensus in defining the semantic parameters of the terms, my informants did not necessarily think of them as constituting "racial categories."

In general then, the semantics of the term *morena*, in Morro do Sangue Bom at least, depend on the point of reference, and the point of reference shifts obviously, according to conversational context. Semantic ambiguity is compounded moreover, by the fact that the word *moreno*, and many others like it, in fact, tend to be used not in a nominal fashion but in an adjectival one -- further evidence, in fact, that in emic terms at least, the race/color lexicon does not constitute a "system of racial classification," nor even a truly taxonomical conception of color. I have used the term *moreno* to demonstrate these points because it is the most ubiquitous and ambiguous of the terms used in Morro do Sangue Bom, and as the literature suggests, throughout Brazil. I would argue however, that conversational context, as well as other contextual factors (some of which, such as class identity, have been amply noted by Harris and his associates) can bend and shift the semantic parameters of most, if not all race/color terms.

Returning to my provisional description of the referential meanings race/color terms, I will end with terms such as *preto*, *negro*, and *escuro*. When these words are used in a purely descriptive sense they refer, typically, to one who is dark-skinned. The color of a *preto* or *negro* is often said to be "*bem fechada*," literally "quite closed" or simply "*bem escuro*" (quite dark).

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Typically, the *preto* or *negro* is said to have "*labios grossos*" (thick lips)," and a "*nariz chato*" (flat nose). Some in Morro do Sangue Bom also say that *pretos* and *negros* have "very large eyes" and "very white teeth." Almost always, those who are *preto* or *negro* are said to have "*cabello bem crespo*" (quite rough hair), "*cabello ruim*" (bad hair), or *cabelo duro* (hard hair). As is the case with other terms, some of my informants qualified their descriptions by remarking that they were describing the "*verdadeiro preto*," that is, the true *preto*. There are many terms, usually called "*giria*," or slang words, used in various contexts by the people of Morro do Sangue Bom, to describe one who is very dark. "*Azulao*" or "*negro azulao*" ("big blue" or "big blue black" may be the closest translations) are fairly common terms. I was told, in the midst of considerable laughter that this refers to someone "so black they are blue."

As all of these terms suggest, people in Morro do Sangue Bom and elsewhere in Brazil do recognize subtle variations in skin color, hair texture and facial features. While they may be familiar with a tremendous variety of terms to describe these variations, in what I would call "non-humorous" everyday contexts, only a few of these words are used with any frequency; many of the words I learned that describe race or color were provided in interview contexts rather than overheard in ordinary conversations. Within everyday discourse in fact, references to a person's color or race tend to occur only within a few limited contexts. Typically, these references tend to be made when two or more interlocutors are conversationally establishing the identity of a common acquaintance. "Have you seen Rosa?" one person might ask another. "Who?" the other might ask. "That *pretinha*, Rosa," the first might respond, "that little black one." Similarly, color references may be made when a speaker does not know a person's name. "How is your girlfriend, that *moreninha*?" one might ask, referring to the person as a "little *morena*." In addition, when one is describing a person who is unknown to one's interlocutor, references to color may be made. "He has my color but his hair is good," one might say, or alternatively, "He's a real *negao*!" (big black one). Notably, such references tend not to occur in the presence of the person being identified or described, although on occasion, one might call out to another, "Hey there, *morena*!" In some cases, people with extremely common names may be

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given nicknames that refer to their color, so that a woman can be called "Maria Pretinha," or "Little Black Maria," to distinguish her from other women named Maria who have lighter skin. The color of babies in referred to more often than that of adults, particularly when neighbors and relatives gather around a newborn. Babies and toddlers may also be directly addressed with color terms, such that one may say to a little girl, "Hey, *moreninha*, come and give me a kiss!"

References to race and color that occur in everyday conversations can be, and often are, more complicated than I am describing here, of course. Nevertheless, these more or less neutral usages are among the most common ones in Morro do Sangue Bom, and they represent a particular mode or style of discourse. In such cases, the person being referred to clearly, is not being "classified" or "categorized" but is simply being described.

Another context in which references to race or color tend to be made is in *brincadeira*, or joking. One man might say to another in greeting, "Hey there, *negao*!" *Brincadeira* tends to engage words that connote not merely color but blackness; they explicitly refer to the darkness or imputed darkness of a person. Some of the words used in *brincadeira* are exotic and no doubt of local coinage such as "*picole de asfalto*," which literally means "asphalt popsicle" -- an apparent reference to skin that is not only dark, but shiny. The *brincadeira* that engages these words is intended, typically, to mark intimacy, and as such, it is less neutral and more freighted with complex and ironic associations than the cases I describe above. As is the case with all highly ironized forms of joking, racialized *brincadeira* can and does backfire on occasion, and even when it is successful, it often gives rise to a kind of laughter that is laced with awkwardness. The verbal repartee such *brincadeira* can provoke moreover, is often edged with antagonism. "*Negao*? Who are you calling a *negao*!" one might respond.

At this juncture, I must begin to qualify my comments. Of central importance is the fact that, with the exception of the contexts I describe above, in face-to-face encounters particularly, references to an interlocutor's color or race tend to be avoided in Morro do Sangue Bom. My informants were far less preoccupied with the act of "classifying" themselves and others than the literature on racial classification suggests, yet, in more general terms, an intense preoccupation

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with color and the complex cultural values associated with it is evident not only in discourse, but perhaps to an even greater degree, in the silence surrounding the overlapping issues of color, race and racism.

The tendency to avoid or soften references to color and race in ordinary face-to-face conversation is a thoroughly conscious one for people in Morro do Sangue Bom. It constitutes a rule-driven etiquette. Like all such etiquettes, its existence becomes most evident when it is violated. Like children everywhere, those in Morro do Sangue Bom sometimes engage in racialized name-calling and they are reprimanded by adults. Adults may violate the etiquette in more complicated and variable ways, including the commitment of unintentional faux pas, the deliberate act of antagonistic provocation, and through the performance of *brincadeira* or joking.

A brief description of the situations in which my own race or color was explicitly referred to helps to elucidate both the rarity of face-to-face references to color in Morro do Sangue Bom and some the implications involved in the violation of the etiquette. My whiteness made me a minority in Morro do Sangue Bom, and my color was made even more unusual by the fact that I am considered very pale even by the standards of white Americans. I was able to begin to imagine, if only distantly and temporarily, living in a world in which one's color is visually marked and either graciously ignored, referred to in a joking manner, or discursively treated as the sign and substance of one's essential identity.

When I interviewed Elena, a woman in her late forties, she gave an example of how the use of a race/color term has the power to offend;

> Like for example, if someone called out to you, "Oh *branca*! Oh *branca*!" (Hey, white!). You wouldn't like it, right? It's offensive! The same as if someone called out to another, "Oh *negro*, Oh *negro*!" He would say, "Hey, my name is not *negro*, it's Joao," or whatever.

As if to nail Elena's point home, I was, on one occasion, called out to in just this manner by someone I had never met on the *morro*. Although I quickly ascertained that the man was drunk, I was not only offended as Elena would have predicted, but shocked by what immediately

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struck me as an uncommon and unprovoked display of rudeness. At the same moment, I became uncomfortably aware of my whiteness -- both my color and my "race" -- and wanted to dissociate myself the negative qualities associated with it. I pointedly ignored the man who had called out to me and continued on my way. That a person of color would have been even more deeply offended may appear to require no elaboration, but some of the specific discursive and cultural reasons for this will be detailed later in this chapter, and, indeed, it is precisely this issue that animates much of the dissertation as a whole.

Jokes were occasionally made about my color and while they never offended me, there was an awareness on both sides of what might be called a mild social trespass. On one occasion, I was sitting on Joia's couch with one leg propped up on a chair. Joia's brother-in-law, with whom I had a warm relationship, came into the house and said, "I saw your white leg sticking out as I was coming in and I asked myself, 'Who is that with a cast on her leg?'" I thought his *brincadeira* was genuinely funny and began to giggle but Joia said in mock indignation, "Tell him to go take it in the ass, Beth!" I obeyed Joia and at that point, of course, all three of us began to laugh. It was precisely the trespass, the impoliteness of the exchange, that constituted the "punch" of the *brincadeira*. This trespass, it should be noted, was understood by all present as a marker of our familiar relationship.

Another reference to my color was made by Varena on the occasion of our first meeting. She had been drinking and exclaimed at length about how terribly pale I was. "You have got to get some sun, girl!" she said several times, "Just look at you! My God!" I was slightly embarrassed, and Joia, who had just introduced us, appeared to be also. Varena's *brincadeira* had backfired for the simple reason that we had just met; her reference to my color was therefore inappropriate. "Sometimes she drinks too much," Joia explained afterwards. Later, as my stay in Morro do Sangue Bom began to lengthen, and as my skin began to tan slightly, Varena called me "*moreninha*," and yet later, she said that I had "become *negra*."

Another reference to my color was made when I was head-toting loads of bricks up the hill with Varena, Joia and Daniel. A man with whom I often exchanged pleasantries said to

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Varena as we passed, "You're making that little white one carry bricks?" "She can bear it," Varena said, "She has blood." The man burst into laughter and replied, "She has blood, huh? Well, she does at that!" Blood, when used in this sense, simultaneously connotes strength and blackness; many Brazilians, including those in Morro do Sangue Bom, believe that people of color have more *forca*, or physical force and endurance than whites, who are sometimes characterized as weak and flaccid, almost to the point of helplessness.

These examples, given my color and my foreignness, are highly specific and unusual. Those with whom I was close understood, even more clearly than I did perhaps, that I was preoccupied with fitting in, and concerned about how my difference might be constructed. I hoped to avoid being overbearingly racialized not only because my research required the negotiation of rapport, but because, as I am sure was evident, I had arrived alone in an unfamiliar community and needed friends. These examples nevertheless highlight the sensitivity that surrounds references to race and color -- a sensitivity that was for me, given by circumstance, and that was given for my informants by an etiquette, and all of the weighty, if assumedly commonsense practices and prescriptive notions that it embodied. What is most remarkable is the fact that these examples represent nearly all of the face-to-face references that were made to my color during twenty months of fieldwork on the *morro*.

It has been said that Brazilian culture is marked above all, by cordiality and this cordiality certainly obtains in Morro do Sangue Bom -- in fact, to a greater degree than I have observed anywhere else in Brazil. The etiquette that stipulates the avoidance or softening of face-to-face references to race and color is fundamental, on the *morro* at least, to the construction and maintenance of this cordiality. Even young children seem to grasp the rules of this etiquette, however much they may break them in the competitive warfare of childhood. For many Brazilians and Brazilianist social scientists, this etiquette seems to be taken as rather straightforward evidence of a lack of preoccupation with race and color and thus of "*democracia racial*," or racial democracy. "As far as actual behavior is concerned," Harris claimed, "'races' do not exist for the Brazilians" (1964:64). The observance of this etiquette in Morro do Sangue Bom

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was so effective that there were moments during which I felt that such a claim was almost believable.

It must be noted however, that systems of etiquette are rarely if ever practiced in cultural or discursive arenas which are "straight-forward," "taken-for-granted," unambiguous and/or unproblematic. Rather, a highly developed etiquette, such as that which I observed in Morro do Sangue Bom, both points to a cultural, if largely unvoiced preoccupation and it constructs, reflects and controls those arenas which are in some sense(s) ambiguous, problematic, and potentially disruptive. Speaking more concretely, why do references to race or color often constitute or imply a breech of etiquette? How and why do words offend and hurt? How do they have the power to mark intimacy on the one hand and to provoke a kind of laughter that sounds both uproarious and awkward on the other? Why, in other words, is an etiquette that dictates the shape, scope and tone of the discourses of color and race necessary?

These questions will be addressed in the following section. In concluding this section, I would emphasize once again that an understanding of Brazilian race/color terminology must begin with an examination of the contexts and distinct registers within which it is used. While my informants certainly did recognize subtle differences in what Americans tend to think of as distinctly "racial" traits, what I call the discourse of color description is only indirectly and abstractly tied to a concern with racial taxonomy. The notions of color and appearance, while they overlap certainly, with those of race, are not entirely subsumed by them. Color, in Morro do Sangue Bom, appears to be conceptualized as a more or less unique configuration of the traits borne by individuals, rather than as the characteristic features of distinct groups. In their accounts of ambiguity, Harris and other researchers emphasized the lack of consensus in the definition of what were assumed to be racial categories; this ambiguity is clearly based on more than mere differences of opinion, significant as such differences may be. The ambiguity of race/color terms is semantically and discursively encoded and contextually produced. In this section, I have focused almost exclusively on semantic ambiguity and its disentanglement, or "resolution" as it were, within specific conversational contexts. As will be seen, this is merely

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the first level at which ambiguity is produced.[4]

My informants did not use race/color terms as if they were mutually exclusive, nor did they use them in a primarily nominal sense. If there is a "calculus" underlying or embedded within the race/color lexicon, it is not a classifying calculus but rather one that is directed towards description. The act of description moreover, whether my informants engaged in it at my request, or within everyday discourses, tends to have a highly provisional quality. My own attempt to define the semantics of the most common terms necessarily shares in this provisional quality, and it will be heavily qualified in the pages that follow.

The discourse of color description, it must be noted finally, has much in common with other discourses of description that suppose the existence of a continuum rather than a set of mutually exclusive categories. Color perception, as we know, is a notoriously subjective phenomenon, whether it is directed toward flowers or people. Even if we leave aside, for heuristic purposes, the manipulation of color terms within several partly overlapping discursive registers, the fact that Brazilians can not seem to agree on the correct color term for a given individual should be no more surprising than the common scenario in which a husband and wife can not agree on the definitions of, and differences between, "mauve," "light purple," "antique rose" and "pink." Seen in this light, it would appear that in eliciting more than 400 color terms, some of which appear to be entirely nonsensical, Harris was tapping the creative poetics of color

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[4] In a dissertation that is based on research in a community in Niteroi, Moema Pacheco makes a number of observations that overlap with my own, yet her analytical conclusions are quite different. She notes, for example, that all terms are "relational," (1986:47) and that in general, race/color terms are not mutually exclusive (Ibid:28). Although she points out that her informants publicly rejected the significance of "classification based on color," she writes;

> The existence of a great number of *categories* that are used to designate the color of people is important in revealing how *racial chararcteristics* are, however, important *forms of classification* for the group. They demonstrate also, the great margin that is offered to the manipulation of a *racial identity* (Ibid:25; emphases mine).

Pacheco follows previous researchers in conflating notions of color with those of race, in asserting that "attributions of color" while "indefinite, imprecise, and even multiple" (Inid:26) nevertheless constitute "categories" and "forms of classification," and that "racial identity" rather than language is being "manipulated" in discourses which involve the use of race/color terms.

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description.[5]

"Why do you have so many words for a person's color?" I asked a young man named Celso during my survey interview. My question, although general, was partly provoked by the fact that he was the sole individual who described his color as "chestnut brown." He reflected for a moment and replied, "Well, you know that the Brazilian, he adores slang, right? Here in Rio, there are people from all over the country, so it's an exchange of slang." In this deceptively simple comment, Celso contradicted the notion, so often repeated in the literature on racial classification, that it is phenotypical variation, the objective and "incontestable" result of miscegenation, that produced the rich vocabularies, or so-called "categories" of race and color. For him, the explanation lay not in the assumption of a homologous relation between these "incontestable facts" and the lexicon, but in the peculiar and often self-consciously artful forms of engagement that he and his countrymen have with their language. As so often happened, Celso demonstrated that he and his neighbors were capable of far more than producing vocabulary lists for my analytical millstone. They themselves were aware that language is simultaneously a space of entrapment and play.

"And what would you call Alberto's color?" Joia's step-father, Jose asked me one afternoon, to see how I was coming along with my vocabulary lessons. I looked at Joia's eldest son, smiled apologetically, and said with mock authority, "Alberto is a *pedo engarrafado*." "Exactly!" Jose exclaimed, amidst much laughter. This term, I was told, literally means "bottled fart," and it refers to a person whose color is "indefinite," "difficult to describe." Its etymology, from all that I could gather, was entirely unknown.

"*Negro* is a Nickname that the Whites Gave to the Blacks"

[5] While having little data on which to base my claim, I would suggest that a creative poetics of color description is more highly developed in northeastern Brazil, where the bulk of Harris's informants resided. As I noted, the terms "*castanho*" (chestnut brown) and *canela* (cinnamon) were provided by Northeasterners. All of Sanjek's informants (who provided 116 terms), were Northeastern.

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My presumption, developed above for heuristic purposes, that race/color terms can be, and are, used in a purely referential, descriptive sense was continually qualified by my informants. When I asked them to define a given word, or when I asked them if a particular word was thought to be pejorative, I was told, over and over again, that "It depends on how it is said." They referred not only to the shifting points of reference that construct the semantics of words like *moreno*, but to the performative and indexical functions of such words. In many contexts, words like *moreno* are not used as adjectival descriptors at all, but as ways of saying something, in oblique but consensually understood terms, about the relationship between interlocutors. As Alberto explained to me, the word *neguinho*, or little *negro* is, above all, what he called "*uma maneira de tratar uma pessoa*," literally, "a way of treating a person." The color of the person who is so addressed is of secondary significance. Alberto's echoing of the nineteenth century primary texts quoted by Forbe's is striking and hardly coincidental.

While historically situated and specific, the strategic deployment of such words aligns itself, analytically speaking, with a much larger and no doubt universal dimension of language use. Alberto's reference to the use of words as a "way of treating a person," is, in fact, an excellent working definition of my own understanding of what linguists such as Silverstein (1979), and cultural anthropologists such as Crapanzano (1992), call the "pragmatic" or "indexical" function of language. Before embarking on a more detailed analysis of the indexical manipulation and functions of race/color terms in Morro do Sangue Bom, it is necessary to qualify and re-embed my discussion of the race/color lexicon within its larger sociolinguistic and sociocultural context. The discourse of color description, while real enough in the precise locations within which it is articulated, is surrounded on all sides by a palimpsest of historically constructed and entrenched meanings that are anything but neutral.

As I continued to learn about the vocabularies of color and race in Morro do Sangue Bom, I came to feel that the most powerful word in the lexicon was *negro*. This word, and many others that are related to it, embody and articulate many of the associations that inform the meanings that permeate the lexicon as a whole. Speaking generally, many discursive registers,

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including those used in Morro do Sangue Bom, revolve around, comment upon, attempt to avoid, and in some cases, to harness, to appropriate and reappropriate the profound and pervasive power of this word.

Abstraction and Hierarchy

On one level, the *negro* is an abstract, even imaginary figure in Brazil. Often shortened to "*nego*," the term is frequently used to refer to a perpetual other who exists, untamed, at the margins of society. The expression, "If the *negro* doesn't make a mess coming in, he shits going out," is well-known in Brazil, as in other parts of Latin America. Even those researchers who argued that prejudice and discrimination in Brazil are based primarily on class differences rather than color differences or notions of race, made abundant references to the negative associations surrounding the figure of the *negro*, and their quotation of derogratory colloquialisms reveals the persistant abstraction that can characterize discourses on the *negro*. Undoubtedly, the UNESCO-sponsored American researchers compared Brazilian discourses on the *negro* with those they were familiar with in their own country. Presentist readings of their descriptions of abstract discourse on the *negro*, reveal in addition, the situated hisitoricity both of the discourses themselves and of their interpretation. Harris's comments in particular, bespeak his own horror of the pre-civil rights world from which he had come and they are worth quoting at length;

> In discussing the *Negro* as an abstract type, the white is inclined to deride and slander. Many informants maintained that "the *Negro* is more like a buzzard that a man," but such statements vary greatly in their emotional tone. They are rarely said with hatred. The mood is generally lighthearted and tempered with an earthy appreciation. There is no monotonous, heavy-handed under-current of bitterness or revulsion.... In Minas Velhas, to the white and to a certain extent to the *Negro* himself, the *negro* is primarily a curious, laughable anomaly. He is looked upon as a sport of nature, as a being with certain sub-standard and grotesque chararcteristics which make him amusing rather than disgusting (1963:53).

Similarly, Wagley wrote,

> .... people in Ita, disparage the *Negro*, if in a rather warm and humorous manner. They know and make use of widespread Brazilianisms which disparage and

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> belittle him... But these sayings are apt to be used by *pretos* about themselves, and by people in a light and joking manner to chide their intimate friends of obvious *Negro* ancestry (1963:126).

There are several rather striking assumptions embedded in both of these passages. Chief among them is the suggestion that because the "*Negro* himself," or "*pretos* themselves" engage in these derogatory discourses, they are in some sense, less morally, politically, or culturally meaningful than they would be otherwise. The presence of laughter and smiling, moreover, is taken as evidence that *brincadeira*, or joking can be interpreted at face value, when in fact, it may articulate very complicated forms of irony. It may well be that in terms of what we might call "central tendencies," there are fundamental differences in the way Brazilians and Americans represent "the *Negro*" as an abstract cultural figure. In Brazil, references to race and/or color are frequently accompanied by laughter, no doubt to a greater degree than is the case in the United States. Intimations of paranoia and racialized notions of culpability are hardly absent in Morro do Sangue Bom, however, and what might be called the moral or political significance of all derogatory discourses about the *negro*, is, if anything, intensified by the fact that people of color, as well as whites, participate in them.

One day I was sitting with a friend in her house on the hill, discussing the issue of crime in Rio de Janeiro. Both the petty crimes of "*furtos*" (purse snatching and pick pocketing) and what is summarized as "*violencia*" or violent crimes are perceived by many *cariocas*, as both the cause and consequence of a country in economic, political, social and moral collapse. My friend, who referred to herself in some moments as *morena* and in others a *negra*, articulated a prevailing notion which is expressed in national discourse: "It's the *nego*. The *nego* steals your watch, he steals your shoes, he steals everything." There was no trace of irony in my friend's comment, nor did she suggest that she saw anything "amusing" about this "*nego*," whom she referred to in a manner that was at once, facile and abstract. This "*nego*," bore the blame, she suggested, for the sense of vulnerability and vicitimization that was shared by *cariocas* of all social classes. "It's not only the rich who are robbed," she added. "And it's not only *favelados* (slumdwellers) who steal," I countered, substituting her racial term for a class one, as I was

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unwilling to make explicit the implication in her choice of words.

I note my reaction because the "figure of speech" that my friend used -- the caricature of the "*nego*" who is made to personify social disorder -- often goes unchallenged. This is the case partly because speakers and hearers tend to assert that it is "just a way of talking," a harmless rhetoric, that is, which remains distant from literal reference. When the word *negro* or *nego* is used in this sense, it is usually not one's own associates or even specific identifiable people that the term refers to. As an activist in Brazil's *movimento negro* said, in deliberately caricaturing this discourse, "'The *negro* does this, the *negro* does that.' You have to understand that the *negro* is always the other." It tends to remain unchallenged moreover, because to do so poses a social risk which is rarely taken, even when an interlocuter may bristle, as I did.

In 1969, Fernandez noted that in the urban context of Sao Paulo, "The word *negro* becomes interchangeable with words such as drunkard or boozer, bum, carouser, and thief; and *Negro* woman becomes interchangeable with streetwalker" (1969:176). It is notable that Fernandez asserts that *negro* is "interchangeable" with such words, rather than simply associated with them, and he is, up to a point, correct. What he fails to note however, is that a white "boozer" would not be called a *negro*. Despite the abstraction with which the word is used in certain discursive registers, and the argument among Brazilians that it is "just a way of speaking," it remains anchored within notions that are distinctly racial.

Although I refer above to the trope of the *negro* as a disembodied abstract other, everyday discourse on Morro do Sangue Bom, as eleswhere in Brazil, articulates a profound association between devalued or even despised physical traits and blackness. While this association may be articulated in expression such as, "The *negro* has an ugly face.... he hasn't got lips, they're rubber tires," (quoted by Harris, 1957:122), it is just as often articulated in personalized discourses which refer to the real people in one's social universe (cf. Maggie, 1992; Pacheco, 1986). A typical comment was made by a woman in her thirties about her own deceased father: "My god, he was so ugly, black as coal, so dark, really *negro*!" This woman had had an exceptionally difficult relationship with her father and her comments were

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simultaneously intended as a description of his color and as a moral denouncement.

As is true of all explicitly racial discourses, this one posits a homologous relationship between the body (and encoded representations of the body) and notions of moral character. This assumption becomes especially obvious when discursive "exceptions" are made to what is implicitly figured as a cultural "rule." Within everyday discourses, the most common discursive construction of devalued blackness occurs precisely in those locutions which begin, "He is *negro* but .... " or alternatively, "He is very *preto* but .... " In one of many cases I overheard, a woman in her twenties was telling two of her friends about an aquaintance of hers (unknown to her interlocutors) who had recently died of leptospirosis. Concluding her sad story she said, "He was very, very *preto* but he was a really cool guy, you know?" Such locutions are ubiquitous and they spell out the assumptions and associations underlying notions of blackness. One is said to be *preto* or *negro* "but very cool"; "but very intelligent"; "but really nice"; "but very responsible"; "but hardworking"; "but he/she has a car." During the entire period of my fieldwork, I never heard anyone challenge the implicit assumptions within such locutions, and I was never able to perceive a correlation between the frequency with which people engaged in such locutions and the color of either speakers or hearers.

While *negro* represents, in both a historical and a cultural sense, the central signifier around which the panoply of negative notions of blackness coalesce, it is but one of many words that, depending on context, can signify the same or similar notions. Joia for example, told me that "*preto* (black) hurts less than *negro*," but she added, "it depends on how it is said." The devaluation of blackness is also articulated through a wide variety of slang terms. "*Crioulo*" for example, has eveloved from a word signifying a Brazilian-born slave to one that is used as an epithet. As a 19 year-old boy told me, "You say "*crioulo*" when you want to *xingar* (curse) someone." Another very common word is "*macaco*" which literally translated means "monkey." One woman defined the term for me by saying, "very black (*preto*) becomes *macaco*." Others simply defined *macaco* as "*muito preto*" (very black). "It is very racial," Alberto said of the word, "It is word that the police often use." One woman defined *macaco* as a "*preto palhaco*,"

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which literally means black clown or buffoon, another fairly common term that is used to *xingar*, or curse someone. Varena elaborated further, saying that *macaco* means, "ugly *preto*, a clown, a *preto* outside of democracy, badly behaved." All of these terms of course, are understood as epithets, and they can be spoken either within a confrontation or behind a person's back.

Negro and similar words that simultaneously connote darkness, ugliness, marginality and immorality are not, of course, the only terms that are burdened with such pervasive, and largely unexamined meanings. All terms are located, both symbolically and discursively within a hierarchy that posits both aesthetic and moral values. *Negro* is at the bottom of this hierarchy, and white is at the top. Positive valuations of whiteness are articulated in everyday discourses, and once again, the color of speakers and hearers appears to be of no significance. The same woman who used race/color terms to emphasize her father's "ugliness" and his dubious moral chararcter spoke glowingly about a very light-skinned woman of color. Value-laden references to race and color, it often seemed to me, tended to be deployed especially in those conversational contexts in which a person's death or impending death was remarked upon. Speaking to her husband, my friend said, "Do you remember Susana, that very pretty light-skinned woman? She is dying of AIDS!" For several minutes, my friend continued to refer to the woman's physical appearance. "And she is so beautiful, she is *clarinha* (light-skinned), she has *olhos claros* (light eyes) and *cabelo bom* (good hair)! It's just so sad!" -- all spoken as though these traits made the woman's illness and likely death all the more tragic.

The valuation of racialized traits is, in a fairly direct linguistic sense, inscribed within the very words used to describe those traits. The expression "*cabelo ruim*" or bad hair is an obvious case in point, and while many conversational contexts require the softening of such terms, it is still used more frequently than words whose valuational loading is less explicit, such as "*cabelo crespo*" (rough or crinkly air) or *cabelo duro* (hard hair). I often had the sense that as a foreigner, I was sharply struck by such expressions, whereas my informants used them in an extremely facile and apparently unconscious manner. "*Nariz chato*" which means "flat nose," carries additional linguistic associations. The word "*chato*" is among the most common of slang

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terms and is used to refer to whatever is thought to be "lousy," bad, unpleasant, obnoxious or troublesome. Thus, when one young woman said she did not like her own nose because, "It is *chato*, ugly, really *chato*," I believe she intended the word to be understood in both of its senses. Notably, when I contradicted her and said that her nose was very pretty, she replied, "No, Beth, your nose is very pretty!" The lips of *negros* are called "*labios grossos*," literally, thick lips, but as with the double meaning of the word "*gross*" in English, it can also mean crude, coarse, or disgusting.

On the other hand, words used to define what are thought of as white features have double meanings which connote positive qualities. The word "*fino*" which translates as "narrow" and is used to describe the lips and noses of white people, also means "fine" or "refined," as in the expression "*gente fina*," or "refined people." Whites people's face are also described as "*bem feita*," or well-made, and of course, as many on Morro do Sangue Bom told me, white people always have "*cabelo bom*," or good hair.

All of these associations, whether they refer to moral qualities or physical features, are not restricted to *negros* and *brancos*. They represent rather, the extremes within a color hierarchy. Thus, one who is not quite *preto* or *negro* is said to have "*cabelo razoavel*," or reasonable hair. *Pardo* was defined by one woman as "darker than white but *better* than *sarara*." Another woman, believing as some do that *preto* is not always synoymous with *negro*, defined the former as, "more or less the same but less dark than the *negro*, more pretty."

The figure of the *mulata* occupies a special place in everyday discourse in Morro do Sangue Bom, as elsewhere in Brazil. Those responding to my survey and other formal interviews in which I asked about color terms, used the term *mulato* more or less consistently to refer to a light- or medium-skinned person with "bad hair." However, only the feminine form, *mulata*, was frequently used in everyday discourse. While the term *mulata* obviously connotes a woman of color, it connotes as well, a sexually attractive woman. Thus I was told in Morro do Sangue Bom that *mulata* referred to "*aquelas mulheres bonitas*" (those pretty women). In defining the term for me, people also told me that a *mulata* is "*forte*" and has a "*corpao*." While

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"*forte*" is usually translated a "strong," it is often used to describe a curvacious woman. The word *corpao*, which literally means "big body" is used in the same sense. The figure of the *mulata* is, of course a well-known cultural trope in Brazil and as many have noted, her allure is rooted in the notion that she combines the "fine" features of whiteness with the crude and "hot" sexuality of blackness.

Metadiscourse and "Hard Words"

As I have suggested, people in Morro do Sangue Bom often engage in a variety of locutions and discourses that invoke the notion a hierarchy of color and of race. They often do so moreover in a way that suggests an unquestioning stance towards what is, obviously, a thoroughly naturalized and taken-for-granted framing of notions of racialized being and value. At the same time however, people in Morro do Sangue Bom articulate a sharp awareness of the power and danger of their language -- as it is used, that is, within certain discursive registers. This fact becomes most evident once again, in the ways people talk, in metadiscursive terms, about the word *negro*. Words that directly signify an unsoftened darkness, and by extension, all of its pejorative and seemingly inescapable associations are often called "hard words." Hard words are those that hurt, that provoke feelings that range from dejection, to shame, to intense and blinding anger. *Negro*, it seems, is the hardest word of all.

Part of the power of the word is defined by the fact that there is a constant slippage between its referential and indexical functions, and its variable engagement with color and with notions of race. More than any other other word in the lexicon moreover, it seems to carry the weight of history as well the burdens of a contested present. During one of my first visits to an organization associated with the *movimento negro*, or black movement, I asked a woman, "Why is that people don't like being called *negro*?" With unmistakable contempt, she stood over me and said, "How would you like it if someone called you a worthless, ugly thing, shit, dirt, less than a dog!"[6] I had my answer obviously, but it was still some time before I fully understood

6 This response, while cutting straight to the point, was extremely unusual in that my informants

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that she referred to more than mere connotation.

'*Negro* is a very dirty word," Dona Janete told me, after we had become friends. "It is always said that 'The *negro* makes a mess. When he doesn't make it on entering, he makes it on leaving.'" Over and over again, my informants on the *morro* told me that while the word *negro* refers to a person with very dark skin and "black features," its real danger lay in the ease with which it could be twisted into an epithet. "The word *negro* is prejudiced," a twelve year-old girl told me, "It is generally used by racist people." "You can't call someone a *negro*," another woman told me, "That will start a fight!"

As will be seen in Chapter Four particularly, my informants repeatedly suggested that being a called a *negro* was the most common and wounding act of overt racism that they had experienced. Being turned away from a job "because of color," as my informants put it, clearly has consequences that resonate far beyond "mere words," yet typically, one who is discriminated against has little to marshall in the way of "hard evidence." Such acts of racism tend, overwhelmingly, to be covert. Being called a *negro*, or any of its variants -- *crioulo*, *macaco*, and *preto palhaco*, among others -- is typically and justfiably read as an overt and thoroughly racialized frontal attack. It brings to the surface everything that is felt but usually hidden, as my informants say, "*embaixo do pano*" or under the cloth. The use of "hard words" not only enacts a racialized form of interpersonal domination but invokes and signals the historically entrenched, structures on which that domination is based. The scenario in which one person calls another *negro* is presented not only as an exemplar of white racism but is frequently invoked as an example of what many of my informants call "the racism of the *negro* himself."

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on the *morro* and those in the black movement typically understood that I was asking for linguistic and cultural explication. Most activists in the *movimento negro* in fact, prefer to be addressed by the term *negro*, as will be seen in Chapter Seven; they are engaged in an extremely deliberate and self-conscious act of linguistic re-appropriation. Nevertheless, this particular informant heard my question as something like: "Why is it that people don't like being called 'filthy shit?'" Fernadez's point that such epithets are "interchangeable" -- with the addition of racialized meanings -- with the term *negro* cannot be overemphasized. This exchange also suggests the degree to which my foreignness allowed me to ask -- and, with this one exception, to be be given patient answers to -- questions that Brazilian researchers might feel compelled to avoid.

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I looked forward to my interview with nine year-old Tiago, Joia and Daniel's youngest son. As I noted, Tiago had a special knack for linguistic explication and I often relied on him to help me understand the meaning of words. "Will the questions be very hard?" he asked me before we began. I told them that there were no right or wrong answers and that I was interested in his opinions. As I had with adult informants, I asked Tiago to list all the words he think of that were related to race or color. He told me that both *preto* and *negro* referred to someone who was "*escuro*" or dark and I asked him if there was any difference in their meaning. Without missing a beat, he responded,

> There is no difference except that *negro* is a nickname that the whites gave to the blacks. Like once I saw a film and there was a white man beating a black man (*preto*) and he kept saying, "What is your name, *negro*?! What is your name, *negro*?!" He kept calling him *negro*.

Tiago's comments confused me at first and I put it down to a child's misunderstanding of language. I should certainly have known by then that his perceptions of his own language were consistently insightful and that the associations that he spun for me always had a penetrating sharpness. I had difficulty seeing beyond the referential use of the word *negro* as a generic term for dark-skinned people of color, and in the scenario Tiago described, I thought the white man was simply using the word *negro* in this generic sense, as a provisional substitution really, for the man's name. Its power to connote, to invoke, to point to, a host of painful associations was evident enough but in conceptualizing its power as that of reference and connotation, I failed to grasp its performative function, or to understand the slippage between oblique references to power and the literal enactment of power. In the same interview in which Tiago told me that "*negro* is a nickname that the whites gave to the blacks," I asked him what term he preferred to use for himself. With no hesitation, once again, he replied,

> I am *preto*. I think the word *negro* is offensive. I call myself *preto*. I really am *preto*. Now, I'm going to call myself *negro*?!

Despite my lack of understanding, Tiago's illustration of the meaning of *negro* continued to haunt me. The scenario he described, I knew, represented a cinematic depiction of Brazil's

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colonial history and it had clearly affected him deeply. The continuity between the past -- what I knew Tiago had already come to conceptualize as his enslaved heritage -- and the present, in which his father sometimes lost his temper and railed against the injustices of everyday life -- were not merely connoted but enacted by the language of the white master. I came to realize that Tiago was telling me that calling a man a *negro* not only invoked an entire history of domination but was the linguistic equivalent of beating him with a whip.

As I later learned, Tiago's etymological understanding of the term was hardly idiosyncratic. "The word *negro* is offensive because it is what the masters called the slaves," Rosa, a woman in her forties, explained.[7] "That is is a word used to criticize," others told me; "It means you want to humiliate someone."

Dona Janete summarized the comments of many when she said,

> I think that people should avoid calling others *negro*. I feel offended when I am called, "That *negra* over there." I don't want to be called that. I have a name! You can call me "Janete," or "Dona Janete." .... You can call me "*senhora*," or "my aunt," or "my grandmother," but to call me "That *negra* over there"?! What is this?! I did not baptize myself by that name! I never baptaized myself as "*negra*." In my consciousness, well, you know that I am a *negra*, but no one talks like that. It's like someone having the nerve to come up to you and say, "Hey, Whitey (*brancazeda*), you gotta hold on there!" Even if it's a joke. Not even in joking! I don't like it... Even when the person is lighter than the one who says this, they feel offended. So, it's very serious. I feel it, right? Now, I don't know if everyone feels it. I think they do. I think generally, here, no one likes it.

"There are a lot of ways," Dona Janete concluded, "to mistreat people."

As is evident, little has changed in the term's semantic parameters, elastic functions, and evocative and performative power since it was initially recognized and described by those who documented colonial discourses on subjected peoples. The word *negro* is still used to racialize, to beat, and to remind the powerless of their entrapped and impotent condition. Most

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[7] Comments that suggest that the words "*negro*" and "*escravo*" (slave) are nearly synonymous were, in fact, ubiquitous and they are confirmed by dictionaries of modern Brazilian Portuguese. The fifteenth edition of the *Novo Dicionario Aurelio* (a standard dictionary) for example, gives the first definition of *negra* as "a woman of the black color" and the second definition as "a slave, a captive."

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significantly, in its reverberating assumptions and multiple and overlapping sites of deployment, it naturalizes that condition and insists on the rightness and inevitability of subordination and alterity. The profoundly wounding power of the word *negro* is both a sign and a symptom of the racialized structures through which power is maintained and distributed.

Although I have described the discourse of color description -- in which the term *negro* sometimes appears -- as a neutral vocabulary of reference, its neutrality is, really, a studied and extremely delicate one. It is constantly and ineluctably vulnerable to the contamination and distortion implied and imposed by the violence of "hard words." My informants signaled their awareness of this distortion through laughter. The embarrassment that my questions sometimes provoked circled around the unbidden but persistent presence of hurtful meanings, the suppression of which was rarely, if ever, entirely successful. Ultimately, I recognized, Tiago's comment was not merely connotative or even, really, metaphorical at all. *Negro* is, in a literal, historical sense, a nickname, an epithet, an ideological cage, and a transparently brutal judgement that the dominant gave to subjected peoples. That the people of Morro do Sangue should at times, "use this epithet among themselves," (quoted in Forbes, 1988:72) and seem at times, to accept its judgement (as did indigenous slaves in the eighteenth century) should not, finally, be surprising. This fact is itself an index of the seemingly bloodless, "symbolic," yet insidiously pernicious forms of violence that are brought to bear in the exercise of domination.

Dona Janete's Joke: The Indexical Discourse on Color and the Discourse on Race

One day when I dropped by to visit Dona Janete, I found her chatting with Varena's mother, Dona Nilda. Although I sensed that things were probably not quite the same after Dona Nilda had converted to Protestantism, the two were old friends and they had closely followed the progress of each other's lives for thirty years or more. They were drinking *cafezinhos* and swapping stories about the employers they had worked for as domestic servants. Dona Nilda was talking about her least favorite employer, a very authoritative, arrogant man who was a diplomat from an African country. Dona Janete, I was sure, had heard this story before. I had

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heard it only once, during one of many occasions in which Dona Nilda had offered me food and much-needed shelter from the noise in her daughter's house. Dona Nilda turned to me. "He was very dark, black (*preto*) like us," she said, rubbing her index finger across her forearm as people on the *morro* often do when referring to color. "Maybe you're black (*preta*), but I am *parda*!" Dona Janete interjected, and burst into peals of laughter.

I was extremely embarrassed and confused. It seemed to me that Dona Nilda, who had little of Dona Janete's humor, and who was, in fact, the darker of the two, was embarrassed also. In referring to her employer's color, Dona Nilda implied that his ill-treatment of her was made all the more reprehensible because he had failed to recognize and acknowledge that despite their obvious diffferences, they shared the understandings that racism produces for people of color. She had made an oblique but unmistakable reference to the moral value of solidarity -- however vague, abstract and unspoken it might be -- and had, in the process, drawn a circle around herself and Dona Janete. Conversationally, her circle generously included me as a sympathetic interlocuter.

I was not yet close to Dona Janete and I thought of her as "my landlady." She was of my mother's generation and as I did with Dona Nilda, I addressed her respectfully, even formally, and I refrained from using the coarse language that marked my intimacy with the thirty-something women who had welcomed me into their network. I knew that Dona Janete did not have a clear sense of the direction and purpose of my research and I, for my part, had only a vague grasp of the depth of her wit. Within that awkward moment then, I felt that Dona Janete might as well have slapped Dona Nilda across the face. I pretended not to hear or understand her comment and quickly asked Dona Nilda a polite question about her experiences. The conversation continued, blessedly, as if nothing had happened.

I was still, in those early days of my fieldwork, trying to get a linguistic footing on the slippery slope of race/color terms. Dona Janete's peals of laughter signaled, obviously, that she had made a "*brincadeirinha*," or little joke. She had shown extremely poor judgement, or perhaps, I thought, I was witnessing a long-standing but obliquely communicated squabble

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between two old friends. My own anxieties about approaching Dona Janete for an interview were intensified. Clearly, I thought, she sees herself as a *parda* and she would be offended if I asked her if she had ever encountered racism. Such a question surely, would imply that (from the arrogant heights of my own whiteness) I had pigeon-holed her as a *negra* and judged her according to the wounding semantics of that term.

Many weeks later, I was, as I have descibed in the introduction, "discovered" by the Rio news media. Dona Janete, whose bedroom window opened just above my door, sensed that I was disoriented by the sudden intrusions and she began to make protective gestures. After one of the television reports was broadcast, I dropped in to visit her. Pushing herself up rather awkwardly with her one good arm as I stepped through her door, she extended her hand and said with deliberate ceremony, "Shake the hand of an old black woman (*preta*)." She explained that she had seen the broadcast the night before. "I have known you as Beth for so long that I can't start calling you *senhora*," she said. "Oh please! What horror!" I stuttered with deep embarrassment.

Immediately afterwards, Dona Janete and I sat down and began the first of many conversations in which she referred to herself as a "*preta*" and a "*negra.*" Steering the path of our talk, she told me about "*racismo*" (racism) and "*preconceito de cor*" (prejudice of color). She suggested that she had assumed that I was unaware of racism, or indifferent to it, as were most of the whites with whom she had been acquainted. "If you bring it up, they treat you like a fool," she said. I told her that I knew that many people denied the existence of racism but that I had already spent enough time on the *morro* to know where the truth lay. "I have heard so many stories!" I exclaimed. "That's right!" she said. I explained, belatedly, that my research was about racism and that I was living on the hill because I felt that it was the best place to find people who could teach me about it. "That's right," she said again, "You know, I didn't really understand that about your research before." Hearing an apology in her voice, I returned it by telling her that I was sorry that I had failed to explain myself clearly. I described my ambivalent struggles with the television journalists and their cameramen; Dona Janete nodded knowingly and

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sympathetically. "The television networks are very racist," she began, and gave me a brief and pointed disquisition on the politics underlying the racialized representations of television. "That's right!" I said.

In the context of Dona Janete's overture, I had abandoned the studied neutrality of the ethnographer and I realized how thoroughly ill-conceived and counter-productive that neutrality had been. I continued to address Dona Janete as "*senhora*" but the formality of our relationship had abruptly evaporated. As time passed, I came to lean on her much as would an adopted daughter and our parting at the conclusion of my fieldwork was a wrenching one.

My reasons for detailing these conversational occasions and the tenor of the relationships that informed them is two-fold. The shift in my relationship with Dona Janete illustrates, in an especially clear manner, the way in which the meanings and practices -- including silence -- that circle around race and color can generate awkwardness, tension, suspicion, and social distance. Dona Janete had aways been very courteous to me, had given me the benefit of the doubt as it were, but she nevertheless kept her distance. She feared that I might show her disrespect by dismissing or denying things that were fundamental to her take on the world, fundamental in fact, to the culturally and socially constructed vulnerabilities that she brought to our relationship. She assumed, with a degree of accuracy, that I was insensitive to those vulnerabilities. If I had expressed this disrespect, the courteousness that framed and supported our relationship might, in fact, have continued, but it would have been irreparably tinged with cynicism, distrust, dissemblance and pretense -- a burden which would have been carried less by me -- for I might, in such a scenario, have remained blithely unaware of, and indifferent to, my own indifference -- than by Dona Janete. Partly as a result of the easy camaraderie between myself and the coterie of women (and their husbands and children) who had absorbed me into their network, I had forgotten how my whiteness might be read, how it might cast an interpretive pall over everything that I said and did. The forgetting of one's own whiteness, the failure to see oneself reflected in the eyes of the other, is, as I came to understand, a defining feature of its taken-for-granted priveleges, and is a symptom of the all-encompassing entrapment that is racism. This, in itself,

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was a lesson of the field and as I hope to demonstrate in Chapter Six, its significance extends far beyond my reflexive references. My presumption of neutrality, when and where I practiced it during the early days of field work, was probably often interpreted as distance, scepticism, an unwillingness to engage in exchange. In failing to speak frankly and at length with Dona Janete about my research, and even more importantly, about my own position, I had unwittingly reproduced the very behavior that she associated with "*racismo embaixo do pano*," or concealed racism. Beneath the surface of politeness and silence, I was brought to learn for the hundredth time, a subterranean world in which cynicism and good faith, suspicion and generosity ceaselessly and painfully battled.[8]

My description of these occasions also illustrates just how complicated are the context-specific registers through which race/color terms can be projected. When Dona Janete said "You may be black but I am *parda*," I took her at her word, and assumed that her terms were referential and categorical. I thought that she had made a statement about her identity, that she had classified herself and set herself against the negritude that Dona Nilda had invoked. After our rapproachment, I realized that Dona Janete was in fact, a "*parda*," a "*preta*" and a "*negra*." Such a solution however, seemed to beg more questions than it answered, not only about her *brincadeira* but about the nature of what anthropologists call "racial identity" and the language through which it is constructed and deconstructed. The hermeneutical key to what Dona Janete had said to Dona Nilda lay less in an interpretation of her words, than in an understanding of her laughter. At the end of this chapter, I will have occasion to return to Dona Janete's *brincadeira*, and to spell out more clearly how cleverly she had snared and exposed the wayward significations of her language.

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[8] In general, my whiteness presented both disadvantages and advantages in my research. During the initial phase of my research, I sensed that people were hesitant to discuss racism with me and Joia, who served as a confidante in such matters, suggested that people might fear offending me because I was white. Once I became willing to communicate to informants that I rejected the descriptive claims of *democracia racial*, my whiteness (as well as my foreignness) presented a clear justification for my appeals for information and edification. This obvious fact, while largely unspoken, is reflected in the distinctly pedagogical tone that characterizes so many of the quotes that I have included in the dissertation.

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The Indexical Discourse of Color

At this juncture, I will complicate my description of the meanings associated with, and contextual manipulations of, the word *negro* and its variants, such as *preto*. The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to illustrating two closely related points about about how my informants in Morro do Sangue Bom used the language of race and color and how they conceptualized notions of racial identity, and by extension, their place in the world.

As I have indicated, the question I put to informants about their color during my brief survey interviews was, in fact, a very complicated one it and was often met with laughter, uncertainty and when others were present, discussion. In response to my question, a woman with curly hair and a tannish complexion said, "I am *branca*." She then extended her arm, looked at it, chuckled and added, "A little bit *morena*, right?" In another case, I introduced myself to a man who was repairing the cement steps outside his home after a heavy rainstorm. He gave his own color as "*negro*" and I asked him about his wife's color. "*Branca*," he said. Smiling, he then looked down at the ground, chuckled sardonically and added, "She isn't you know, but that's what we say."

It is possible that some of my informants who used, and then qualified the term "*branco*" did so because they were confronted with a ghostly pale interviewer; they may have seen me as a "standard" by which to compare those who were "*puxado por branco*," or leaning towards white, with the "true white." Still, the general pattern of qualification continued to repeat itself regardless of the color of my interviewees and the words they used.

One day I asked Maria, Joia's next-door neighbor, if she would do the survey interview with me. Her eight year-old daughter, Ana, with whom I was particularly friendly (she was Joia and Daniel's godchild) was present and she attended the interview closely. Maria's skin was tan and her hair was curly. Her husband, Joao, who was driving his delivery truck that day was, as I knew, occasionally referred to in *brincadeira* as a "*negao*" or big black man. His skin was very dark, he kept his "*cabelo crespo*" or crisp hair cut very close and he was tall and broad shouldered. Joao and Maria's three children were darker than their mother and lighter than their

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father. Ana had very long, thick hair that people call "*cacheado*" or very curly.

When I came to the color question, Maria laughed shyly and said of herself, "I'm called white but I'm not really. I'm -- I don't know -- *morena*?" When I asked about Joao, she said without hesitation, "*Moreno.*" Ana said, a split second later, "*Negro,*" covered her mouth and giggled. Maria turned to her daughter and said sharply, "No, he is not!" Ana's giggling became uncontrollable and once again, she said, "*Negro.*" Maria was clearly embarrassed. In an attempt to cover the awkwardness of the moment, I pretended to ignore Ana and asked, "And the children?" "*Morenos,*" Maria replied. "Except for me," Ana said, thrusting her chest forward, "I am a *negao*!" Maria shook her head, rolled her eyes and said, "Stop!" The three of us burst into laughter.[9]

Like the young man I had interviewed who distinguished between his wife's "real color" and "what we say," Maria told me that what she was "called" was different from how she "really" appeared. Maria, Ana and I all knew that Joao was not, according the discourse of color description, *moreno*. I sensed that her use of the term was related somehow, to the fact that she and I could never seem to overcome our shyness towards one another. Our relationship was, and would remain, mediated by her daughter with whom I shared an easy affection. It was partly Ana's awareness that I enjoyed *brincadeira* and partly the micheivious impulse that children often have to expose and play with the squeamishness underlying the delicacy and politeness of adult discourse that motivated her to contradict her mother. Ana understood moreover, more clearly than did her mother, that I liked and respected her father.

I do not mean to suggest here that one's choice of race/color terms is determined entirely by the interpersonal context in which it is used but simply that it can be. Other informants who qualified the terms that they used had never met me and their qualifications were based, I

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[9] Ana's exclamation violated the gender rules of Portuguese; "*negao*" is masculine. She may have intended to echo a popular carnaval song that first hit the streets of Salvador several years before which had the chorus, "*Eu sou negao.*" Such lyrics, which characterize the relatively new genre of Afro-Brazilian music coming out of Bahia, enact a politicized re-appropriation of terms such as *negro* and *negao*. See the following footnote.

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believe, on an understanding, given by the interview context, that I was asking about "real color." Just as they carefully qualified questions about their employment status, so they strove for referential "accuracy" in the words they used to describe themselves and the other members of their households. A dark-skinned woman in her forties whom I had just met, said, for example, " I am *preta* (black). People say *morena* but I think I am really *preta.*"

Regardless of the context-sensitive decisions that motivated my informants' responses, it was clear that when distinctions were made between what "people say" and some notion of "real" color, the "real" color was always, by the standards of the discourse of color description, darker. What "people say" then, served to "lighten" the person referred to. My informants comments were metadiscursive; they intended not only to answer my question as best they could (using the discourse of color description) but to teach me about, or to signal their own awareness of, the ways in the race/color lexicon was systematically manipulated.

On another occasion, I was interviewing Susana, Joia and Jorge's half-sister. While we were chatting, Susana's friend and neighbor Lucia, and her teenage daughter, Nica, dropped in for a visit. Lucia, Susana and Nica were all dark skinned with "*cabelo crespo.*" Lucia agreed to participate in my survey. When I asked her her color, she said without hesitation, "*preta,*" and her daughter, answering for her mother said, "*negra.*" "I am *preta negra,*" Lucia then ammended. She looked to Susana for confirmation. "You are *parda,*" Susana said with conviction. I then asked Nica her color and she said, "*parda.*"[10]

The use of the word *parda* in such contexts may be partly informed by my informants' awareness of the ubiquitousness of the term in official documents. The very "officialness" of the term however, is related, as my informants know, to the linguistic lightening processes that occur

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10 Livio Sansone (1992, 1993, 1993) found that his informants in and around Salvador displayed generational differences in the way they used race/color terms: parents preferred *preto*, while their children preferred *negro*. It is possible that Ana and Nica followed this pattern. If they did however, it is far less consistent and evident in Morro do Sangue Bom than it appears to be in Bahia. As Sansone points out, this pattern is determined, in large part, by the revalorization and reinvention -- within a context of transnational, often youth-oriented influences -- of "cultura negra" or black culture in Salvador. These influences, while present in Rio, are far less marked, or were, at least, during the early 1990s.

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in everyday discourse. In the cases I describe above, it seemed, observers' judgements of the the "proper" response were dictated less by a concern with descriptive "accuracy" than with carefully and politely maintaining the proprieties that inform both official discourses and "what people say." In order to clarify my point further, I would note that Susana had also given "*parda*" as her own color, yet in a focused interview, she constantly referred to herself as a "*negra*" and a "*preta.*" During the survey interview, she and Lucia had not disagreed about Lucia's color; they had responded to my question within very different registers.

I brought my survey form to Dona Janete only after we had become close. She responded to my color question in both registers, as had other informants, but rather than beginning with what "people say" and moving on to a descriptive qualification, she performed the reverse operation. Referring to her son she said, "He's a *negro* clearly; he has very bad hair!" After a burst of laughter, she set her face in a serious, almost guilty expression and said very soberly, "He is *pardo.*"

Although my survey interview represented a highly unusual social context (and one that began with very naive assumptions on my part) the responses I received reflected a much larger indexical or pragmatic discursive register through which race/color terms were systematically manipulated. As I will continue to demonstrate throughout the remainder of this chapter, my informants were highly conscious of the indexical use of race/color terms and the relationship between this use and the discourse of color description. Within everyday discourse, in fact, what I call the indexical discourse of color is unmistakably dominant. In strictly linguistic terms, its function is essentially euphemistic. Cutting straight to the point, one informant told me, "*Moreno* is used so as not to call someone *negro.*" For this informant and others, the term *moreno* really had no descriptively differentiating function at all; it was simply a polite way of referring to a person of color.[11]

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[11] In yet another example of the ways in which Brazilianist anthropologists document the existence of the very different discursive registers in which race/color terms are used -- while persistantly asserting that such terms are taxonomical -- Sansone writes, "Relations of friendship, but also, fear of gossip can bring a family to *classify* the other neighbor with a term

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In social, or pragmatic terms, the indexical discourse of color functions to demonstrate respect and/or affection. "*Moreno* and *pardo* are words that people like," an eleven year-old girl told me, "They are good words." By using such terms of course, one avoids "hard words" and the feelings of hurt and offense that they cause. What is consciously regarded as euphemistic substitution even occurs when the person being described is not present. When I asked Dona Janete to describe a number of people in her own social network, she gave terms such as *moreno*, *jambo* and softening diminutives such as "*pretinho*." When we had finished with the list, she leaned back in her chair, sighed with what appeared and be relief and said, "Good. I have not called anyone a *negro*."

When words such as *moreno* (the most common one) are used in this indexical fashion, they do not deceive, nor are they intended to. When a speaker describes or calls out to a woman who has very dark skin, "*cableo crespo*" and "black features," both the speaker and the woman know that she is "really *preta*"; the point is that the speaker has demonstrated a polite consideration for her feelings. The term "*morena*" and "*bonita*" (pretty) in fact, often appear together, and there is even a sense in which the speaker may be suggesting that the woman is pretty, or at any rate, "nice."

Susana clarified the fact that the use of words such as *morena* does not, and is not intended to deceive. She suggested in fact, that when a dark woman such as herself is called *morena*, one might hear condescension beneath the obvious euphemism of the term. I was taken aback when she told me that she felt that *morena* was offensive because I had come to understand that it was the safest and softest term in the lexicon. Susana patiently explained,

> It offends because people who are quite black (*bem pretinha*) are called "*morena*." They say I am "*morena*" because I am black (*preta*). You see?

For Susana, the indexical use of the term *morena* engages the same rather paradoxical dilemma as do all euphemisms. The intent of the speaker who uses a euphemism is, typically, to

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that is taken as positive -- above all, moreno in place of preto" (1993:85; emphasis mine). In such a case, I would argue, the family Sansone describes is using a polite and deliberately vague term of reference, an act which is quite different from "classification."

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soften, conceal, or discursively dismiss the unpleasantness of the original referent -- the word or concept, that is, for which the euphemism is a substitution. Yet in using the euphemism, which is an unmistakably performative act, the speaker summons that original referent. When someone calls Susana "*morena*," she inevitably hears the echo of "*preta*" ringing silently but somehow palpably in the air. While the speaker may have intended to show consideration for her feelings, what he has in fact done, Susana suggests, is to bring the weight of the entire, culturally embedded hierarchy of color and race to rest upon her shoulders where it whispers hurtful innuendoes into her ear. We might suggest that Susana is more "sensitive" than most of my informants who appear, typically, to appreciate the "delicacy" and consideration that informs the indexical use of words such as *morena*. Other informants share her sensitivity however, and Susana articulated an insight which is absolutely fundamental to an understanding of the extent to which the meanings associated with color and race are constructed, maintained, ineffectually denied, and struggled with through the quotidian mechanics of discourse. Despite the obvious "manipulation" that occurs in such mechanics, Susana's comment indexes a form of entrapment from which there seems to be no exit.

In addition to words which are associated, in the discourse of color description, with intermediate colors, there are other terms that function in a similar fashion in the indexical discourse of color. The terms "*de cor*" (some use the variant "*da cor*") or "of color" is one of these. "It is not good to call a person *negro*," Elena, one of Joia's neighbors, told me, "so we call him an '*homen de cor*' (man of color)." When I asked Tomas, a young man of nineteen what the expression meant, he told me,

> When a person is really of color, of our color [we say], "He is of color." "Of color" is a slang term among us; it is used like that. It is not offensive. In fact, it is even nice [to say], "a person of color."

The ubiquitous use of diminutives functions in the same manner and they are, grammatically speaking, the most obvious of indexical terms in the sense that they are rarely used in a purely descriptive fashion. The most common diminutives are *pretinho*, *escurinho* and

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neguinho. The term *pretinho* is usually glossed as "little black," and indeed it is sometimes used to describe a child or an adult of dimunitive stature. Far more often however, its meaning is closer to "a little bit black." It modifies the term *preto* by softening it. "*Pretinho*" even suggests a kind of cuteness. Roberta, a young woman in her twenties, echoed others when she told me that the term is "*carinhoso*," or affectionate, at the same time that it is "*bem delicada*," or quite delicate.

The term *escurinho* diminutizes "*escuro*," which means dark. It is thus at a slightly farther remove from the reference to blackness carried in the term *pretinho*. Like *pretinho* however, it has an affectionate ring and tends to suggest "just a little bit dark." As Jose, a man in his late forties told me, "Instead of saying '*preto*,' it is better to call a person '*escurinho*.'"

The term "*neguinho*" is also, as I was told by many people, an "affectionate" word, yet it has additional indexical functions. The affection behind it is, depending on context, either a propietary or a condescending one; it can, indeed, be both. White middle-class men, as well as poor men of color may sometimes call their wives "*minha neguinha*," (my little black one) and the wives, ostensibly, like it when they do so. In this sense it is propietary, and while affectionate, the speaker asserts a personal claim, and a superiority, over the hearer. If a wife were to call a husband by such a term, it might well have the tone of a teasing sexual overture because it would suggest a playful role reversal. "Oh yes, please do," a white male informant flirtatiously responded after I had asked him if I, as a woman, could appropriately call him or another white man by this term. Although it can be used for a white person, the colonial etymology of *neguinho* is evident and several people in Morro do Sangue Bom told me that they objected to it. "*Neguinho*," Tomas said, "I don't like anyone to call me that."

Sometimes Tiago called his mother, "*minha neguinha*." Joia would grab a broom or other handy object and in feigned fury, chase Tiago around and around the dining room table until both collapsed in exhaustion on the couch, Tiago still giggling with his hand held over his mouth and his mother trying her best to maintain a stern expression. The punch of Tiago's *brincadeira* was three-fold: it communicated incestuous innuendo, it asserted that Tiago's status

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was higher than that of his mother, and it flirted, as the term always does, with a derogatory racial reference. As Alberto, Joia's oldest oldest son said, "*Neguinho* is a way of treating someone."

Nevertheless, words such as *pretinho*, *escurinho* and *neguinho* can be contrasted to "hard words" with considerable dramatic effect. As Tomas noted when he talked about the tendency of policemen to hurl racial epithets at young men such as himself,

> [The word] *crioulo* is very offensive. *Negro*! *Crioulo*! They never call us "*escurinho*." They never call us "*pretinho*."

Although the terms *pretinho* and *escurinho* are universally recognized as "polite" and "affectionate," they can still carry, like *neguinho* and more directly euphemsitic terms, a condescending edge. The extent to which they do so obviously depends both on conversational context and the relationship between interlocuters. Just as Susana suggested was the case with the term *morena*, however, condescension is, to an extent, encoded in diminutives in a manner which is entirely independent of context. Roberta, who had explained that the term *pretinho* is both "affectionate" and "quite delicate," clarified this point later in our conversation when she began to talk about "racism in Brazilian society";

> Even within a given conversation, you are going to talk about someone, and how is it? If it was a white person, you wouldn't call him "*branquinho*," no. But if the person was a *preto*, you say it like this -- you say, "That *pretinho*." You already have that [racist] idea in your head.

Roberta's comments are ethnographically accurate, for white adults are rarely referred to as "*branquinho*," while adult people of color routinely receive the diminutive. This is true regardless of the color of the speaker and it was the fact that people of color, "automatically" as it were, use diminutives that Roberta wanted to emphasize. "*Pretinho*" seeks to soften and soothe but its echo gently, or sometimes aggressively, infantalizes. It is intended to index affection but in a wayward fashion, it simultaneously indexes the relentless presence of a hierarchy within which the *pretinho* accupies a pitiable position. "Poor thing!" one of my informants joked after she had described her friend as a "*pretinha*." Whereas Susana's comment

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indexed the entangled and entrapped nature of racialized language, Roberta's comment spoke directly to it.

Roberta told me that she would be *morena*, were it not for the fact that she did not have "good hair." She could not "categorize" herself with more precision than that and she added that her boyfriend called her "pretinha." While she understood his affectionate intent, it rubbed her the wrong way. I asked her what she called him. "I don't call him anything," she said, "I call him by his name." Within the small space of intimacy between herself and her boyfriend, Roberta had perceived an exit but her care and consideration were not returned.

The Discourse on Race

I have, in many of the illustrations above, suggested that euphemisms and diminutives tend to be used only for those who are dark-skinned, and thus at the bottom of the race/color hierarchy. My discussion on the discourse on race will qualify that suggestion and at the same time, challenge the conventional notion, buttressed by the racial classification studies, that all Brazilians conceptualize race as constituted by multiple categories, which serve above all, to distinguish, dark-skinned from light-skinned people of color. Basing their argument on the facts that Brazilians do distinguish (in the discourse of description) between light- and dark-skinned people of color, that everyday discourses tend to speak of "*brancos*, *mulatos* and *negros*," and the assumption that race/color terms constitute "racial categories," previous researchers have overwhelmingly asserted that light-skinned people of color occupy different socio-cultural positions than those who are unambiguously black.

This argument was articulated most forcefully by Carl Degler in *Neither Black nor White: Slavery and Race Relations in Brazil and the United States* (1971), a classic discussion of comparative race relations. Basing his analysis on the extant literature (including historical sources) rather than ethnographic research, Degler argued that light-skinned Brazilians of color, unlike those in the United States, are able to strategically pursue what he called a "mulatto escape hatch," whereby they are permitted to climb the socio-economic ladder and thus acheive a

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position intermediate between those of whites and *negros*. The argument of Degler and others (see for example, Harris, 1964), while offering an elegant explanation for some of the differences between American and Brazilian cultural patterns, is unsupported by conclusive evidence that light-skinned people of color do, in fact, fare better in contemporary Brazil.[12]

More recently, researchers have challenged the notion that light-skinned people of color occupy positions of greater socio-economic advantage than those filled by people with dark skin. Basing his argument on a detailed analysis of 1976 census data, Nelson do Valle Silva has concluded the *mulatos* and *negros* constitute in socio-economic terms a "homogeneous group" (1985:49). There is little difference in income between them; both are very disadvatged vis-a-vis whites, even when the variable of educational achievement is controlled. "Blacks and mulattoes, contrary to an assumption frequently found in the literature seemed to display strikingly similar profiles," Silva noted; "....the joint analysis of Blacks and mulattoes constitutes a sensible approach to the analysis of racial discrimination in Brazil." Other researchers, such as Carlos Hasenbalg (1985) have joined with Silva in reworking the language through which racialized discrimination is discussed, in referring not to distinctions between three or more "groups" but to those between "whites" and "non-whites."

Two historians of Brazilian race relations, Thomas Skidmore (1993) and George Reid Andrews (1991) have also recently urged a rethinking of Brazilian racial categories (at least as they are etically conceived), and have questioned the assumption of differences between the socio-economic location of light-skinned people of color and those who are unambiguously black. Citing both Silva's work and the discourse of Brazil's *movimento negro*, Skidmore argues that the conclusions drawn from research on racial classification may have been under-informed and premature. He suggests that Brazil may be much closer to a "biracial" model than

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[12] Historically, the existence of *mulato* brotherhoods and even of a "*mulato* press" have been documented and they were based, in large part, on the more favorable economic positions and special concerns of free people of color living in the context of slavery. The institutionalization of such distinctions, and the legal and socio-economic arrangements on which they were based, had waned however, by the early twentieth century (see for example, Andrews, 1991; Flory, 1977; Russell-Wood, 1982).

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has previously been assumed. Andrews also argues against the assumption of significant social differences between blacks and those of "mixed race." While a sensitive observer of the complexity and ambiguity of race/color discourses in Brazil, he concludes in his historical study of black-white relations in Sao Paulo, "... I have chosen to emphasize the commonalities between the two groups as well as the black-white racial dichotomy, which, I believe, accurately describes twentieth century Brazilian society" (1991:254).

My analysis of discourses in Morro do Sangue Bom confirms this position from a distinctly ethnographic angle.[13] If Silva's conclusions are correct, how is the undifferentiated positioning of light- and dark-skinned people of color either contradicted or confirmed by the ways in which poor people of color talk about themselves, their notions of identity, and their experiences?

I must complicate and qualify my analysis still further by describing an additional register which respresents a distinct frame in which racial meanings are articulated. I call this discourse simply, "the discourse of race," because unlike both the discourse of color description and the indexical discourse of color, it engages, in a direct fashion, distinctly racial conceptions of identity -- and clearly bipolar ones at that. These notions and the discursive registers that carry them speak against the preoccupation with, and framing of, the notions of color that imbue the referential and indexical registers that I discuss above.

I noticed a tendency among my informants to refer in some contexts to *negros* and/or *pretos* and *brancos* or whites early in my fieldwork but only later did their comments seem to gel into a distinct set of countervailing assumptions. During one of the first days on which I was conducted my survey interview, I approached a young woman, Marta, who had tannish-colored

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13 Silva's conclusions (see also, 1996), and more generally, statisically contructed arguments concerning the *degree* to which people of color suffer from systemic forms of socio-economic discrimination have recently been challenged by Harris et. al. (1993; 1995(a), 1995(b)). This challenge is based on the admittedly slippery nature of demographic statistics themselves, for official census categories bear a complicated relationship to what Harris calls "emic categories." While this is not the place to engage this debate, I would note that my own research has some relevance to it, for it distinguishes between what I believe to be true "categories" and descriptive and indexical ways of speaking.

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skin and very curly hair. When I asked her color, she responded, "I am white but I'm not really white, right? I'm a mixture. My mother is *mulata*." I was already familiar with the way in which Marta qualified her whiteness. What was striking however, was her reference to her mother's color as a way of "explaining" or describing her own. The assertion that Brazilians "classify" or describe themselves on the basis of individual appearance rather than ancestry is endlessly repeated in the literature on racial classification (see for example, Harris and Kottak, 1963). Still, Marta had answered my question, in a fairly straight-forward way, through the discourse of color description. I then asked her the color of her sister who was also a member of her household. "Look," Marta said patiently, "there are two colors, right? White (*branco*) and black (*preto*). She is black. The children are black also."

After I felt I had acheived a degree of competence in my understanding of the admittedly slippery rules that governed the discourse of color description, I approached Elena. A woman in her mid-forties, Elena was a neighbor of Joia's and her home became one of my favorite places to visit. She and her husband Jose (who had previously been married to Joia's mother) kept a menagery of pets, including a blind, pure-bred dalmation, a small geriatric mutt, a feisty kitten and a tank-full of tropical fish that fitted into a specially-made niche in the wall of their livingroom. Jose was the only person I knew on the *morro* who had a taste for the more operatic styles of Brazilian music, including the flamboyant national anthem which he sometimes played at ear-splitting volume while he stood on his porch overlooking the city, mirthfully conducting into the air.

Elena's skin was very dark and her hair was what people called "good" -- it fell in shiny waves. Her facial features were what she herself called "*tracos finos*," or narrow, fine features. Her particular combination of features, while not extremely rare was nevertheless unusal and it was such "mixed" appearance, I thought, following previous researchers, that provided the *raison d'etre* for the plethora of race/color terms. Following the statistically prominent (but hardly consensual) "dark skin, good hair" definition of *morena*, I would have described her with that term, or perhaps, because she had told me that her mother was white and her father *preto*, I

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might have called her a *mulata.* Jose's features also presented something of a descriptive challenge but one with which I believed the race/color lexicon was rather precisely equipped to deal. If race/color terms were in fact, classificatory categories, one would say that Jose was the "opposite" of Elena; he had light skin and "bad hair," a combination that some people call "*mulato.*" Jose's skin was ruddy and freckled however, and his hair was reddish-colored; I took his appearance to be classically "*sarara.*"

When I asked Elena to describe her own color, she said, "*preta.*" "And Jose?" I asked. "*Preto* also," she responded and then continued, "Only *branco* and *preto* exist. The rest of things don't exist." Later in our conversation, I asked her to explain;

> That's right, only *preto* and *branco* exist. The other things don't exist -- *mulato*, *moreno*, [all that]. We say "*mulato*," but that doesn't exist, no. We've mixed it all up right? *Branco*, *moreno*, *mulato*, I don't know what all, but they don't exist, no.

Elena's comments were echoed by others. When I asked Dona Janete to explain the meaning of the word *negro*, she said, "The *negro* is the one who kills and steals and goes about acting rude. Those are the *negros.*" She had referred not to color at all but to the abstract, imaginary figure that I described previously. She understood that my question had been motivated by a desire to understand the terms that were used in the community however, and she continued;

> Besides this, there is only the white, the black (*preto*), and the *mulato*. Right? The rest don't exist, no. That's all an invention of the people.

Unlike Elena, Dona Janete suggested that the *mulato* did in fact "exist," but as Elena had, she radically simplified the lexicon for me. She was not referring to the discourse of color description at all (although she did so in other conversational contexts) but to notions of race, which appeared to be constituted, unlike color descriptions, by true categories that might very well be mutually exclusive. Once again, Dona Janete's comments were metadiscursive. She was telling me how to interpret her language, how to read between the lines of a creative spoken text that defied literalist hermeutics because it was, after all, an "invention of the people."

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My friend Neusa, a dark-skinned woman in her twenties, also cautioned me against the impulse towards literalism. She had provided a list of race/color terms and I asked which terms were considered offensive. Our conversation was as follows:

> R: Is *negro* offensive?
> N: *Negro*. Look, it's like this -- it depends on the sense in which the person is speaking, you see? Sometimes the word *negro* is used to discriminate. It is not valorizing you see? It is discriminating. But it depends on how you put it.
> R: And *mulato* -- can it be offensive?
> N: No. Look, so many things [words] exist exactly so that one in not totally of a *negro* color. So they use the *mulata* color, the *parda* color, the *morena* color, to treat the person in a sense [like they are] a little lighter, a little like, less discriminated against.

Up to this point in our conversation, Neusa had described the indexical discourse of color and she defined it's pragmatic functions much as I have. She did not stop there however, but went on to explain what I needed to know in order to read between the lines of discourses on color;

> So, these things do not exist. One is white, or one is *negro*. But people feel so humiliated to be *negro*. The *negro* was a slave. The *negro* suffered. The *negro* was treated like an animal. All that. But here, it is truly correct to say that one is white or one is black (*preto*). No one can be anything else.

Once again, a direct connection had been made between the word *negro* and slavery. As had Elena and Dona Janete, Neusa substituted "*preto*" for "*negro*," and suggested that there was a fundamental distinction between colloquial speech and what was "truly correct to say." After Neusa had made these comments she told me that she called her own color "*mulata*." She had not contradicted herself, but had spoken within, and metadiscursively referred to, different discursive registers.

Yvonne, a woman in her late twenties, also emphasized the notion that "one is white or one is black." Because Yvonne was one of Joia's closet friends, I had known her since I first arrived in Morro do Sangue Bom. Never one to beat around the bush about anything, Yvonne's conversation often had a directness that I found refreshing. As I had with so many others, I explained to her that

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I was trying to understand the words that described color and race. After she had provided a number of terms, I asked her what the words referred to, beginning with the first on her list;

> R: What does a *preto* look like?
> Y: A *preto*? Oh, for me, *preto* is the one who doesn't pass for white (*Preto e aquele que nao passou de branco*).
> R: What? I don't understand.
> Y: If one is not white, one is black (*preto*).

Yvonne had used a fairly common colloquial expression and I was to hear it, and its variations repeated a number of times in Morro do Sangue Bom. One day for example, I was interviewing Nestor, a very clever man in his thirties, who was one of Daniel's younger brothers (and Yvonne's former husband);

> R: So, a question. You said in the other interview that we did that you are a *negro*. Didn't you say that? [He nods.] So, I'm confused because you could be *moreno*, or *pardo* or *negro*, or whatever --
> N: -- It is because the color, it passes -- For example, the definition is the following: passed by white is *preto* (*passou de branco, preto e*). I define it this way.

Nestor explained that a "lighter" person with "soft" hair was called a "*moreno*"; in this moment, he lapsed into the discourse of color description. "They're all *negro*," he said however. Our conversation continued,

> R: But this expression, passed by white is *preto* --
> N: -- It defines -- "passed by white is *preto*" -- it defines everything. One who doesn't have light skin is a *negro*, in general. Everyone. In Brazil, this is so. It's hard in Brazil to find a person with really light skin.
> R: So, there really is, in your mind at least, a separation between white and black (*negro*)?
> N: That's right.
> R: So, you can say, in this other sense, in this sense that we are talking now, that most of these people [*morenos*, *pardos*, etc.] are *negros* also? Is that right? Because they aren't white?
> N: In Brazil, yeah. The majority. I will tell you the following: ninety-eight percent is all *negro*. It's a mixture. Passed by white is *preto*. There are very few pure whites here in Brazil, right? Because there is a great deal of racial mixture.
> R: But a mixed person also has this idea that he is a *negro*?
> N: That's right.

The notion that words such as *moreno*, *pardo* and *mulato* refer to those who are *preto* or *negro* was confirmed in many other ways as well. Joia's half sister, who told me that the term

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morena is offensive because it refers to blackness, also radically simplified the race/color lexicon. I asked her to list all of the terms she could think of and she began;

> *Preto*, *negro*, right? What else? *Preto*, *negro* and -- [pause] -- *moreno*. They say that. There's a guy here, he's a *mulato* from Paraiba. He calls me "*morena*," you know? He doesn't call me *preta* or *pretinha*. He says it like, "Hey, *morena*! Hey, *morena*!"

Before she had even completed her list, Susana had begun to define the pragmatics of the term *morena*. Our conversation continued;

R: So, you said *mulato* also.
S: That's right.
R: What else? It can be slang too.
S: *Neguinho*. I think that's all.
R: But before, you said *pardo* also.
S: Yeah, that's right, there's *pardo* also.
R: So, what does *preto* mean?
S: *Negro*.
R: What does *negro* mean?
S: *Preto*. [We laugh.]
R: Is there a difference or not?
S: No. I think it's the same thing.
R: What does *moreno* mean?
S: *Preto*.
R: What does *mulato* mean?
S: Put *negro* down.
R: *Mulato* is *negro* also?
S: Yeah.
R: What does *neguinho* mean?
S: *Preto*.
R: What does *pardo* mean?
S: *Preto*.
R: OK. Are you remembering any other words?
S: No.

Susana had entirely bypassed the discourse of color description, which asserts that *pretos* are darker than *morenos* and so on. She had, in a sense, described the pragmatic function of these words and then erased the distinction between description and pragmatics entirely. All of these words, according to Susana, "referred" to or described blackness; they were synonymous. I remained uncertain whether Susana's intention was to expose the "real color" that was so

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imperfectly softened or concealed by the indexical discourse or whether she referred, as Elena, Dona Janete, Nair, Yvonne and Nestor had, to a notion of race that was distinct from references to, and the polite manipulation of, notions of color. She may have intended to make both points simultaneously.

My interview with Rosa, a woman in her forties, echoed my conversation with Susana and helped to untangle its possible meanings. As had many other informants, Rosa interpreted my request for color terms as one that referred only to those words that described non-whites;

> R: *Preto, moreno, mulato, pardo, russo.* If the hair isn't straight, they're *negro*, right?
> r: And what else?
> R: There are Japanese for example, but they're white.
> r: OK, what does *preto* mean?
> R: *Preto* is *preto*, right? [We laugh.]
> r: What does *moreno* mean?
> R: It's *preto* also, right? It's the same thing.
> r: What does *mulato* mean?
> R: For me, that's *preto* also.
> r: What does *pardo* mean?
> R: Light-colored people with hard hair, I think it's *preto*.

As Rosa and I were talking, her friend Carla dropped in. Because Rosa and I appeared to be deep in conversation, she simply nodded and began re-heating coffee at the stove. A woman in her twenties, Carla had very light skin, what I would have described as "*puxada por branca*," or leaning towards white. Her color was far closer to mine than to Rosa's. Her hair was covered by a scarf. "Like her, like her color," Rosa said, gesturing towards Carla. "But the hair -- show her your hair, Carla -- It's hard. The hair is hard." I was somewhat embarrassed but Carla obligingly removed the scarf from her head for a moment and then re-tied it. I began, "So, a light person with hard hair is -- " "Is *negra*," Rosa said, finishing my sentence. Turning to Carla, she said, "Aren't you? Are you white?" I had not even been properly introduced to Carla and Rosa's direct, unsoftened question startled me.

"No," Carla said simply. She had not balked at the two radically simplified choices Rosa had presented. Having been invited into the conversation, Carla asked us what it was about. I

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explained that I was doing research on race and racism. "I am not racist," she said. "No, of course not," I replied, "I am asking people what they think about these things, about their opinions and experiences." Carla immediately told me that she had worked as a domestic servant, for a man who was racist. "He didn't like my color," she said, using an expression that I had heard many times.

Because Carla's hair was hard, Rosa had suggested, she "did not pass for white" but was a "*negra.*" Despite her light skin color, her employer had "found her color horrible," -- had said so directly, in fact -- and had made her suffer for it in other ways. Using a colloquial expression that I would hear many times over, Carla said, "I simply told him that we are all going to the same little hole." Her reference of course, was to the shared mortality of all people, the fundamental equality among all who would go, eventually, to their graves. Rosa nodded in confirmation. It seemed that she already knew Carla's story, although she told me that she did not tend to discuss such things with her friends or family. Although neither made it explicit, there seemed to be a sense in which both were implying that the difference in their colors -- which was very pronounced -- had little meaning on the asphalt of the city, where they were similarly racialized.[14]

The tendency, at least in some contexts, to see oneself as a *negro* or *preto*, regardless of the distinctions that are made in the discourse of color description, is undoubtedly informed by the hard understandings of shared experience -- encounters, that is, with racism. Analucia, a woman in her thirties, defined her blackness in these terms but to an even greater degree on the basis of a racialized solidarity, that according to so much of the literature, should not exist in Brazil. Analucia often dropped in to chat with Joia and the two of them often engaged in a mock brusqueness. "Hey woman, what are do you doing there?" one might ask the other. As

[14] There are occasional references to bipolar visions of race in the literature but they tend to be highly qualified or unanalyzed. Irene Barbosa, in a dissertation about black families in the city of Campinas, S.P., for example, provides a quote from an informant" "Not being white, all are negros; some are lighter, other darker, but everyone confronts the same problem" (1983:117). The significance of her informant's comment, however, is barely noted by Barbosa.

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happened between so many households on the *morro*, Joia and Analucia constantly borrowed one another's kitchen utensils, clothing and food. Analucia was a very light-skinned woman whose hair was what most people would call "*meio duro*," or somewhat hard -- different, in other words from, the "really bad hair," that is stereotypically associated with people who are *pretos*. I thought of her simply as "*branca*," or white, and I fully expected her to describe herself as such. Analucia's husband, Jorge, was very dark-skinned and when Joia's aunt, who lived just above Analucia and her family, referred to the fact that he was "*muito escuro*" or very dark, she lowered her voice to a whisper. She did not want him to hear and have his feelings hurt. Analucia's and Jorge's children were also dark.

I used my survey questions to open my interview with Analucia. When I asked her about her color, she said, "I am *parda* but I am of the black race (*da raca negra*)." I later returned to the way she had identified herself;

> R: You said you're of the black race. But you aren't very dark and you could be *parda*. What does this mean? *Pardo* is also of the black race?
> A: It is, because it is a mixture of black (*negro*) with the white race. Because -- [pause] -- I'm almost black (*negra*) but my skin isn't so black (*negra*), because my mother was white. My father was a *mulato*. So, in this way a generation was born which was neither white nor black (*preta*), a *parda* color. So, this color *parda* exists, but it's not a defined color, right? So, we are neither white nor black (*preto*).

It is notable that Analucia switched from the word *negro* to the word *preto*, the latter of which connotes color more directly. She contrasted white and black (*negro/preto*) with other "colors" that are "not defined." Analucia first says that *pardo* is of the "black race" because "it is a mixture of black (*negro*) with the white race," and then says that "we are neither white nor black (*preto*)." Analucia's comments are less contradictory in their original Portuguese than they are in English for they suggest a contrast between notions of color and those of race. I remained confused however;

> R: But you identify more with the black race?
> A: Yes, with the black race. Because we -- well, I -- consider myself of the black race because my family has black (*negro*), right? My father was *mulato*, but my mother was white. But I consider myself to be of the black

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> race. All my children are black (*negros*), my husband is black (*negro*), so I consider myself of the black race also.

When I asked Analucia to tell me more about her family of origin, she again emphasized notions of race;

> When we get together, if you take a good look, [you see that] there is a mixture of *negro* in the middle. You know there is *negro* in the family. It might be distant, but there is *negro* in the family.

As other informants had, Analucia described herself not on the basis of her own unique appearance but according to notions of racial ancestry. She directly contradicted the assertion, made by many (e.g., Harris and Kottak, 1963; Harris 1964) that Brazilians "classify" themselves by appearance rather than by "hypodescent" -- the American tendency, that is, to identify oneself through the "race" of the darker parent. Analucia's reference to herself as "of the black race," is clearly conditioned moreover, by her conscious stance of solidarity with Jorge and her children. That she should thus align herself with her loved ones, and indeed, with most of the members of her community hardly appears surprising, yet her comments, once again, contradict the conventional assertion that notions of racial solidarity are practically non-existent in Brazil.

I wondered if Analucia's reference to herself as a "*negra*" was somehow an epiphenomen of the interview context -- constructed by my questions about color, race and racism. As our conversation continued however, it became clear that it was not. In the many jobs she had held as a maid, she felt that she was discriminated against, just as Carla was. She also told me a particularly interesting story. One day, when she was visiting a friend in the hospital, she rode on the elevator with a black man and several white women. After the man got off the elevator, the women made racist comments about him. "They thought that I was white too," Analucia said with a sneer. She corrected them however, and said, "Look, I am a *negra* too and you should not talk like that!"

Dona Janete also suggested, in one of our interviews, that people who were of intermediate colors, were by definition, *negros.* In the same conversation, she referred to her son, Jacinto, as a "*negro*" and as a "*mestico.*" "So, *mulato*, *moreno*, *jambo*, all these people can

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be of the black race?" I asked her. "Of the black race, yes," Dona Janete replied. Referring to both of her sons, neither of whom were extremely dark, she added, "Because isn't the mother *negra*? Am I not *negra*? I am *negra*. That's what I think."

As Analucia had, Dona Janete suggested that terms such "*mestico*," "*misturado*," "*pardo*," "*moreno*" and *negro* were not mutually exclusive, as tends to be assumed in the literature on racial classification in Brazil. Recalling Dona Janete's earlier comments about the derogatory meanings attached to, and necessity of avoiding the use of the term *negro*, it would appear that she had contradicted herself. Referring to her son, I asked, "But if someone called Jacinto a *negro*, not in a nasty way but --" Dona Janete broke in,

> Oh, he is called that. Here we call him that, "Oh, *neguinho*! Oh, *nego*!" We do that here. We call him that. No one gets upset about it."

Here, her contradiction appeared to be even more glaring. Between us Dona Janete and I had used the term, or referred to it, in three different senses. As my informants continually reminded me, "It depends on how it is said." In my reference to speaking in a "nasty way," (and in her previous comments) we both referred to the way in which the word is used as an epithet. In her description of the way in which her son Jacinto was sometimes addressed, she referred to a an intimate, teasing register. Only those who were very close to Jacinto could use these words and expect him not to "get upset about it." In her reference to her sons and herself as *negros*, Dona Janete referred to a notion of race, a true category. Here, she used the term in a neutral, directly referential sense. She had also made this distinction between separate registers when she said, in the comments I quoted earlier in this chapter that, "In my consciousness, well, you know I am a *negra*, but no one talks like that." At any rate, Dona Janete believed that because she was a *negra*, then her sons were *negros* also -- despite their father's lightness and the fact that they were "mixed."[15]

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15 Zimmerman also contradicts the conventional notion that racial identity in Brazil is based solely on appearance rather than ancestry or parentage. Referring to informants in the Northeast, he writes;

> Family.... in its genetic sense, becomes important as a race criterion. It was used in a number of other instances: the two *fazendeiros* were considered

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When I interviewed Alberto, Joia's and Daniel's sixteen year-old son, I decided to test, as I had with Dona Janete, some of the understandings I was beginning to form about the distinctions made between notions of color and race, and the various ways in which the term *negro* could be used. When I asked Alberto his color, he said, "*Moreno*. Or *mulato*. But on my identity card is says I am *pardo*." As Alberto had suggested, it was something like the Portuguese of Portugal. I asked Alberto, "Can *moreno* also mean *negro*?" "Yes, it can," he replied without hesitation, "Because *moreno* is not white. It is dark." Once again, a color term was oppositionally contrasted to white. "But the word *negro* offends many people, right?" I asked Alberto. "Yes," he explained, "but it depends on the way a person says it." I thought for a moment, and continued;

> R: Okay, here's an example. Let's say two men are talking about you over at Joaozinho's bar and you can hear them but they can't see you standing there. One says to the other, "I saw Alberto yesterday." The other says, "Which Alberto?" and the first one says, "Alberto, that *negro*." What would you think?
> A: It's just a description.
> R: Would you be thinking that you're not really a *negro*?
> A: I am a *negro*!

This use of *negro* as a " just a description" is made more clear by contrasting it to the word *preto*. When I asked people the difference between the two terms, some people told me that "*negro* is darker than *preto*." Others told me that there was no difference. Still others, such as Tiago and Dona Janete, described the use of *negro* as an epithet. All of these responses highlighted different registers in which the term can be used. Most people however, told me that "*Preto* is color, *negro* is race."[16]

There are of course, many other ways in which the word *negro* and others, including

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> mulatto by a few people because they, likewise, had *pretos* in their family. In numerous instances people who were interviewed said they could not indicate the *qualidade* of some of the people on the list because they "did not know their family"... (1952:103).

16 These different emphases are made in standard Portuguese dictionaries as well. In this strictly limited sense, both words resemble their English glosses: black/*preto* (which can refer to the color of an object, as well as a person) and negro/*negro* (which refers to a person of the supposed "negro race").

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"*raca*" itself, were used to articulate concepts of race, and while they often function indexically, they are, on another level, as Alberto suggested "just descriptions." In my interview with Susana, for example, she repeatedly used locutions such as "*raca negra*" (black race), "*nossa raca*" (our race) and "*sangue negro*" or black blood, which, she asserted was stronger than "white blood." Dona Janete, whom I once thought identified herself exclusively as a "*parda*," said in the context of Nelson Mandela's brief visit to Rio in 1992; "I like him because he struggles for my race." Within such comments obviously, a measure of racialized pride was being articulated. "I adore my color," Nestor said one day. As if to clarify his meaning, he added, "I adore my race." While such comments are very occasional in Morro do Sangue Bom (both in the sense of infrequent and contextually determined) they articulated a sense of racial belonging -- which in some cases was not merely local but stretched, however tentatively (as in Dona Janete's statement) towards transnational conceptions of identity.

For the most part however, references to race were made somewhat more obliquely and typically, they occurred in the context of discussions of racism. Although the expression "*de cor*"/"*da cor*"," or of color, is as I noted previously, often used politely, it also functions, like its English equivalent, to encompass all people of color.[17] "*Pessoas* de *cor*," or people of color are contrasted, whether implicitly or explicitly, with whites and whiteness. Semantically speaking, it is synonymous with the expression "*raca negra*" or black race. The word *cor*, or color, is itself polysemic in the sense that it may refer either to a color scale or to racialized identity. A woman who works as a maid for a white "madame," might thus say, "She likes my color." What is being referred to is not the shade of one's skin but one's "race," and what is implied is that the employer, blessedly, does not practice racism against her maid. More typically, in narratives of racism, such as the one that the light-skinned Carla provided, a person will say, "He does not like

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17 "*De cor*" or "*pessoas de cor*" can politely soften and serve as generic terms at the same time. My English use of the expression "person of color" besides resolving problems of translation also reflects my preference for this term while I was conducting interviews in Morro do Sangue Bom. However, *pessoa de cor* is not, like its English equivalent, a favored term among Brazilian scholars who tend to use the term *negro* in academic writing.

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my color." "*Preconceito de cor*," literally "prejudice of color," is likewise used in exactly the same way that Americans use the word "racism," or "racial prejudice." When those who might be called in the discourse of color description "*morenos*," "*pardos*," "*jambos*," "*sararas*," "*mesticos*" or "*pretos*" describe their encounters with racism, they often say in short-hand that they were "*maltratado por causa da cor*" or "mistreated because of color." Even more obviously, when discussing their relationships with white people, my informants often referred to "*pretos e brancos*," or "*negros e brancos*," leaving aside entirely references to the distinctions made in the discourse of color description, as well as the politeness that is performed in the indexical discourse of color.[18]

It is clear then, that contrary to the conventional wisdom on racial classification in Brazil, my informants do, in some moments at least, conceptualize race as a bipolar, dichotomous and essential divide. Although the discourse of color description and the indexical discourse of color do not constitute "systems of racial classification," the discourse on race is clearly a taxonomical one. "*Negros*" (or *pretos*) and "*brancos*" in this discourse are racial categories par excellence.

As an essentializing category, blackness and the concept of race itself, are constituted

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[18] Pacheco suggests that the terms *preto* and *branco* are rarely used within intimate social universes but rather refer to distant, even abstract others. Within the community she studied in Niteroi, she notes, the terms *claro* (light) and *escuro* (dark) were preferred, for they did not highlight "opposition" and "atenuated the possibility of conflict" (1986:30). In general however, Pacheco's ethnography describes the community as though it were an island, untouched by relations (such as those of work) that extend beyond it. Her downplaying of the "black-white" register ignores the multiple contexts in which poor people of color live, travel and work, as well as the extent to which these contexts inform, in very concrete, rather than abstract ways, notions of oppositional race. Although underestimating in my view, the significance of oppositional registers, it is nevertheless true that the discourse on race is not a dominant one. Maggie makes an observation similar to Pacheco's, while again, underestimating the significance of oppostional discourses. She writes that, "our myth of racial democracy obliges us to avert our gaze from this opposition because it traces the unequal social positions of blacks and whites" (1992:7). While this comment is both perceptive and accurate in a general sense, this framing of the issue does not ask who is meant by "our" in the phrase "avert our gaze" and it does not refer to specificable discursive contexts. There are moments, as the following chapter demonstrates, in which poor people of color choose to avert their gaze from racialized opposition, yet I would suggest that doing so in a truly successful and consistent fashion is a privilege of whiteness.

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through language. The adoption, by people in Morro do Sangue Bom, of the language of race and color, what Tiago calls the "nickname that the whites gave to the blacks," would appear to be a perfect example of an extremely broad and deep form of linguistic hegemony. Yet Dona Janete's reference to discursive registers that are an "invention of the people," suggests an ambiguous and ambivalent engagement with this given language, one that can not so easily be summarized with references to hegemony. A degree of resistance can be, and I believe should be, read in the discourse of color description and the indexical discourse of color. While the former stretches towards a de-essentializing and dismantling of race, the latter stretches towards a democratic leveling of color distinctions. Both however, are spoken ultimately, within a language through which people of color cannot win.

Tiago's mis en scene refers not only to the constructing power of language but to all the practices and historically contingent social structures through with power is exercised and race constructed. As the master names the slave, he beats him repeatedly. This beating is both a metanym of, and a metaphor for, the broader infrastructures that give racism, as a means of managing and maintaining directly material forms of inequality, its *raison d'etre*. Naming and beating are simultaneous acts of domination and I believe that Tiago was aware of the importance and mutually reinforcing power of both.

Jose, Elena's husband and Joia's stepfather, explained to me the difference between the discourse of description and the racialized sameness of all people of color. Blackness, he suggested, is partly given by poverty. He began with a reference to Joia.

> Now, Joia is *preta*. But people call her *morena*. Why? Because of her color. She isn't *preta* like the color of your clothes. So, she's *morena* .... On her identity card, it says "*parda*." .... [But] deep down, everyone is *preto*. Look there [gestures towards the people going about their business on the hillside]. Some are lighter, some are darker, but they're all *negros*.... Because everyone who was raised on the *morro* -- and this is what I was telling you -- everyone is mixed (*mestiçado*). Everyone is *preto*. *Preto* no, everyone is *crioulo*!

When Jose referred to Yvonne, he distinguished between the indexical discourse of color and shared race;

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> She's *preta* also. People say, "*mulatinha*" (little *mulata*) so as not to say *preta*. Isn't that so? But all this is *preto*. They're all *macacos* (monkeys)! But no one is going to say that, right?

Jose's use of the words "*crioulos*" and "*macacos*" obviously violated, to a rather extreme degree, the rules of good taste. I could not laugh when Jose said those words, nor did he. He merely smiled (in much same way that an American will wink) to signal a shift in register that he assumed I was competent to follow. Jose's metadiscursive *brincadeira* was very similar to that of Dona Janete, which I described earlier in this chapter. He was drawing attention to the ironies of the indexical discourse. In calling everyone on the *morro macacos* and *crioulos*, Jose was violating and mocking the delicacy with which people customarily avoid references to blackness. This avoidance, he suggests, and the words used in both the descriptive and indexical discourses, summon the very hierarchy of value within which the language of race and color is embedded. The purpose of avoidance, in other words, is a self-defeating one. When Jose refers to the fact that "everyone was raised on the *morro*," he is suggesting that no matter how color is constituted -- referentially or indexically -- everyone is equal. Equal, that is, in poverty, and in being *negro*.

When Dona Janete said to her darker friend Dona Nilda, "Maybe you are *preta* but I am *parda*," the thrust of her *brincadeira* was the same. She was referring less to the objective difference in color between herself and Dona Nilda, than to the general tendency of the descriptive and indexical discourses to locate that difference within hierarchy and to draw invidious and hurtful distinctions between herself and her life-long friend. Her facetious remark was not directed at Dona Nilda at all, but to the cruel absurdities, dangerous pitfalls, and blind alleys of language itself. It was precisely such ridiculous distinctions -- which were built upon superficial illusions -- that divided people from each other and from themselves. Far from a refutation of Dona Nair's muted evocation of the value of solidarity, Dona Janete's joke was a particularly Bakhtinian way of echoing and framing it within its complex, unstable and permanently threatened contexts.

People in Morro do Sangue Bom, it is clear, engaged metadiscursive narratives through which the descriptive and indexical discourses were figured as a superficial scrim beneath which

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a different and more implacable "reality" was imperfectly concealed. This, I would argue, is a theoretically appropriate way to describe the way in which the significations of color and race are culturally and discursively ordered in Brazil. The discourse on race simultaneously engages essentialist, naturalized notions of racial being and what I would suggest is a more conscious, and objective awareness of the fact that blackness is constructed through the shared experience of discrimination and prejudice, and is thus a product of domination. It is in this latter sense especially, that the discourse on race disavows the descriptive claims of *democracia racial.*

These metadiscursive narratives are theoretically appropriate for the additional reason that the discourse on race is neither a totalizing, nor even a dominant one but is, in fact subterranean. It is ever present and reverberant but neither fully elaborated nor articulated loudly. All of the discourses I have described moreover, are embedded within a larger arena in which silence, rather than talk, is most fully evident. *Democracia racial*, whether we call it a myth, a reality, an ideology, a discourse or a dream, is a kind of fragile dam that requires careful tending. People in Morro do Sangue Bom participate in its upkeep, even as they sometimes undermine, in very quiet and subterranean ways, its foundation.

I have previously described the significations of color and race -- and here I would add, of racism as well -- as "wayward." In Morro do Sangue Bom at least, many of the linguistic practices associated with these significations are attempts to staunch the flow of hurtful and displaced meanings. In what appeared to be pained confusion, Joia once said in the presence of myself, Jose and Daniel, "I know I am a *negra*, but I'm *morena*, right?" She revealed a certain kind of anguish that underlies all of these discourses. While I might claim to have disentangled much of the ambiguity that so infamously adheres to color and race in Brazil, Joia's comment suggests that there are levels at which no untangling is possible. While many have suggested that Brazilians enjoy a tremendous freedom in the ways they define, describe and "classify" themselves, the imprisoning cultural, social, psychological, political, and economic significance of both *raca* and *cor* is powerfully articulated in all of the discourses I have described. It is no wonder that silence is so palpable on the *morro*, and yet, so clearly preferred.

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3

Silence: Racism and Cultural Censorship

After spending five and a half months in Brazil in 1940-41, the African-American sociologist, E. Franklin Frazier wrote, "There is in Brazil, little discussion of the racial or color situation. It appears that there is an unexpressed understanding among all elements in the population not to discuss the racial situation, at least as a contemporary phenomenon" (quoted in Hellwig, 1992:131). More than half a century later, Frazier's observation remains essentially accurate. While some scholars and black movement militants have been developing sociological analyses of racism and espousing anti-racist discourses since at least the 1930's, their numbers remain small and the contexts in which these discourses are articulated continue to be extremely limited. The discussion of issues related to racial prejudice and discrimination in everyday discourse is, relatively speaking, a rarity, and this appears to be true, as Frazier noted, of all colors and social classes in Brazil.

In the discourses of *democracia racial*, the lack of talk about racism in Brazil is frequently taken as prima facie evidence that racial prejudice and discrimination, as a set of social and/or political problems, are not significant enough to provoke discussion. Observations such as Frazier's are regarded moreover, as ethnocentric judgments, made because Americans obsess over their own "dilemma" to such a degree that they fail to understand that no such dilemma exists for Brazilians.

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While Frazier himself appears to have been partly swayed by this argument (see Hellwig, 1992), his comment does more than simply underline the political and sociological differences between Brazil and the United States. In referring to "unexpressed understandings," he suggests, if not censorship (which did in fact, occur during the military dictatorship of the 1970s) then a kind of tacit, unexamined and yet deeply pervasive etiquette of silence. This silence, I want to argue, is meaningful; it is not merely a lack of talk or an unmarked absence, as has been suggested, but is a perceptible lacuna within discourse.

In the section immediately following this one, I briefly review several of the most salient theoretical arguments related to silence. My purpose is not to present an extensive review but to introduce and establish my argument that silence may very well be politically, culturally and psychologically meaningful. In addition, I use this section to introduce several overlapping issues that I believe are crucial to the analysis of silence: the notion of linguistic domination; the theoretical description of consciousness and its relationship to discourse; and the puzzle posed by the lack of formal coercion or enforcement that characterizes many forms of cultural- and self-censorship.

The third and longest section is divided into several parts. I begin with a focus on informants' accounts of their own silence. While I suggest, following a familiar literary trope and the intuitive sense on which it is based, that "silence is palpable," or "pregnant with meaning" it is extremely difficult to describe or define. I thus rely on informants' comments on what they readily acknowledge is a pervasive reticence in discussing racism in everyday conversations. I then refer briefly to the theoretical issues raised in the first section of the chapter and suggest that none of the theories I review present a good fit with my data. This is due in large part to the fact that these theories lack an explicit concern with the experiential bases of silence. The final subsection expands on the first in investigating how people in Morro do Sangue Bom account *for* their silence.

The fourth section contains an analysis of the legend of Escrava Anastacia, a popular saint whose image and story are well-known to people in Morro do Sangue Bom, as elsewhere in

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the state of Rio de Janeiro. Based on informants' comments, I argue that while a number of cultural interpretations of the legend are possible, the popularity of Escrava Anastacia is due in large measure to her ability to symbolically represent silence and the historically entrenched cultural injunction against racial protest in Brazil. In a somewhat paradoxical sense, Anastacia's image and story "speak" about and against silence and assert that which the lacunae in everyday discourse conceals: the horror of slavery and the reality of racism, its contemporary analog.

In the fifth and final section, I return to explicitly theoretical concerns and compare my conclusions to James Scott's (1990) influential thesis on the "hidden transcripts" of subordinate groups. While I concur with much of Scott's analysis -- I describe for example, a hidden transcript on class that is articulated in Morro do Sangue Bom -- I argue that it does not account for unenforced forms of silence, and too easily assumes that subversive discourses suppressed in the public realm will, by necessity, emerge in those spaces that are controlled by the dominated. While I argue that many of the assumptions inherent in the notion of false consciousness must be challenged, I conclude that resistance -- even the more symbolic forms embraced by Scott's unusually expansive definition of the term -- remains a profoundly difficult achievement in many systems of domination.

Theoretical Treatments of Silence

Silence represents a particularly difficult puzzle, both in the realm of ethnography and in theory building. In the social sciences, it tends to be discussed in relation to one of two issues: the macro level of discourse (or the lack of discourse) in public domains, and the micro level of sociolinguistics and the analysis of speech acts. In the former case, discussions of silence usually center on censorship. While censorship is sometimes used in a metaphorical sense (see for example, Bourdieu 1991) it typically refers to the enforcement of silence by identifiable agents, usually the state and/or its representatives. Censorship is defined as a primary means by which states control opposition and resistance. As one writer has remarked, "A kind of macro silence of oppression is a desirable state for all power groups that are afraid that the mere

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expression and exchange of opinions or the free flow of information will threaten the existing status quo" (Jaworski 1993:115). Theories of enforced censorship however, cannot account for the maintenance of silence in the apparent absence of censors, identifiable agents who police discourse and punish infractions against an official code.

A number of writers have used the concept of linguistic domination to account for the silence of subordinate groups. In Bourdieu's vision, for example, dominance and power are exercised through the unequal distribution of "linguistic legitimacy" and "competence" which are defined as the forms and styles of speech practiced by the dominant. The "popular speech" of the lower classes is devalued on the "linguistic market";

> The power of linguistic legitimacy consists precisely in the fact that dominated individuals are always under the *potential jurisdiction* of formal law, even when they spend all their lives .... beyond its reach, so that when placed in a formal situation they are doomed to silence or to the broken discourse which linguistic investigation so often records.... when they find themselves in a formal situation, dominated individuals are condemned to a practical, corporeal recognition of the laws of price formations which are the least favorable to their linguistic productions and which condemns them to a more or less desperate attempt to correct, or to *silence*. (1991:71-72; 83; 97, emphases Bourdieu's).

Although Bourdieu refers above to the threat, however abstract, of coercion or enforcement, he emphasizes the notion that direct control of the speech of subordinate groups is rarely necessary, for the members of such groups share the beliefs, assumptions and values of the linguistic markets in which their speech is judged. In fact, it is precisely their internalization of these values that leads to their silence, for they, along with the dominant, judge their own speech to be inadequate. Although Bourdieu's comments on the silence of subordinate groups refer to a contextually specific form of silence that is quite different from the kind I am concerned with, his theoretical framework is notable for it's insistence that subordinate speakers "misrecognize" the flow of power in discourse and acquiesce to a set of "laws" which maintain their subordination, and by extension, their silence.

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In a somewhat similar argument concerning the control of language by dominant groups, and the consequent "muting" of subordinate groups, Kramarae, (elaborating on Edwin Ardener's (1975) comments) writes,

> The language of a particular culture does not serve all its speakers equally, for not all speakers contribute in an equal fashion to its formulation. Women (and members of other subordinate groups) are not as free or as able as men are to say what they wish, when and where they wish, because the words and the norms for their use have been formulated by the dominant group, men. So women cannot as easily or as directly articulate their experiences as men can. Women's perceptions differ from those of men because women's subordination means they experience life differently. However the words and norms for speaking are not generated from or fitted to women's experiences. Women are thus "muted" (1981:1).

The most fully developed work on silence comes in fact from feminist socioliguists. At the macro level of analysis, a number of writers have focused on women's limited access to the arenas of public discourse, to their internalization of beliefs about the inadequacy of girls' and women's speech, and to the historically entrenched "unofficial" censorship of women's political criticism. (See for example, Harding, 1975; Houston and Kramarae, 1991; Kramarae, 1981; Lakoff, 1975; McConnell-Ginet, et, al., 1980; Thorne and Henley, 1975.) Kramarae's comments are interesting in their suggestion that (dominant) language itself, rather than the situated contexts of its use (as in de Saussure's (1959) notion of *langue* and *parole*), may be an inadequate vehicle of expression for subordinate groups. She notes in another publication that "Silencing is used to isolate people disempowered by their gender, race, and class, even in the speaking contexts of their daily lives" (1991:388).

Adrienne Rich (whom Kramarae quotes) has also commented in this connection that women's speech has been silenced by "namelessness, denial, secrets, taboo subjects, erasure, false-naming, non-naming, encoding, omission, veiling, fragmentation and lying" (1978:18). The ridicule, silence, dismissal and denial that so often characterize responses to women's speech --particularly politically critical speech -- is cited by Kramarae (1991) and others as one of the most effective means of silencing dissent. These responses are culturally and politically

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constructed and can be observed at the macro level of patterned discourses and in the micro-politics of ordinary, everyday speech events. In this vision, oppression itself is partly concealed by language and by the lacunae within both public and private discourses. It is not merely that the subordinate group -- in this case, women -- is silenced but that the oppression which leads to silencing remains "unnamed." Both silence and the oppression that enforces it, tend to be naturalized. There is, in effect, no discourse about silence and its meanings. While many writers emphasize sex differences in language socialization -- and hence the internalization of beliefs about women and their speech -- comments such as those of Kramarae and Rich do not necessary imply a corresponding lacunae (or what Bourdieu would call "misrecognition/*mecconaissance*") within women's consciousness. The silence of women and other subordinate groups, in other words, need not be read as an unquestioning acceptance of dominant ideology, as in Bourdieu's scenario.

Silence has also been analyzed at the micro level of face-to-face conversations and speech acts. Referring to the analysis of silence generally, one writer has noted,

> As with speech, silent communicative acts may be analyzed as having both illocutionary and perlocutionary effect.... although here we clearly cannot use "locution" in its usual sense. The analogy carries further, since similar inferencing processes are employed to interpret the meaning of what is not spoken as in interpreting the meaning of what is said (Saville-Troike, 1985:7).

Systematic analyses of the kinds of silence that are not embedded within conversations (and which thus come under the purview of highly technical forms of conversation analysis) are relatively few, however. Basso (1970, 1979) notes that silence can mark distinct cultural styles of communication and that it tends to be observed in highly specific, identifiable contexts. Silence is, in such situations, both meaningful and interpretable. Saunders asserts that among the Italian families he studied, silence is one of two primary expressive styles. Drawing on the anthropology of emotions, he writes that "silence may be an indication of conflicting or problematic emotions, emotions which must be monitored, controlled, or inhibited in expression because of their potential consequences" (1985:175).

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In ethnographic studies such as these, silence is not seen as enforced or imposed. Censorship, in either its literal or metaphorical sense is not relevant. Rather, silence is a kind of code-choice similar to that assumed to operate in linguistic production. In the case of the Apache community studied by Basso, silence may be intended as a communicative act; often, it is a kind of politeness phenomenon designed to protect others from the embarrassment or exposure of speaking. For Saunders' informants, silence is directly linked to the control of emotion; one not only protects others but protects oneself from the social and psychological disruption of escalating anger or frustration.

None of these discussions of silence are directly analogous to that with which I am concerned: the lack of everyday discourses on racism in Brazil. The absence of talk about racism in Brazil is not limited to poor people of color as an oppressed group; it is not enforced by identifiable agents (although it may be historically linked to censorship and repression); it concerns a specific issue or topic and does not, in this sense, constitute a cultural style; and, while it is neither absolute nor totalizing, it spans an enormous range of conversational contexts, including those broadly defined as "public" and "private." Despite the specificity of this type of silence, the discussions of silence cited above help to establish the point that silence is often, if not directly communicative, then at least meaningful. It is not a mere absence of talk but a constructed and carefully maintained lacuna within discourse. These discussions also help to define a set of questions and key issues to be examined in approaching the analysis of silence; I will return to them later in this chapter.

Accounts of and Accounting for Silence in Morro do Sangue Bom

As I have noted in the introductory chapter, I rarely heard impromptu discussions of racism in everyday conversations in Morro do Sangue Bom, particularly during the early months of my fieldwork. Later, when I conducted in-depth interviews with people, the issue of the lack of talk about racism, as well as the denial of racism, was often broached not by myself but by

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informants. When it was not, I asked direct questions about the issue. For example, after informants described personal experiences that involved racism, I often asked them if they had recounted these same experiences to others, such as friends and family. I also asked people if they recalled occasions, during their childhood or adolescence, in which a parent or other adult had discussed the issue of racism with them. I also asked parents if they had discussed such issues with their children.[1] Within such conversations, particularly those that involved detailed accounts of experiences with racism, I asked very general questions, such as, "Why do you suppose it is that such things are rarely discussed?" Thus, much of what follows is based not on silence itself but on informants' comments about and descriptions of silence, and their accounts of why people "don't want to talk about it" and choose to "*ficar calado*" or stay silent.

With the exception of my latter question, which often elicited extended reflection and speculation, very few of the responses I received were in the affirmative. When I asked Yvonne a if she tended to discuss racism with her friends and family, she gave one such a rare response, though she began her comments with some equivocation;

> No. You know why, Beth? Because I'm not very connected to [these issues] (*Eu nao ligo*). But also because we [herself and her extended family] almost never talked about it. And now, since I've moved, it's hard to get together with them. Oh, but with friends I have -- always, right? -- I talk a lot with [a friend] about this. I have [other] friends also, who live nearby, who talk a lot about this, right? And they always think that it really exists, this horrible prejudice, here in Brazil, and that it's never going to end. It's when we -- well, generally, it's when we see something, or others see something, right, some prejudice. Like I could be passing through some place and a woman (*senhora*) or a man (*senhor*)[2] is

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[1] Irene Barbosa (1983) based her thesis on the question of whether the parents in the black families she studied in Campinas (S.P) engaged in practices through which they prepared their children for confrontations with racism. Working from within the limits of an explicitly psychological or psychocultural model, Barbosa's thesis circles around, without really analyzing, the issues of discourse and silence. She concludes generally that parents tend not to speak to their children about racism. Such discussion, when it does occur, only emerges after a child or adolescent forcefully broaches the issue after a disturbing encounter with racism.

[2] Yvonne's use of the terms "*senhora*" and "*senhor*" are used, in a sense, as euphemisms for whites -- perhaps even more specifically, middle-class whites. These words are typically glossed as polite terms of respect, but they function, in this context, as references to people whose status -- defined by class and color -- is higher than that of Yvonne and other poor people of color. This is but another example of the myriad ways in which notions of color and hierarchy are

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> insulting a dark person, something horrible. And it's like you can understand that it's only because they're black (*preto*), right? So, that's how the conversation starts. There is always a motive for these conversations, and this is always the motive. When someone, when there is a white person putting a black person (*preto*) down. .... But always when I see that, I think it's horrible, horrible and I comment on it, I converse about it, when I discover it.

The repetitive tag questions and repair work Yvonne used in her comments suggests a kind of uncertainty. When she says that she and her friends discuss racism, she points out that "they always think that it really exists." Within the conversations that Yvonne refers to, the description of racist practices is framed as evidence for something whose very existence remains, culturally and discursively speaking, a matter of public contention. Later in our conversation however, Yvonne acknowledged that people in Morro do Sangue Bom rarely discuss racism in detail; I will return to her further comments later in this section.

Yvonne's allusion to a cultural argument that centers directly on the question of whether or not racism truly exists in Brazil was immediately familiar to me, for it framed so many of the comments that people provided in response to my questions. While this may have been partly due to the way I often posed my questions (e.g., "Do you believe there is racism in Brazil?) this initial framing of the issue would continue to dominate people's narratives -- particularly their comments about silence -- long after it was conversationally established that I was entirely persuaded by the authority of their claims, and had responded to their narration of painful experiences.

After Jonas, a man in his late twenties, spoke with considerable frustration about his experiences with racism, I asked him if his friends tended to recount similar experiences to him. He responded rather curtly, "Some tell what happens, some don't tell. It's like I already told you, the subject is rarely touched on but I believe [racism] exists." At this moment, I feared that

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alluded to with softened terms and it confirms Maggie's (1992) and Pacheco's (1986) observation that oppositional terminology tends, in many contexts, to be avoided. Nevertheless, most of my informants did not make such substitutions, but referred directly to "*brancos*," just as Yvonne does two sentences later. Despite the fact that Yvonne was not usually one to "mince her words" her initial reference to "*senhora*" and "*senhor*," was, I felt, at least partly determined by her concern that I not feel that she included me in her denunciatory comments.

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Jonas had read my question as a skeptical, or even a rhetorical one -- as though I were suggesting that his experience was too unique to constitute evidence of systemic racism, or as though perhaps, the discrimination he encountered had nothing to do with racism. Such an interpretation moreover, would suggest that I was resistant to the moral suasion of his story. By then, thankfully, I had largely abandoned my misguided stance of neutrality and I rushed to reassure Jonas that like him, I was convinced of the reality of racism and that I respected his authority.[3]

The comments of Analucia show a similar concern to carefully assert the reality of racism while acknowledging the silence surrounding it. She had finished telling me the story that I describe in the previous chapter, in which several white women, believing that Analucia was white also, made racist comments about a black man. Analucia scolded them. I asked her if any of the other people present who had witnessed the exchange had said anything to her after the confrontation, either in support or refutation of her angry comments;

> No, they stayed silent. I mean, it's like that Beth. It's concealed, but there is racism. Here in Brazil, it will never end, never end, it's never going to end. Many can say, "Oh no, there's none of that, there isn't prejudice against the *negro*." They won't say anything because I think here, no one accepts [the reality of] this business of discrimination against *negros*.

Silence and/or the discourses that deny the existence of racism in Brazil are highlighted in these comments. As other informants had, Analucia, in fact, imitates and mocks the discourse of denial. In all of these cases, Yvonne, Jonas and Analucia reasserted their conviction that

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[3] This interview, in fact, took place under extremely difficult and compromised conditions. Jonas had insisted that we conduct the interview while he was serving duty in the residents association. He was unemployed and for a small remunerance, he sometimes sorted mail, made announcements on the public address system and answered the telephone at the association headquarters. Helio, the association president, was one of the very few people that I spoke with on the *morro* who not only denied the existence of racism but sneered at those who contradicted him. As he passed in and out of the room where Jonas and I were conducting our interview, he made a number of dismissive gestures, and even directly challenged Jonas's insistence on the reality of systemic racism. Implicitly, Helio was suggesting, whatever bad experiences Jonas had had were due not to his color but to his own personal failings. Had I invited Helio into the conversation, the results might have been particularly interesting but I made a show of ignoring him. Jonas's stories were emotionally wrenching and I was far more concerned to show that my personal and political sympathies lay entirely with him.

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prejudice and discrimination are pervasive. The intonation of these assertions, impossible to capture in written transcripts, was forceful and argumentative and the otherwise ubiquitous, polite tag questions that request attention, conversational support and understanding were absent.

With the likely exception of Jonas's response, I believe that my interviewees did not, in fact, feel that I was in need of suasion or had failed to understand the import of their words. Rather, particularly when they referred to silence, they framed their comments as a kind of defensive counter-argument against an invisible interlocutor. If at times I had the impression that they had never before discussed their experiences, interpretations and opinions in such detail, I also had the sense that both their narratives of racism and their comments on silence had a history -- even if it was only a private history of tortured inner dialogue, a kind of *esprit d'escalier* or staircase wit. While their comments were generously intended to enlighten a foreign researcher, they were also, at identifiable moments, directed towards all of the people who had denied their experience and misread their silence.[4]

My awareness of the dearth of explicit discussions about racism was repeatedly confirmed by people's responses to my direct questions about the extent to which racism was a subject of conversations within families and between friends. When I asked Paulinho, a man in forties, if his parents had ever discussed racism in his presence, his response was typical. Although he described a childhood spent in the Bahian *roca*, or countryside, his comments were echoed by others with more urban origins. The all-consuming demands of day-to-day survival left no time or energy for the discussion of issues such as racism;

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[4] I believe that middle-class whites do, in fact, tend to misread the silence of poor people of color and I support this contention in Chapter Six. Although the silence surrounding racism is almost universally observed, it could be suggested that it is constituted not by a single "code" but by multiple ones. People in Morro do Sangue Bom, I believe, have no difficulty in correctly reading one anothers' silence, for it is, in a sense, based on a local code that is constituted by local understandings as well as by broader, more universal patterns of cultural censorship. As a code, the silence that is observed among middle-class whites is differently motivated and interpreted; they no doubt inaccurately assume a homologous relation between their own silence and the silence, for example, that is observed by their maids.

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> No, there was that whole thing at home, that business of being in the *roca*, all that, planting manioc, making *farinha*, that whole thing. So everything was more or less just consumed with this, and fishing, you know? My father had this fantasy that one day things would get better but they never did.... When I was nine years old, I felt that [awareness of racism]. I came home and I said to my mother, "Mom, someone called me a monkey (*macaco*)!" You understand? And she just said, "Answer back, insult them back." .... So, like that, after that business of throwing insults, it starts up, that whole thing, right, and it's too much.

His mother's response, Paulinho suggested, was hardly adequate.[5] Other informants told me that during the time they were children, cross-generational conversation was, in general, very restricted. Elena, who grew up in the countryside of Espirito Santa said, "It's not like today. There was a lack of information and parents didn't converse with children as they do now." Like Elena, a number of informants suggested that their parents lacked the sophistication -- usually referred to as "*informacao*" or information -- to engage in discussions of racism.

I also asked many of my informants if they had heard stories about slavery when they were growing up. When I asked Dona Janete, she recounted several but then added,

> The adults at that time didn't converse with children, right? It's hard for you to understand this but we didn't have the right to listen to the conversations of our elders. When the parents were conversing like that, we had to leave, to work, to take care of our younger siblings. So I didn't hear things like that.

The few stories about slavery that Dona Janete did recount were painful ones, involving routine privation and gratuitous torture.[6] When she says that children "did not have the right to

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[5]Silence between parents and children may often be exacerbated by the type of facile dismissal and apparent avoidance that Paulinho refers to. I provide additional examples below. Barbosa makes a similar observation:

> Many of the occurrences of racial problems in the school do not reach the awareness of the mothers. During conversations in which mothers and their children participated, frequently a child or youth would provide testimonies about occurrences with which the mothers were unfamiliar... When they asked, "Why didn't you tell me?" the response was generally, "You yourself told me that it isn't good to give importance to these things and I am only remembering now because the [anthropologist] has asked me" (1983:106).

In some cases evidently, parents may not intentionally discourage or curtail discussion but the end result -- silence -- is the same.

[6] Those stories I did hear about slavery often involved burning as a method of punishment, and sometimes, of murder. Dona Janete's grandmother for example, had recounted an incident in which a slave woman was forced to immerse her arm in boiling water. Gilberto Freyre

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listen to conversations," I believe she was not only suggesting that relations between parents and children were more formal[7] than they are currently but also that children were deliberately shielded from certain conversations. Very few informants in fact, were able to recall hearing stories about the slavery era, although the grandparents and great grandparents of a number of the older people I I knew had, in fact, been slaves. Paulinho, whom I have quoted above, was an exception in that he told me that his great grandfather would "get the children together and tell stories, so many incredible stories." Although Paulinho referred to the content of these stories in a pained and somewhat vague way, he was able to recall their effect on him;

> My great grandfather told about all that, stories so bad that he would wind up crying, the poor guy, and then he would change the subject, because he was crying so much. This made me so upset and angry (*revoltado*).... This for me, I was a child and he passed this on to me. I said, "My God, what was done to my great grandmothers, my great grandfathers?" That whole thing. And they died, I didn't get to know them well. And I kept thinking about this: was it the same for them?

In Paulinho's last line ("was it the same for them?") he was referring to the stories about rape and beating that his great grandfather had reported as happening not to him but to others, his friends of the *senzala*, or slave quarters. Paulinho told me that as a result of these stories, which he had heard at the age of seven or eight, he had become a "very rebellious child."

Dona Janete's son, Jacinto, also told me several very truncated stories from the slavery era that his mother had told him. He then said,

> My mother told us a lot.... She told us so many things. I don't involve myself with it (*Eu nao ligo muito*). Because it's so sad. I don't like [these stories] from the past. What humans do to each other -- I think we should leave those times behind. Oh, but there is slavery still today, right? .... Slavery is like racism, it hasn't ended, it's just gotten more sophisticated. And this isn't going to end. It exists today, a concealed kind of slavery (*escravidao embaixo do pano*).

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occasionally departs from what others have called the "myth of the friendly master" and describes the sadism of slave-owning families -- which was sometimes extreme.

[7] There is every reason to believe that my informants' assertions of a bygone formality between parents and children are accurate. People over thirty nearly always addressed their parents with the formal "*senhor/senhora*," -- and always had -- whereas their own children always addressed them with the informal "*voce*." As Dona Janete and others suggested, this shift has been accompanied by a general loosening of the more rigid forms of familial hierarchy and formality.

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Both men obviously suffered distress on hearing these stories and in retelling them to me, in however abbreviated a fashion. When Jacinto said "I don't involve myself with it (*Eu nao ligo*)," his face became contorted and he waved his arm about as though dispelling a cloud of smoke. Most people told me, however, that their parents had talked neither about slavery nor racism when they were growing up. When I asked younger informants in their teens and twenties if their parents had ever discussed racism with them they rarely elaborated on their responses, saying simply, "No they never talked about it," or "They don't involve themselves with this. (*Eles nao ligam*)."

Some informants, like Paulinho, suggested that the lack of open discussion (which could hypothetically involve warnings, advice or reassurance) within the family caused them pain and frustration during their childhood or adolescence. In this regard, the comments of Rosa are worth quoting at length; they recount the searing experience of a sudden confrontation with prejudice and the failure to find sufficient "explanation" or familial support and reassurance. When I asked Rosa if she was able to recall the first time she became aware of racism, she paused for nearly a minute and then began to recount an experience she had had at the age of sixteen or seventeen;

> I remember. It was in Belo Horizonte [a major city in the state of Minas Gerais]. I came to Belo Horizonte and worked for a family there[8] [as a domestic servant]. And on the same street, I knew a girl, a *moreninha*, a *mulatinha*,[9] she worked on the same street as I did. So, I lived there and every weekend, my employer would go out. So my friend said to me, "Let's go out on Saturday night." I said, "Let's go." She had a white friend. So at nine thirty at night, she came over and we went over to this friend's house to call her to come out with us... But when her friend saw me, she didn't want to go out anymore. She spoke directly to me. "But why don't you want to go out anymore?" I asked. "Oh, because you're black (*preta*)." She didn't like dark people. It just stayed in my head and later I spoke with my employer. She said, "Oh, there are a lot of people who don't like blacks (*pretos*). There are many whites who don't like blacks and many blacks who don't like whites." And from that day forward, I thought, "What is this difference?" Of whites not liking blacks, blacks not liking whites? You know?

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[8] Rosa was born and raised in the countryside of the same state and like many of her generation, she left the *roca* and began working in the city when she was a teenager.

[9] Rosa was using these words descriptively to suggest that her friend, while not white, was very light-skinned. Rosa is very dark-skinned.

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> There has to be some root to it, from the mother or father. I knew there had to be a reason but I thought, "How absurd!" I thought, "What does that have to do with anything? What bullshit (*besteira*)!" I always kept that in my head.

At this point in her narrative, Rosa paused and I asked her if she had also told her mother or another relative what had happened. She continued;

> I talked about it with my mother. My mother just said, "What nonsense, that had nothing to do with it!" [And I said], "Then why didn't she go out with my friend just because I was with her?" [My mother said], "Because you were poorly dressed." That's what my mother said. [I said], "No, Mom, I was all neat and pretty, just like her." "Then why didn't she go out with you?" "No, mom, the girl actually came out and said it was because I was black!" [My mother said], "Oh, that's nonsense, it wasn't that, no!" You know? All she said was that perhaps I was poorly dressed. I said "No, mom, it wasn't because of that, no!" My mother didn't believe me.

At this point, Rosa paused again and I asked, "You were very angry then?" Almost shouting, she responded,

> I knew it was because I was a *preta*! Because I was a *negra*! This bullshit (*besteira*) shouldn't exist but it does!

Rosa's narrative culminates in her insistence that despite her mother's denial, she knew beyond a doubt that she had encountered racial prejudice. When she described -- in fact, replayed -the conversation with her mother, the speed and pitch of her voice increased and she repeatedly left out the pronouns that indicate who was speaking in the original conversation. In her last statement, ("This bullshit shouldn't exist") I believe Rosa was not merely making a prescriptive moral statement. I had heard such pronouncements many times, and while they were often spoken with some feeling, they had the conversational ring of oft-repeated truisms. Rosa's statement, on the other hand, sounded like "talking back." Speaking as it were, to her mother, and by extension, to the discourse of denial, and to silence, she was saying in effect, "I know it shouldn't exist but denying that it exists doesn't erase the reality of what really happens." In calling herself first a *preta*, then a *negra*, Rosa rejects politeness and euphemism, and at the same time, speaks in the voice of the other, using what Tiago had called the "nickname that the whites gave to the blacks" and what she herself, in a different moment of our

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conversation had called "what the masters called the slaves." Despite this experience, Rosa told me that she had never discussed racism with her own children.

Clearly, silence in Morro do Sangue Bom is not absolute. Although people told me stories about racism which they had not told their friends and families, a number of people were able to recount second-hand stories -- encounters with racism that were suffered by parents, spouses, children and friends. Rosa had, in fact, mentioned that her twelve year-old son had told her that a white neighbor had called him racist names and that she "didn't like *pretos*." Clearly, she and her son had had at least one conversation about the issue. For Rosa somehow, this conversation and others she might have had with her children were not deemed significant, or were not recalled.

Although it was not absolute, I often had the sense that the silence observed within families and between families was somehow at cross purposes. This was especially clear when I interviewed Dona Janete and her son Jacinto on separate occasions. Both had spoken at length about racism. While Dona Janete said, "Thank God, nothing ever happened to me," she felt that both of her sons, in being dismissed from, or ill-treated in their jobs, had been discriminated against. Generally, she felt that racism was very pervasive. Yet when I asked her if she had ever discussed racism with her sons, she said,

> Have I conversed with my sons about this? I never said anything because they don't feel this. They think that everyone accepts them. The only thing was [my son's difficulties on the job].... So they never complained about being discriminated against. And it doesn't enter their heads that they could be discriminated against in some place.

When I interviewed Jacinto, he spoke at length about a variety of situations in which he had felt victimized by prejudice and discrimination, ranging from his reception in restaurants, to his rejection by his future parents-in-law, to being dismissed from a job. When I asked him if his mother had ever discussed racism with him, he said, "No, no." I clarified my question by asking, " Did she ever say anything, you know, like, 'you have to struggle because there is racism'?" He responded,

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> Oh well, [she said] you have to study to be someone in life... because of that business -- these days you have to study because those of us who don't study won't be anything; it would be worse.

I asked him, "Did she ever advise you in a more direct way about racism?"

> No, no, she didn't advise me. Because in the first place, my mother didn't have well -- She is from Minas. She didn't have a lot of education, and in her work she stayed up until now, she stayed there for twenty-three years. She doesn't have much of a notion of -- she never had -- My parents never struggled ideologically, in this movement business, racism, those things. They never did because each one is caught up in day-to-day thing, right? So, she just told us to study, to study because at least you could a job that's more or less..... but these days it doesn't help (*nao adianta*)! A garbage collector!

Both thought the other was naive about the realities of racism and there is a suggestion, though not explicit, in the comments of both, of a desire not to undercut this naiveté with open discussions of what both, it is clear, know and feel. Neither, it seems, wants to disabuse the other of a false sense of safety and optimism. In this sense, the silence they observe with each other is protective. Though it is almost certain that Dona Janete and her son Jacinto have, on occasion, at least mentioned issues and personal experiences related to racism, neither recalls, or wants to recall, these conversations.

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When cultural censorship occurs across social groups -- such as those defined by class, color or sex -- we should not assume that such groups are responding in similar or homologous ways to monolithic cultural or political processes. While it can certainly be argued that there is a "universal etiquette" against speaking openly and at length about racism in Brazil, what motivates this etiquette for a middle-class white person may be quite different from the motivation for people such as those in Morro do Sangue Bom. Furthermore, people's explanations for their own silence may show a very imperfect or inconsistent fit with theoretically expectable patterns. The claims of "*democracia racial*," which would constitute a theory of sorts, would posit, for example, that silence reveals a predictable lack of concern with what is irrelevant or non-existent. Support for this position might be read in the comments some

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informants made, such as "*Eu nao ligo*," or "I don't concern myself with it," as well as the comments about the more pressing concern with the "day-to-day." A Marxian analysis might posit that poor people of color (and all Brazilians) are mystified by the myth of *democracia racial*; they do not perceive racism and are thus unaware of it. Such a scenario would be similar to Bourdieu's vision of linguistic domination in that the flow of power is misrecognized; subordinate groups share dominant discourses and accept the values and assumptions on which the judgment of the legitimacy of language and discourses (and silences) are based.

My data, particularly that gathered in interviews during the latter stages of fieldwork, offers very little support for such a vision. Very few of my informants were unaware of racism and as is noted in the section above, they self-consciously argue against, and even derisively mimic, the discourses that deny the existence and significance of racism.

A theory of linguistic hegemony or domination similar to that Kramarae suggests might posit on the other hand, that poor people of color refrain from discussing racism in intimate settings because they lack the language, discursive models and narrative strategies to do so. When people in Morro do Sangue Bom attribute the lack of talk to the "*falta de informacao*," or lack of information, they seem to lend credence to such a theory. Furthermore, linguistic domination (or "lack of information"), to the extent that it exists, is everywhere compounded and supported by the covert nature of many racist practices. Covert discrimination is notoriously difficult to prove, and is itself, usually constituted through verbal exchanges which involve deliberate dissimulation. As Rosa said, "It's our word against theirs."

As the following will demonstrate however, informants in Morro do Sangue Bom have their own reasons for remaining silent and these reasons, while not offering a complete refutation of the assumptions of theories of linguistic domination, nevertheless challenge them, in rather complicated ways. My informants accounts of and accounting for their own silence point to that which is missing in such theories: a concern with the experiential bases of decisions to speak or to remain silent.

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When I asked Guilherme, Daniel's younger brother, if his parents ever talked about racism, he said, "My mother is not racist." I was taken aback by this response and then recalled that Joia had told me that Guilherme's (and Daniel's) mother had protested her marriage to Daniel years earlier by repeatedly saying, "What are you doing with that dark one, that *negra*?" Guilherme may well have been aware of this conflict, and may even have heard that his sister-in-law had discussed it with me. "No, that's not what I meant," I said to Guilherme, who responded, "No, I know you didn't mean that." I repeated the question. "No, never," he replied. I asked him, "Why do think it is that people don't talk about it very much?" He responded,

> Oh, well, people want to forget and let it pass. That's why people don't talk about it. It's a form of forgetting, of trying not to remember.

Guilherme then abruptly brought up the issue of slavery;

> Because [racism] has diminished a lot. There was a lot of racism during the slavery era. Even so, it still exists. These days, people will even say to you, "Give thanks to God and Princesa Isabel[10] that you are free. Because you are a *negro*. A slave." That happens, there are people who say that to you. I mean, it's racism. It doesn't do to keep talking about it. It doesn't resolve anything. It doesn't change things. If racism comes from the big person, right, on top, well, it's hard for the person on the bottom to say anything."

For Guilherme then, the relative silence surrounding racism is not a mere absence of talk. Within this silence there is a kind of purposefulness, the involvement of agency, for it is a "form of forgetting," or more precisely of "trying not to remember." Guilherme was the darkest in his family, much darker than his own mother, and it may be that his comments had a personal edge, a reference to his own family history.

A number of overlapping meanings are suggested by his comments on slavery, however. Forgetting seems to refer not only to a desire to turn away from the memory of one's own

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[10] By signing the "Golden Law," Princesa Isabel, the daughter of Dom Pedro, and the acting head of state during his absence from Brazil, is credited with abolishing slavery. In a strictly discursive sense, she is similar to the glorified figure of Abraham Lincoln. The political activities, including slave rebellions, that lead up to abolition in Brazil, were, of course far more complicated than references to Princesa Isabel suggest.

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personal confrontations with racism, but also from the collective memory of slavery. As several informants told me, it is "best to forget," about slavery; one must avoid "holding rancor." Yet, at the same time, a number of people said, "Slavery has not ended"; the fusion of the past and present is not merely rhetorical but is seen as experiential. In mimicking racist discourse ("Thank God and Princesa Isabel that you are free...."), Guilherme suggests that the attempt to forget either slavery or the offense and pain of personal experiences involving racism is constantly undermined by fresh insults. In addition, the racist comment he quotes seems to convey a threat, perhaps even a command, to silence. It is certainly, at any rate, the kind of comment that people in Morro do Sangue Bom described as "putting one in one's place" (*se ponha no seu lugar*), an idiomatic expression that is as common and brutally direct as it is in English. This sense of threat is carried further in his reference to the "big person," the "one on top," whose power compels silence.

Notably, Guilherme's abrupt shift between the issue of talking about racism and talking back to the racist occurred in the responses of a number of informants. I felt certain that Guilherme understood that my question concerned conversations *about* racism, such as those that might occur with one's family and friends. Yet for him and others, the acts of "talking about" and "talking back," while certainly separate, were closely related. As will be seen below, his comments on the ineffectiveness of talk, it's failure to accomplish change, were also echoed by many.

After I had reassured Jonas (whom I have quoted earlier) that I respected his authority and agreed with his opinions about the prevalence of racism, our conversation continued. I asked him, "Why is it that people don't talk much about it?"

> There isn't a way for it to be resolved. If someone mistreats me because of my color, am I going to punch him? I can't do that. You just have to let it go. Let it go, right, let it go (*deixa pra la*). You can't even -- you can't lose your temper (*esquenta a cabeca*) over it. You forget what's happening. It passes. I let it go (*Deixo pra la*). I think this is the best way of resolving it.

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I did not doubt Jonas's sincerity in making these comments; it seemed he had arrived at such an apparently complacent position through a painful route. His passivity was an achievement. He had told me about an experience in which he had gone, quite literally in tears, to the police station to make a formal complaint of racial discrimination. The police had told him to "calm down," and to "not lose his temper" or get "hot headed" (*nao esquenta a cabeca*). In the end, precisely as Jonas said, nothing was resolved. As was the case with Guilherme, I felt that Jonas had understood my question, yet he responded not with an explanation for the lack of talk among friends and family but by commenting on the impotence one feels in face-to-face encounters with racism. Neither talking about nor talking back mends the injustice, and physical violence is, if not impossible, then certainly untenable. In the absence of redress, it is best to "forget" and "let it go."

Tomas, a young man of nineteen, made similar comments. After he had described a number of occasions in which he felt he had been harassed or discriminated against because of his color, I asked him if he had told anyone else about what had happened. "No, no, I didn't tell anyone, no. I got really sad (*fiquei triste*) about what happened," he said.

Because of my own cultural assumptions about painful emotions and the consequent desire to "unload" one's feelings by talking about them, and the events that provoked them, I asked him, "But didn't you want to tell someone?" "I didn't want to tell anyone, no," he responded in a soft voice, "I got very sad." Pressing further, I asked, "But why didn't you want to tell anyone?"

> Because it doesn't do any good. It doesn't do any good (*nao adianta*), no. It does nothing, nothing, nothing. And to whom will I complain? There is no one to whom I can complain. I know that we have human rights, right? But to complain -- there's no way, so you have to let it go (*deixa pra la*). It doesn't do any good (*nao adianta*).

Evidently, Tomas did not share my psychoanalytic, essentially hydraulic model of emotions and talk; he implied that telling the story would not relieve his feelings but would lead to a painful reliving of them. The word he used, *triste*, like the word *nervoso*, is often used as a

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gloss for a host of emotions in Morro do Sangue Bom. While *nervoso* may suggest a kind of fearful anxiety, as the word *nervous* does in English, it frequently implies an emotion closer to an incapacitating anger or perturbation, the kind that can provoke tears of pent-up frustration. It may also suggest a fear of losing control, of unleashing one's anger. Thus, when Jonas described his feelings on arriving at the police station to lodge a complaint, he used the word *nervoso*, and implied that his attempt to seek legal redress might have been more successful had he not been crying and in a state of pent-up rage. *Triste*, on the other hand, may describe anything from an abstract and vague melancholy to despondency and grief; it implies at any rate, a passive withdrawal into the self, a private and quiet nursing of wounds.

Although I had asked Tomas why he did not tell his friends or family what had happened, he turned for elaboration and explanation finally to the impossibly of accomplishing legal or moral redress. There was in fact, no one to whom he could complain, especially given the fact that most of his stories involved police harrassment. Who could he trust to champion and defend what he appropriately calls his "human rights?" Once again, the futility of discussing experiences with one's intimates is tied to the futility and even danger of direct confrontation and protest. As Guilherme told me, in describing what appeared to be ubiquitous incidents of police harrassment,

> You can't ask them why. They'll beat you, demoralize you. If you say something, the reality, and [the policeman] knows he's wrong, there can be aggression. He will abuse his authority. You don't stand a chance.

The danger of talking back was also described by Dona Janete, although her comments were more equivocal. After she had reported to me that her sons had been discriminated against, I asked her if they had protested their treatment. She said,

> No, no one talks, no. Because I think that here in Brazil there is a problem of everyone keeping silent (*ficar calada*). Many people feel it but they stay silent. They never shout (*nunca grita*). They never shout, "Oh, I want a better job, I want I don't know what all." They never protest (*gritar*), right?

"*Gritar*," the word Dona Janete used, while usually glossed in English as "shout," also means to complain or protest, or to request help. In some contexts it has a political connotation,

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as in the expression "*grita de liberdade*," which is perhaps best translated as "demand for liberty." She continued;

> I think that here in Brazil, there is this craziness (*mania*) of feeling something and not protesting. A thing of people staying silent, of not talking. Even though, even though they may be hurt, they continue [as they are]. They don't try to protest (*nao procura gritar*), to say, "I am not feeling well."

I asked Dona Janete why people stay silent. She replied,

> I think they have fear, right, my daughter? Of repression. Because if you want something in a job and any white wants to do something to you there, they aren't going to defend the dark one (*escuro*), even though the little dark one (*escurinho*) is right. They're not going to question the white one, they're going to question the dark one. So if anyone is going to have to go, the white doesn't go, the dark one goes. There is a fear of speaking. In jobs, right, it's difficult, so you keep your mouth shut (*cala boca*). You stay silent. The *negro* isn't in [a good position] but he's there, hanging on. And I think this is wrong. The person who isn't feeling well has to really protest (*gritar*), right? "I'm not feeling right here, I'm getting out of here, for this reason and this reason exactly," right? But they stay silent.

It is notable that even though Dona Janete has a very clear understanding of the reality and nature of the vulnerability of those she calls "*escurinhos*" or dark ones, she insists that "this is wrong"; one has to shout, to protest one's mistreatment. She refers to the failure to do so as a "craziness" (*mania*) and defines it as a characteristic of Brazilians. To a certain extent, Dona Janete is correct. As I have noted previously, Brazilians do observe a code of cordiality and courtesy, a pervasive etiquette that effectively discourages direct confrontation.[11] Poor people of color, needless to say, tend to observe this code very closely for they stand the most to lose from a breech of etiquette. As Dona Janete points out, they will not be defended. Nevertheless, her comments suggest that there may be a certain kind of shame in not defending oneself.

It is clear from these comments that what Guilherme calls the "big person," "the one on top," are not mere figures of speech for people in Morro do Sangue Bom. They may refer variously to state-sanctioned force, usually in the form of the police, or to the *patroes* and

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[11] This code, I would suggest, applies to one's relations with one's equals and one's superiors. Middle-class Brazilians may choose to be cordial to those whom they consider their inferiors but they are equally free, as so many of my informants suggested, to be rude and insensitive.

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business managers who control one's access to informal clientage and formal employment and thus to the material sustenance of oneself and one's family. The threat of force, the possibility of being subjected not only to "demoralization" but to violence and economic privation as a punishment for talking back is very real. It is more than a subjection to mere "potential jurisdiction" as in Bourdieu's scenario. This fact would seem to offer a powerful explanation for the silence of people like Tomas, and indeed, political repression, which is primarily constituted by the constant arbitrary police harrassment that occurs in the war-torn Rio of the 1990s, exists as a constant backdrop to silence and the kind of self-conscious complacency and passivity described by Jonas. Yet, as I have suggested above, talking back and talking about are very different acts that occur in very different contexts and while my informants seemed to disursively draw the two together into one explanatory web, they certainly recognized the distinction between them.

I often had the sense that the telling of these stories involved not only an emotional re-living of the actual experience but also a kind of confrontation with one's powerlessness in the face of the "big person," the "one on top." In narrating such experiences, one almost inevitably casts oneself as defenseless and dependent. If my informants' narratives of racism sometimes seemed to be articulated in a confessional register, what was being confessed was not only vulnerability but the "demoralizing" and "humiliating" failure to defend oneself. Thus, to recount such experiences, even to one's intimates, seems to entail a kind of *vergonha* or shame.

When I asked Robertson, a young man of 20 why people tended not to talk about their personal experiences with racism, he said,

> Perhaps they feel ashamed over their suffering. They withdraw themselves (*se retraim*) with shame. Or perhaps when you suffer over something, you don't want to tell people, you don't want to explain, because you're afraid that afterwards, people will treat you the same way. They might think it's your fault.

Although the issue of "*vergonha*" was mentioned by a number of informants in regard to "*ser negro*" or being *negro*, Robertson was the only one who explicitly used such a notion to account for the relative silence on the subject of personal encounters with racism. The

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implications of his comments, however, seemed to be echoed by several informants when I asked if they had had personal experiences with racism. A woman in her fifties who spoke articulately about various forms of racism in the public sphere, nevertheless responded to my question about her own experience by saying,

> Me personally, no. I, at least, have always gotten along with white people (*gente clara*). I was never discriminated against. Because I have always tried to get along and people like me. So, that's how I am. I have always tried also to learn and to give. There really are dark people who are very discriminated against when they're badly behaved, when they have no manners. So they become discriminated against.

The notion that people of color may "provoke" racialized discrimination by behaving badly or in presenting an unkempt appearance was articulated by a number of informants. When I asked Tomas if his mother ever talked to him about racism, he said,

> My mother conversed with us. Because I like to wear certain clothes, to dress as I please, in shorts and a cap, and to wear my hair [in a fashionable style]. So that's why. People who always go in shorts, without a shirt on, who wear necklaces and wear their hair [like this] -- people who have this hair are stopped by the police, you know? [My mother] says, "It's because you have this hair that the police stop you. You have go out with your hair combed down, always very neat."[12]

When I asked Tomas if his mother had explicitly said anything else about racism, he responded, "She never involved herself with it, no (*ela nunca ligou, nao*)." It should be recalled

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[12] In this comment, Tomas seems to contradict his earlier statement that he did not discuss such encounters with his mother. As I have noted with regard to Rosa and her son -- and it is clearly true of Dona Janete and her sons as well -- some stories are clearly being exchanged in the familial context. I would speculate that Tomas had told his mother about some of his encounters with the police without stating explicitly that he himself interpreted their harrassment as racism. Jacinto similarly, may have told his mother of the events leading up to his dismissal from a job without explicitly referring to "*racismo*" (racism) or "*preconceito*" (prejudice). Such a possibility is fortified by the fact that Dona Janete believes that Jacinto remains, for the most part, ignorant of the existence of racism, even after he himself told her something which she interpreted as a brush with racism. The question underlying this puzzle is, what in fact constitutes a "discussion about racism"? For many of my informants it seems, allusions do not qualify. Other than this possibility that such experiences may be described very incompletely and elliptically, I can only explain these peculiar gaps by suggesting that just as people are motivated to "forget" and "let go" of the memory of the original experience, so they may be motivated to forget any consequent conversations about it.

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also that Rosa's mother insisted that her experience of being rejected by a white woman was because she must have been "badly dressed."

There is thus an ambivalence which is articulated about the social and political nature of racism. At times, racism is figured as an overwhelming, inevitable force, one that variously resides rather abstractly in the *sociedade* or society, or in the persons of powerful people who abuse their authority. It may even be seen as residing, as I demonstrate in Chapter Five, within one's own family or within one's self. In any case, "it will never end" and one is defenseless and powerless against it. On the other hand, in comments such as those above, it is implied that one may be able to avoid racist mistreatment by controlling one's self-presentation -- by behaving well, by "giving" and by wearing neatly pressed conservative clothing and modest hairstyles. This issue has implications for the understanding of silence in that it helps to elucidate the notion that *vergonha* or shame may play a role in the construction of silence. This shame may be related of the narration of one's self as defenseless, even cowardly, or to the fear that others may turn the blame in the wrong direction, as Robertson suggested. In both cases, to talk of one's one experience with racism involves a negative and uncomplimentary figuring of oneself, and perhaps by extension, of one's community or "*raca*" (race).

Yvonne, whom I quoted at the beginning of this chapter as saying that she converses with her friends about racism, nevertheless acknowledged that in general, the subject is rarely discussed. I asked her why she thought this was the case;

> No, [people] don't converse [about racism]. I think they don't feel unsettled (*nao sente incomodado*) by it, I don't know. I don't know how to explain well why not, you know? I think it's a little like that -- there's no way to change things. Accommodation (*acomodismo*), right? There's no way to change things, it doesn't help (*nao adianta*), you know, "I'm not going to get ahead," right?.... It's fear also, you know, fear of competing with the white. I think it's accommodation, fear, a lack of hope, of faith, of not believing in oneself, right? "I can, I am able, I'm going to go out there, but I'm not going to succeed." It's a lot of that.

Yvonne's comments, like those of many others on the morro, account for silence in primarily psychological terms. There is in these comments a kind of politics, what Yvonne calls

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"accommodation" (*acomodismo*). While a collective acquiescence is implied both by silence itself and informants' accounts of and accounting for silence, I believe that what Yvonne and others refer is a more private kind of psychological accommodation. The overriding concern that these comments express ultimately, is not with the politics of either discourse or silence but with protecting oneself and one's intimates from the the eruption of anger and the festering of emotional pain.

Yvonne also echoed many others in her statement that talking "doesn't help" (*nao adianta*). By now these expressions are familiar to the reader and they deserve comment. In Portuguese, the expressions "*nao adianta*" (it doesn't help, advance, or improve things), *deixa pra la* (let it go, leave it be, or perhaps more colloquially, don't let it get to you), "*nao liga*" (don't connect to it, don't concern or involve yourself with it) and "*nao esquenta a cabeca*" (literally, don't get hot-headed, or don't lose your temper) are continually intoned in the context of stories about racism. As can be observed in the above quotes, they are particularly ubiquitous in the comments informants make when accounting for silence on the subject of racism.

These expressions appear, at least partly, to be descriptions of strategies that are consciously adopted at the moment in which encounters with racism occur. As Jonas said, "If someone mistreats me because of my color, am I going to punch him? I can't do that. You just have to let it go." In such moments, it seems, these expressions constitute a kind of inner dialogue, spoken to oneself with the intention of quelling the painful emotions, including anger and humiliation, that racism provokes. They muzzle angry outbursts and smother the dangerous impulse to defend oneself with violence. We might call them in this sense, words of accommodation, but it is a forced accommodation that comes from the knowledge of personal and collective vulnerability in the face of "the one on top."

In accounts of silence, these expressions both refer to and index silence, the impulse or decision to not speak, to not tell of one's own experience or to introduce the specter of collective humiliation into ordinary conversations. As Tomas said, "It made me sad..... It doesn't help, it doesn't help.... you have to let it go, it doesn't help." In psychological terms, it appears that

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these expressions are an attempt to bring closure to stories that in fact have no real end. They also represent a kind of dismissive gesture, a ritualized locution which is meant to dispel the cloud of anger and frustration that inevitably descends on both the storyteller and the listener. In social terms, these expressions signal or command a return to silence. They suggest not only psychological suppression but the closure of social discourse about the realities of racism and injustice.

Ultimately, I feel, for many on Morro do Sangue Bom, silence is directed towards the containment of anger and psychological pain. My own assumption (one that is shared in fact, by most middle-class Brazilians and more than a few social scientists) that speaking of one's pain helps to ease that pain, and that the articulation of anger may profitably lead to personal action and/or political mobilization, seemed to hold no sway on the *morro*. Talk cannot overcome but in fact evokes what Yvonne called "fear, lack of hope, faith, not believing in oneself."

If it can be said that people on the *morro* have what Frazier called an "unexpressed understanding" not to discuss the innumerable slights, insults, humiliations, and rejections that are suffered in the day-to-day world, they do so not because they lack the words, the analytical sophistication or the discursive strategies to do so, (cf. Winddance Twine, 1994, 1997) and not because they believe racism is insignificant, but because to do so would involve a kind of personal and collective surrender. The paradox of silence resides precisely in the fact that it both implies and objectively constitutes a kind of political accommodation to oppression, at the same time that it allows people like those in Morro do Sangue Bom to "let it go," to "forget," to at least partially contain the wounds of victimization and to carve out a world in which to live with dignity and laughter.

Silence and Sainthood: The Legend of Escrava Anastacia

Although silence seems to be constructed and maintained through "unexpressed understandings" and is indexed in discourse -- particularly in expressions such as "let it go," "it

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doesn't help," and "don't concern yourself with it" -- it appears to be, relatively speaking, unmarked and unremarked. It is as though silence itself, the act of "trying not to remember" is itself buried in a kind of "forgetting." While the metaphor of psychological repression seems to offer itself at this juncture, it is not a truly apt one, for people in Morro do Sangue Bom know very well that racism is pervasive and wounding -- their "forgetting" in this sense, is unsuccessful. Still, if silence is meaningful, we might expect it, much in the manner of repressed material, to surface or to be marked, in however displaced a fashion, in genres other than everyday discourse. I believe that the story of silence is, in fact, represented in the figure of Escrava Anastacia, a popular saint whose image and mythical biography are well-known in Rio de Janeiro.

I first became aware of Escrava Anastacia, (or Slave Anastacia) very early in my fieldwork. Her image is reproduced on placards, religious pamphlets, wall-hangings, religious medals, and in the plaster busts that are sold in Rio's religious shops. While it is possible to visit Rio and never become aware of Anastacia, once one has noticed and studied her image, it seems to appear with striking regularity. The image of Anastacia is a disturbing one. Although Alma Guillermoprieto, an Mexican journalist (and one of the few who have written about Anastacia) flippantly describes her image as "irremediably ugly," and "distressingly like a fly," representations of Anastacia are graphically powerful and evocative testaments to the horror of slavery. While Anastacia is believed to bestow mercy on her devotees, there is nothing gentle in her image. She is always portrayed from the neck up. She has the short, tight hair, dark skin and broad nose of a *negra.* When she is represented in color, as in the plaster busts, her eyes are blue and they are said to be "very penetrating." Her neck is encased by a thick iron collar and her mouth is choked by an iron muzzle, a device which is called a *mordaca.* As her name implies, Anastacia was a slave woman and as her image unambiguously reveals, she was a victim of what were once extremely conventional methods of punishment and torture.

The origin of the Anastacia legend is clouded in controversy. The image of Anastacia seems to have originated in an illustration of an anonymous slave drawn by the French artist, M.

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J. Arago, who traveled to Brazil in 1817. Beginning in 1971, Arago's illustration was exhibited in the Museu do *Negro* (housed In the Igrega do Rosario, a traditionally black church) in Rio de Janeiro. The director of the museum, a man by the name of Yolando Guerra, evidently had a vision about the illustration and began to elaborate what later became the biography of Escrava Anastacia. This, at any rate, is the account given by church authorities who investigated the Anastacia legend. In 1987 they concluded that Anastacia, also called Santa Anastacia, or Saint Anastacia, never existed. Her image was removed from the Igreja do Rosario, much to the consternation of a number of my informants. Aware of but unmindful of the church's pronouncement, devotees of Anastacia now congregate at a temple dedicated to her in Maduriera, in Rio's North Zone.

I am not concerned here with the controversy surrounding the popular saint, nor with the religious practices, formal or informal that define what has been called the "cult of Escrava Anastacia."[13] While living in Morro do Sangue Bom, my concern was with the ways in which informants narrated the story of Anastacia and how they explained the presence of the *mordaca*, or muzzle in which she is depicted.

Like all popular saints, Anastacia is believed to intercede for those in dire need and to perform miracles for her devotees. More than a few of my informants told me that they believed in Anastacia; they had addressed many prayers to her and they were answered. Some spoke volubly of her sainthood. Dona Janete, for example, told me,

> I believe. I believe very much that she became a saint.... She became a saint, yes! For this reason she is called Saint Anastacia, right? But the people don't want -- you know -- they never wanted Anastacia to be a saint. They think she isn't a saint.

I asked Dona Janete why this was the case. She responded with a hoot of laughter,

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[13] See Burdick, 1993 for an ethnographic account of the religious practices and their political and cultural contexts among Protestants, Catholics and Unbandistas in Rio de Janeiro's Baixada Fluminense. Burdick is currently researching the religious practices and discourses associated with the cult of Escrava Anastacia.

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> Oh, it must be because she is a black woman (*preta*), right, my daughter? If she were white, she could be a saint but she is a *preta*!

Other informants, while not professing belief in Anastacia, called her the "*protetora dos negros*," or the protector of the blacks, and in one case she was called a "great *orixa*," or god of the Candomble pantheon. Other informants, particularly *crentes*, or Protestants, told me that they did not believe in Anastacia. Nevertheless, all of these people were able to narrate at least parts of the Anastacia story. This familiarity is due, in large part, to the fact a *telenovela*, or miniseries, about Anastacia was aired on a major Brazilian network in 1990. There are, of course, many versions of the Anastacia story and the *novela's* screenwriter no doubt mixed some of the common elements of popular, oral versions of her biography and those found in religious pamphlets with elements from his own imagination.

Elena, who was a *crente*, declared herself immune to the claims of Anastacia's sainthood but she recapped the *novela* with considerable enthusiasm. Her narration contains most of the elements I heard in other informants' narrations and thus serves as a template:

> Escrava Anastacia was a slave who they say was sacrificed. She was a really beautiful slave woman, really black with blue eyes. She was enslaved by a plantation owner. He put her to doing really brutalizing work, you know? But she did it without complaining. But he wanted her, wanted her as a woman. She didn't want that, no way. So her put her in the stocks and flogged her.
>
> The people in the slave quarters were her friends. She was the leader of the slaves. Anything that had to be done, she was always in front. If, for example, there was a sick person, she went to them to lay on hands and cure them. So out in the slave quarters, she helped the *negros*.
>
> When the man saw that she didn't want to be his woman, he said, "Fine, you're going to take care of my children. I'll give my children a black doll with blue eyes." So, she took care of the children but he kept bothering her. So, he said, "Since you don't accept me, I'm going to do something so that you will never again speak in your life." So he put an iron collar on her neck and an iron *mordaca*, squeezing her mouth and nose. I mean, because she was always helping her people, he would really enslave her, so she would never speak again. So, she stayed that way and continued to take care of the children, without ever speaking.
>
> She was getting sick and the plantation owner called a doctor. The doctor told him to take the collar and *mordaca* off her. She said, "Put it back on. My hour has come." The doctor put it back on because there was nothing more he could do for her.
>
> So, the plantation owner's son was tubercular. He was complaining, crying in pain. So the man came, the plantation owner, who put the collar on her.

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> He kissed her hands and said, "For the love of God, save my son's life. I don't want to lose my son." She put her hand on [the boy's] head and passed her hands over him very slowly. Once she got down to his feet, she took her hands away and closed her eyes. The boy got up and called his parents. Then everyone said, "Thank God, thanks to Anastacia, my son is cured!" So everyone was happy. But they could do nothing more for her because when she finished curing him, she closed her eyes and died.

In Elena's narrative Anastacia was "sacrificed" both because she rejected her master's advances and because she was a leader to "her people," the slaves who shared her burdens on the plantation. As Elena had, most people who talked to me about Anastacia touched on both of these elements, although some emphasized one over the other. Perhaps predictably and logically, a few of my informants provided versions in which it was suggested that Anastacia did not succeed in repelling her master's abuse; she was raped, yet remained proud to the end. (See also Guillermoprieto, 1990: 179). In such accounts, stoicism in the face of violation is emphasized. Other informants however, emphasized not Anastacia's victimization but her heroism. Although Jorge expressed doubt about popular saints in general, his attempt to narrate the story of Anastacia was emotional;

> I don't understand it well, I don't understand her story well. I saw a little on television. Anastacia. She was a protector, right? She was a saint. She was a woman who died muzzled (*amordacada*), for her people. For her race. God! I mean, she was a person who died for her race! You understand, she died for her race. That guy took the *mordaca* off and it was pure gangrene in her mouth. She died from that. Why? To defend her people, to help her people. She gave her hand to her people. ..... She died for her people. You know? You understand how it is?

When informants did not spontaneously bring up the issue of Anastacia's *mordaca*, or muzzle, I asked them about it's significance. When I first began asking about her, I occasionally forgot the word and referred to "that thing on her face." Invariably, people would provide the word, "*mordaca*," and they usually defined it as being on her mouth. The word *mordaca*, as well as its verb form *amordacar*, and it's adjective form, *amordacada*, were known by everyone who discussed Anastacia with me.

Also called a *folha de Flandres*, the *mordaca* was a commonly used "disciplinary" device during the era of slavery. According to most historical sources, its purpose was to

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prevent slaves from drinking *cachaca*, or cane liquor and/or from eating dirt.[14] Both my informants' comments and standard dictionary definitions pose a rather different purpose for the *mordaca*, however. The *Novo Dicionario Aurelio* defines the word *mordaca* as "An object with which someone's mouth is plugged with the end that they can neither speak nor protest (*grite*)." Figuratively, the word is defined as "repression of the liberty to write or to speak." The verb form, *amordacar* is defined as "to impede speech." While in the field, I was unaware of these standard dictionary definitions of the word *mordaca* (I assumed it referred merely to a device used to discipline or torture slaves) and I continued to ask about the meaning of the *mordaca* in the story of Anastacia.

A few informants were hesitant in their responses. When I asked Yvonne about Anastacia, she did not mention the issue of her master's sexual advances or abuses. She said that Anastacia "struggled for the race, right, for the slaves, and after she died, I think that people continued believing in her." When I asked her, "What is the significance of that thing she has?" Yvonne replied,

> The *mordaca* on her mouth, right? I would also like very much to know because I don't know why she has this *mordaca* either. Because generally a *mordaca* is used for a dog. She was a human, a person right? Now, it is said that there are people who talk too much and it is said that she talked a lot, she really talked so.... It's because she talked so much like that he put that *mordaca* on her.

Other responses were similar but lacked Yvonne's hesitance. A number of people told me that Anastacia's master locked her into the *mordaca* to prevent her from telling others about his abuse. A man in his thirties told me,

> I think she suffered because she was used as an object, her master used her like an object... That *mordaca*, they say that it was so that she could not protest (*gritar mesmo*).

A woman in her forties told me that Anastacia had "already done many miracles" for her and she said,

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[14] The eating of dirt, evidently common among Brazilian slaves, was believed to motivated by a desire to commit suicide by slow degrees. It may be more likely that it was caused by a pica, a nutritional disorder.

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> It was so she couldn't tell [others] what the master did with her, you know? He muzzled (*amordacou*) her mouth.... Because of what she had gone through, she couldn't say anything to anyone with that iron *mordaca* on her mouth. I believe in her.

Susana, Joia's half-sister, made similar comments. She had told me that Anastacia's master tried to rape her. She resisted and he put the *mordaca* on her;

> Because then she didn't shout (*nao gritava*), it was so she couldn't call for help (*nao grita socorro*). Because she was muzzled (*amordacada*), she didn't yell (*grita*), you understand? So he muzzled her so she couldn't protest (*grita*) and from that she died bit by bit, without food, without speaking, and without drinking, right?

Jorge, who is quoted above as saying that Anastacia "died for her race," said,

> I heard that it was put on her because she was the type of person who didn't hold anything back, you know?...Her master tried to hold her down and force her .... She was a person who was like a leader, she was a leader inside the slave quarters, on the plantation. All that she did was accepted by everyone. So, she was courting a young man and this guy [the master] tied her down and put it on her face so she couldn't tell the young man what he had done, what he had done to her.

In all of these comments, the purpose of the *mordaca* is related to a literal muzzling of Anastacia. Specifically, it prevents her from telling others, her friends and supporters in the slave quarters, what was being done to her. In these narratives, Anastacia is muzzled not only as punishment for her (possible) resistance or outspoken leadership in the slave quarters but also so that she could not "*gritar*," or reveal the abuse she had suffered. Although we might expect that the master would be, in a sense, omnipotent -- not required at any rate to justify or defend his actions, however brutal -- his exploitation and abuse of Anastacia must be kept a secret.

Other informants also explained the logic of the *mordaca* in terms of the prohibition against speaking that was imposed on Anastacia, although in more general terms. A woman in her sixties said,

> He didn't give her the right to express what she was feeling. He muzzled her so she had no way of speaking. She became mute.

A woman in her twenties told me,

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> She was a person who had a facility in speaking, for communicating messages. People believed in her prayers. And the *mordaca* signified a form of impeding her speech.

A teenage boy simply said, "She had power in the word. She was muzzled so she would not speak anymore." When I asked Analucia about the significance of the mordaca, she said, "Because the mordaca prevents the person from speaking, right?.... You can't say anything of what you know and what you have heard." Following her lead, I asked, "Could it be that she had a secret to tell?" Analucia replied,

> Yes, and it wasn't told, right? To not speak, to not begin speaking, because of the *mordaca*, right? It's the same thing like when you want to tell someone [something], and someone knows that you want to tell [it], and they muzzle (*amordacar*) you. So you never speak, you never come to the point of speaking. I think this is what happened to Escrava Anastacia. She didn't get to tell her story.

As she had on other occasions, Dona Janete pulled the threads of these ideas together into a masterful interpretation. She had not seen the *telenovela.* Much to her consternation, her husband and sons were given to compulsive channel-surfing on the family television. She told me that Anastacia was "sacrificed" because of her beauty; "She was killed, little by little, right? ... He put on her face that *mordaca*, right, on her mouth." "And why did she have the *mordaca*?" I asked Dona Janete;

> I don't know. It must have been for her to suffer from not speaking. Like, here, everyone shuts their mouths, right? So, they shut Anastacia's mouth. The first thing they did was to put that *mordaca* on her and she didn't speak anymore. It was pinching her here, pinching, pinching. And she never spoke again. They put it on her head, right? She had it here, around her head and everything. Meaning, the law for the *negro* is to really keep silent (*de calar mesmo*). It has been thus since slavery, right? The law for the *negro* is to keep silent (*ficar calado*). It began through Anastacia, right? They put it right on her mouth. Why didn't they put it some other place, around her middle, on her legs, in some other place? They put it right on her mouth. They put it right on her mouth because here [she places her hand over her mouth], they covered [her mouth] and that was it. She could hear but she couldn't speak. They did her in. She was sacrificed little by little and she could say nothing... So I think it was clearly this. They put it on her so she couldn't speak of what was happening to her, and it was like that until the end of her life. Until she died. To die, to die, oh, she never died. Anastacia vanished. There are people who don't die, they vanish. In my mind, she appears.

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As my quotations suggest, informants' explanations of the significance of Anastacia's *mordaca* were remarkably consistent. It is clear however, that there are many ways of reading the Anastacia story. For Guillermoprieto, the story is, in a fundamental sense, about the cultural erotics of race in Brazil. As she writes, "I was interested in Anastacia because her legend was explicitly concerned with the relationship between black women and white men, and while that relationship is at the center of the Brazilian universe, it is rarely addressed from the black point of view" (1990:179). As Guillermoprieto suggests, Anastacia's blue eyes imply miscegenation and many versions of the story place particular emphasis on Anastacia's sexual allure and her master's desire.

The extent to which Guillermoprieto's brief analysis represents or comments on "the black point of view" is questionable. Her suggestion that Anastacia embodies familiar cultural tropes related to sexuality and the *mulata* is nevertheless cogent;

> What was curious about Anastacia was that, fitting none of the contemporary Brazilian sexual stereotypes, she embodied them all: although she was chaste, she was endlessly sexually available; although she was aloof, she was sexually irresistible; and although the legend stressed her black skin and Africanness, the unaccounted-for blue eyes made her the first of a breed -- a parthenogenic *mulata*. .... the *mulata* serves to perpetuate one of the myths that Brazil holds most dear, that there is no racism in Brazil, that miscegenation has been natural and pleasant for both parties, and that white people really, sincerely, do like black people. In fact, the aesthetic superiority accorded to light-skinned black women -- *mulatas* -- underlines the perceived ugliness of blacks before they have been "improved" with white blood (Ibid: 182, 180).

The story of Anastacia incorporates then, the overvaluation of "white blood" and supposedly "white" characteristics.[15] Although Anastacia struggles for "her people," she is

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15 Tiago, who knew none of the details of the Anastacia legend told me that she must be a "*deusa*," or "goddess of the negros because there are no *negros* with blue eyes." It could be said that Tiago is overvaluing "white" traits but his claiming of her as a "goddess of the negros" clearly undercuts such a notion. Guillermoprieto fails to note the fact that people of color claim Anastacia as one of their own and in Morro do Sangue Bom, at least, they refer to her not as a "*mulata*," but as a "*preta*" and/or a "*negra*." "Her people" moreover, are also always referred to as "*pretos*" and/or "*negros*" and as Jorge said, she died for "her race." I would suggest that Guillermoprieto makes far more of the significance of Anastacia's blue eyes than do poor people of color. I know, in addition, that most of my informants would be offended by her suggestion that Anastacia was "endlessly sexually available," even with the qualifications that

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superior to them. Her beauty, which a number of my informants remarked upon, seems to be linked to her "penetrating blue eyes."

In a very different interpretation, the story of Anastacia can be read as a parable about servitude, particularly the domestic servitude of women. Nearly all of the women I knew in Morro do Sangue Bom had worked as *empregadas*, or maids, at some point in their lives; most in fact worked in the homes of white middle-class families from the time they were teenagers. As I indicate in the following chapter, women often describe situations in which they feel slighted, exploited, and insulted while performing domestic service for others. Usually, they have to hold their tongues. Talking back of course, can lead to abrupt dismissal. Although Anastacia was a slave and a saint, her life was not so different from theirs.

On one level, or perhaps within one reading, Anastacia represents the picture of the (nearly) perfect servant. As Elena said, she was "put to really brutalizing work but she did it without complaining." Although abused and shackled, she "continued to take care of the children." Although condemned to a slow, painful and unjust death, she rouses herself to save the master's son just before expiring. For these generous, saintly, "feminine," and submissive qualities, Anastacia, it seems, is revered. For the dominant, she is the model of one who provides "good service" and for people like those on Morro do Sangue Bom, she suggests that long-suffering patience and subordination are rewarded in the spiritual realm. To bear one's burdens without complaint, moreover, is thought to demonstrate dignity of character.[16]

Guillermoprieto offers. Her resistance against sexual exploitation -- which itself could be metaphorically related to other forms of exploitation -- is central to my informants' narration.

[16] This, of course, is the most ambiguous angle of the Anastacia story. On the one hand, she is revered for her resistance, and on the other, she is lauded for her ability to "turn the other cheek" and to suffer in a silence, which while forced, is maintained in dignity. Read crudely as a "political" parable, it could be said that the message of the Anastacia story is, "This is what happens to you when you try to resist your exploitation." What such an equation leaves out is the other message that the dignity and humanity of the slave remain inviolable. The master, while a monster, is a pitiable one, alienated from his own humanity. Alberto struck a particularly Hegelian note when he told me that Anastacia was punished because she "knew things about the whites that they didn't want her to know." He did not mention either resistance or leadership. If Anastacia's story is read as an analog to the experience of contemporary domestic servants, it

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While Anastacia's blue eyes do seem to touch the cultural nexus of meanings associated with miscegenation and the superiority of the *mulata*, and while Anastacia does model the dominant vision of servitude and black womanhood, these readings do not address what seems to be the dramatic motif at the heart of narratives about Anastacia: her forced silence. For my informants in Morro do Sangue Bom, it seems that Anastacia's story is fundamentally about injustice and the concealment, through silencing, of injustice.

If the legend of Anastacia can be called a parable, it is one that asserts, perhaps above all else, the righteousness of the weak and the wickedness of the dominant. While Guillermoprieto argues that the legend is "explicitly concerned" with relations between black women and white men, her reliance on the puzzle of Anastacia's "unaccounted-for blue eyes" and her sexual availability suggests a far more circuitous reading than the one I would propose. Guillermoprieto may be correct in her suggestion that by figuring Anastacia as a *mulata*, the story "perpetuates the myths.... that there is no racism in Brazil, that miscegenation has been natural and pleasant for both parties." Yet such an interpretation skirts the obvious: Anastacia's story is far more explicitly concerned with the brutality of slavery, and by extension, with the reality of racism. I believe that the Anastacia story is a kind of a dramaturgical representation, a symbolic narration of racism and the very real silence surrounding racism. For Dona Janete, it seems, the Anastacia story is somewhat like a myth of origin. Anastacia "suffers from not speaking" and this is compared to "Like here, everyone shuts their mouths." The significance of Anastacia's torture is that it dramatizes "the law for the *negros*," which is "to keep silent." It has "been thus since slavery." As Dona Janete remarks further, "It began through Anastacia."

The parallels between the Anastacia legend and the silence surrounding racism in contemporary Brazil are fairly obvious. Anastacia was muzzled so that she "could not express what she was feeling," so that she "could not protest (*gritar*)," and so that she "could not speak of what was happening to her." Her silence is directly linked to the overwhelming force of

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might be noted further that people like Alberto's mother do, in fact, know the secrets of their employer families, while remaining themselves unknown.

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domination, just as my informants explanations for their own silence are repeatedly linked to the very real danger of talking back in encounters with racism. A climate of terror is alluded to in both narratives. Anastacia's muzzling is not only to prevent her from talking back and from rousing the slaves to resistance with her charismatic "power in the word," but also to prevent her from telling others, her intimates, about what was being done to her. Her master's abuse must remain concealed, hidden in silence. Anastacia's story is thus analogous to the concealment of racism, which is said to "*incubado*" (literally incubated, or covert); "*embaixo do pano*," (under the cloth) and *mascarado* (masked). All of these expressions refer to the more or less covert practices that support and constitute racism as well as to the "mutual understandings" that undergird silence and the discourse of denial. Anastacia's story thus also enacts and depicts, in symbolic form, the social, cultural and psychological injunctions against talking about racism even in non-confrontational, intimate contexts. She symbolizes the wounds of racism and exploitation, as well as the muzzling that is manifest in the self-censorship of poor people of color.

Like Escrava Anastacia, poor Brazilians of color are entangled in a cultural, ideological and psychological web in which neither resistance nor resignation are ever absolute. We can not sum up their position with facile references to false consciousness, because they know the truth. Nor can we romanticize their attachment to Anastacia and claim that it expresses solidarity and resistance, for like Anastacia, they remain, for the most part, silent about what is happening to them. I believe that the popularity of Escrava Anastacia is due in large measure to her ability to graphically and symbolically represent both the oppression of African-Brazilians and the muzzling or silencing of their voices, their inability to talk back and talk about what is really happening "*embaixo do pano*," or under the concealment and obfuscation entailed in the discourses of d*emocracia racial*. From what people call her "*forca*" or strength, and from her "penetrating gaze," she tells their story without words. For the master, it is an accusing gaze and ultimately, a gaze of inner resistance, a refusal to allow her inner dignity and moral character to be sullied by the abuse and humiliation to which she is subjected. For "her people," "her race,"

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it is an understanding gaze, an understanding within the shared silence and about the shared silence. As Dona Janete says, "In my mind, she appears." Perhaps the silent suffering that I have described here is transmuted into an unburdening of one's pent-up words, in the dialogue of prayer. Escrava Anastacia is, in the very direct sense that frames her sainthood among poor people of color, one who listens to their "*grita*": their shout, their protest, their call for help.

Silence, Domination and Consciousness

My description of silence in Morro do Sangue Bom, or perhaps more properly, my informants' accounts of and accounting-for silence, has implications for theories of domination, resistance and consciousness. In concluding this chapter I will comment on only one such theory, that outlined by James Scott in *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. I discuss Scott not only because his work portrays a cogent, sweeping and influential vision of the processes of domination and resistance. The scenarios he depicts, in which subordinate groups are subjected to what Bourdieu calls "symbolic violence" as well as material forms of exploitation, address my own concern with the supposedly less tangible, psychological forms of domination. Moreover, Scott's scenarios, it would seem, bear striking resemblances to the structuring of domination in Brazil and to a number of the themes I have raised above. As I hope to show however, his analysis fails to take account of silence and of the success of certain kinds of ideological domination in squelching coherent visions of resistance.

At the center of Scott's analysis is a concern with domination and the consciousness of the dominated. Specifically, he challenges theories which posit a "false consciousness" among subordinate groups and he questions the extent to which hegemony is successful in persuading the dominated to support and/or acquiesce to dominant ideology. He divides theories of false consciousness into two approaches, which he calls "thick" and thin" theories;

> The thick version claims that a dominant ideology works its magic by persuading subordinate groups to believe actively in the values that explain and justify their own subordination.... The thin theory of false consciousness, on the other hand, maintains only that the dominant ideology achieves compliance by

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> convincing subordinate groups that the social order in which they live is natural and inevitable. The thick theory claims consent; the thin theory settles for resignation (1990:72).

In challenging both approaches, Scott suggests that theorists tend to underestimate the extent to which various types of resistance and revolt (particularly those with unsuccessful outcomes) actually occur. For this reason, most theorists of domination attempt to explain why resistance does not occur rather than why subordinate groups tend to "exaggerate their own power, the possibilities for emancipation, and to underestimate the power arrayed against them (Ibid:79)." Scott's interpretation of the historical record may be open to debate but he argues further that theorists base their evidence for false consciousness on what he calls the "public transcript." The public transcript is a kind of "self-portrait of dominant elites"; it is constituted by an "official culture" in which subordinate groups speak and act as if they do, in fact, accept their subordination.

Applying this notion to the lives of those in Morro do Sangue Bom, it could be said that when domestic servants, for example, so often fail to talk back to their employers, or when young men remain silent and cooperative during an episode of police harrassment, they are observing the rules of the public transcript. To do otherwise, obviously, would be foolhardy or even, in extreme cases, fatal. Scott's argument is effective in that it challenges the notion that the failure of poor Brazilians of color to protest their treatment or participate in political mobilization represents evidence of *democracia racial*. Quiescence in this sense, is a product of the flow of power within the public transcript, and cannot be read as contentment or ideological cooptation.

As Scott argues, "any analysis based exclusively on the public transcript is likely to conclude that subordinate groups endorse the terms of their subordination." Alongside of this public transcript, however, there is a "hidden transcript." The hidden transcript is constituted primarily through discourse but also through certain kinds of surreptitious action, such as the slave's pilfering of the master's goods or the peasant's poaching on the landowner's estate. As a discourse, the hidden transcript articulates all the feelings, views, and concealed politics of

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subordinate groups which cannot be openly and unambiguously expressed in the public transcript. It is the "privileged site for nonhegemonic, contrapuntal, dissident, subversive discourse" (Ibid: 25). Spoken out of earshot of the dominant, the hidden transcript involves an explicit negation of dominant ideology. If this discourse were "transposed to the context of domination," Scott writes, it "would represent an act of rebellion" (Ibid:115).

Scott's vision of the back-and-forth flow of domination and resistance is particularly notable in its highlighting of the social and psychological wounds of domination. He writes,

> I privilege the issues of dignity and autonomy, which have typically been seen as secondary to material exploitation. Slavery, serfdom, and the caste system routinely generate practices and rituals of denigration, insults and assaults on the body that seem to occupy a large space in the hidden transcripts of their victims. Such forms of oppression.... deny subordinates the ordinary luxury of negative reciprocity: trading a slap for a slap, an insult for an insult. Even in the case of the contemporary working class, it appears that slights to one's dignity and close surveillance and control of one's work loom at least as large in accounts of oppression as do narrower concerns of work and compensation (Ibid:23).

These comments, it should already be clear, have particular relevance for Morro do Sangue Bom. In my private interviews with informants, "slights to one's dignity" were constantly described. Feelings of humiliation and powerlessness were communicated in people's comments about silence, and as will be become more evident in the following chapter on narratives of racism, when people in Morro do Sangue Bom talked about racism in their interviews with me, they placed a very dramatic emphasis on what they (justifiably) perceived as affronts to their dignity. These affronts, Scott argues, produce, at the very least, what I have referred to as an inner dialogue;

"Who, after having been insulted or suffered an indignity -- especially in public -- at the hand of someone in power or authority over us, has not rehearsed an imaginary speech he wishes he had given or intends to give at the next opportunity?" (Ibid:8).

Scott continues, rather in the manner of an aside that "Such speeches may often remain a personal hidden transcript that may never find expression, even among close friends and peers." (Ibid.). This possibility, a terribly important one, I believe, is never dealt with at length. More

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often he suggests, "An individual who is affronted may develop a personal fantasy of revenge and confrontation, but when the insult is but a variant of affronts suffered systematically by a whole race, class, or strata, then the fantasy can become a collective cultural product" (Ibid:9).

In defining the social and political functions of the hidden transcript, Scott emphasizes the notion that the off-stage articulation of dissident, counterhegemonic discourses is a precondition of, and a kind of rehearsal for, concrete, active forms of resistance and revolt in the public domain. The hidden transcript also plays a significant role in the construction, maintenance and defense of dignity within the communities of the dominated;

> Who precisely, ... composes the audience before which an indignity is most damaging? It is, I believe, that audience before whom one's dignity, one's standing as a person, is most important because it forms the social source for one's sense of self-esteem. In particular, this circle would include one's closest family, friends, neighbors, coworkers and peers, and particularly, one's own subordinates toward whom one stands in a relationship of power.... The sphere within which a slave can, at least provisionally, more effectively establish his dignity and standing is that formed by peers, among whom, correspondingly, he has the most to lose by any public assault on that dignity (Ibid:114).

Scott's argument concerning the hidden transcript contains the suggestion of a kind of inevitability. Culling evidentiary support from both historical sources and the conclusions of experimental psychology, he implies that "suppressed speech" must, almost by natural necessity, find an outlet in hidden transcripts. He relies, in large degree on a hydraulic model; "the speech characteristic of one realm of power is, in part, a product of the speech that is blocked or suppressed in another realm of power... The profoundness of the silences generated in one sphere of power may be proportional to the explosive speech in another sphere" (Ibid:176).[17]

If Scott's analysis is correct in most of its details, we would expect to find a hidden transcript about racism -- "explosive speech," in fact -- in Morro do Sangue Bom. Insults,

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17 These assumptions are rather different from those that inform my analysis of Escrava Anastacia. Although I refer to the metaphor of psychological repression, I do not suggest that the Anastacia legend is a form of "compensation" for silence, nor that it is a pressured product of it. While the act of praying to Anastacia may offer something like cathartic abreaction (in the sense of private speech, if not in a conventional psychoanalytic one), I claim only that Anastacia *represents* the meaningfulness of silence, not that she is, in the very direct sense described by Scott, a reaction to it.

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slights, affronts and the maligning of one's character -- all articulated as my informants report, in a distinctly racist idiom - - are routinely suffered by many in Morro do Sangue Bom. Within the context of these events, poor African-Brazilians are usually, if not always, muzzled; they cannot afford to take on the risks to their safety and livelihood that talking back would entail. Yet, the *morro* is precisely the type of sequestered social space in which the venting of rage and the defense of one's dignity can, and according to Scott's analysis, logically should, occur. We would expect to find, in other words, a highly developed, immediately recognizable hidden transcript, in which "inner dialogue" or "imaginary speeches" that are suppressed in encounters with racism are given full voice. What we do hear, instead, is a palpable silence and evidence of a lacuna within discourse. "*Ninguem gosta de falar*"; no one wants to talk about it.

Scott argues that in those cases where even the hidden transcript is suppressed, there is apt to be a machinery of intense coercion and surveillance that makes the articulation of discourses of resistance untenable. This is clearly not the case in Morro do Sangue Bom, where silence is so frequently defined as voluntary, even though it may be motivated by psychological and social suppression. A lack of "mutuality," i.e., of shared experience and social cohesion may, as Scott suggests, also account for the lack of a hidden transcript. Although I have noted that people in Morro do Sangue Bom often seem to observe silence at cross purposes -- they assume for example, that others are naive about racism -- it is clear, and will become clearer in the following chapter, that most people in Morro do Sangue Bom believe that all people of color are confronted with racism in fairly commonplace and routine contexts. As I have demonstrated in the previous chapter, even those with very light complexions declare that they are not immune to encounters with racism. Within the silence, I would argue, there is a mutuality of both experience and understanding, even if it is a tacit, "unexpressed understanding."

I do not mean to suggest of course, that there are no hidden transcripts in Morro do Sangue Bom. There are a number of fairly distinct subversive discourses on the *morro*, not the least of which are those that refer to class. There is, in fact, a very highly developed hidden transcript, one that articulates the injustices of class and which pits *pobres*, or the poor, againt

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ricos, or the rich. This is not surprising of course, given the historically entrenched and varied discourses about class in Brazil generally, as well as the extreme and highly visible disparity in wealth and privilege that characterizes cities like Rio de Janeiro. In one sense at least, people in Morro do Sangue Bom are like most other Brazilians in the relative silence they observe on issues related to racism and in the fluency they express when referring to class differences.[18] In fact, the references they make to class only constitute a hidden transcript to the extent to which they express sentiments and views that cannot be spoken directly to what Scott calls "the teeth of power." Although they may be concealed in this sense, they are thoroughly familiar and predictable.

Just as Scott would suggest, the dialogues that constitute this hidden transcript about class are ubiquitous in the everyday discourses that animate social life in the sequestered space of the *morro*. Discussions of the immorality and rapacity of the rich often begin with a narration of personal experience. Women who work as domestic servants for example, often exchange stories about the families that employ them. Often these families become the butt of extended jokes and moral censure; their extramarital affairs and other sexual peccadilloes are described in detail, as are their drug use, craziness (*loucura*), and neuroses. Middle class families are also described as helpless and lazy; they are incapable of doing any form of physical labor. *Patroes*, or patrons, are often described as harsh, unjust, exploitative and extremely hypocritical as well.

When "*ricos*" are referred to in more abstract ways, it is often said that "the more they have, the more they want," that "they steal from the poor" and "treat them worse than dogs." Politicians and the government also frequently come under attack and these attacks are couched in class terms. I often heard it said that "all politicians are thieves" and the "government doesn't care about the poor." Generally, the poor suffer from *fome*, a word which literally translates as hunger but which is discursively used to stand more generally for the material difficulties,

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[18] As will be seen in Chapter Six, middle-class people, particularly those who figure themselves as liberals who support the politics of the Workers Party (PT), are also very fluent in discourses about class -- although their discourses are, typically, different from those of poor people of color.

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physical suffering and directly economic vulnerabilities induced by constant and grinding poverty.[19] The rich on the other hand, have *mordomia*, which can be generally defined as the possession and conspicuous, insensitive and arrogant display of wealth and privilege. Typically, the issues of race and racism are not explicitly articulated in these discourses. At times however, racism is implicitly invoked, usually through references to slavery, which so many on the morro say "has not ended." I heard one such reference when I was visiting Joia's family. The relative silence on racism is embedded in conversational contexts in which the injustices of class are explosively denounced, and given the significance of this fact, the conversation I heard at Joia's house is worth reproducing at length.

Joia and I were in the kitchen preparing dinner for her family when her husband Daniel returned from work. He came into the kitchen with a look of exhaustion and consternation on his face and quickly made himself a *caipirinha*, and lighted the first of several cigarettes. Daniel, as I noted in the introduction, worked as repairman of refrigerators and air conditioners and he began telling his wife that one of his wealthy clients had not paid him for all the work he had done. Joia listened quietly, and nodded sympathetically as his voice became more and more explosive. I asked him a question about the client and he began to address his speech to me as well. The following dialogue is exerpted, with slight modifications, from the copious field notes I made shortly after the event.

> "They have a mansion in Angra dos Reis!" Joia said, referring to a beachside resort for the wealthy. "They are so rich they can practically buy a new car every month!"
>
> "And they don't pay me!" Daniel fumed. "Mansions they have and they don't pay me! They get rich by robbing people. They call you in to do

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[19] People on the *morro* do note, in some contexts, that unlike the poor of the Northeast for example, (see Scheper-Hughes, 1990) they do not "go hungry." Their constant references to their own "*fome*" are intended to invoke, for example, the constant and enervating anxiety that comes from a certain knowledge of the fact that one's children are vulnerable to a frightening array of diseases and accidents -- and that quality medical care remains out of reach. I heard numerous stories of death in which I could not avoid the conclusion that the deceased might well have survived under more favorable -- and financially inaccessible -- medical conditions. *Fome*, I want to say, is a synonym for poverty and it functions in a way that is exactly opposite that of euphemism: it is intended to depict, in extremely graphic and unsoftened terms, the forms of "*miseria*" (misery) and injustice that poverty produces.

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something, then they get you to do everything else and they don't pay... For example, I fix the refrigerator. Then they say they want the stove fixed and then a thousand other things.... They have five mansions in Angra dos Reis![20] They have a huge apartment [in Ipanema] and they don't pay me! The rich are thieves, Beth! They are rich because they steal.... I'll go there with a hammer on Friday and 'bop! bop! bop!' -- it will be resolved! Beth, a poor person who can't pay, OK, but a rich person! A rich person and they don't pay me!"

I asked Daniel, naively, if he could send a bill or a letter. He fixed me with a grave look. Swinging his arm in a wide arc, he shouted, "On Friday I'll go with a big hammer. A letter, no! A big hammer, 'bop! bop!' Everything is over, everything is resolved! Beth, Brazil is a beautiful country. But for most people, the great majority are poor. Slaves, Beth!

I nodded and said, "And it's even worse in the northeast."

Daniel said bitterly, "It is slavery, Beth. They say that slavery has ended. But it hasn't ended. It's worse there even."

He gestured towards Tiago, who was cavorting nearby, and said, "Boys Tiago's age. Look, Tiago goes to school doesn't he? He studies. There, they can't even read, they can't write, they don't know anything!"

"Except how to cut cane," I said.

"That's right, except how to cut cane," he spat.

Tiago, on hearing his name moved closer and looked up at Daniel. "What, father?" he asked, as though he were expecting to be given the familiar kind of lecture that begins, "Beware Tiago, if you are not good...."

Addressing Tiago, Daniel said, "Children in the Northeast. They have nothing. They don't know anything."

"Oh," Tiago said, believing he had quickly seized the point. "They're beggars," he said with relief and spun on his toes.

Daniel crouched down so that he was at Tiago's eye level, put his arm around him and said, "No, they're not beggars, Tiago. They work."

"It's not their fault," I added.

Daniel stood up and continued, "It is slavery, Beth. They say slavery ended, but no." He waved his finger back and forth. "Before they beat you with a whip. They don't beat you with the whip anymore, no. Now they beat you with hunger. It's slavery, the same thing, only they don't use the whip. They'll get you, they always do. They kill you with hunger and there is nothing you can do. They say slavery has ended, but it hasn't ended.

"A reformed slavery," I said, to show that I understood.

"A reformed slavery," Joia and Daniel repeated at the same time. "They don't use the whip anymore."

Speaking generally, Daniel's comments fit Scott's description of the hidden transcript very neatly. They express a "personal fantasy of revenge and confrontation" (Ibid: 9), yet his script is a very familiar one to his wife and would have been to anyone on the *morro* who overheard it. These comments from the hidden transcript of class injustice make it clear that

[20] The objectively enormous chasm between the rich and the poor in Brazil obviously lends itself to unrestrained hyperbole.

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what Dona Janete calls the "craziness" of keeping silent does not apply to all topics concerned with injustice; the silence surrounding racism represents a special case. Class, as an identity, it must be noted here, is at least hypothetically mutable, and the notion of *vergonha* or shame is not so tenaciously attached to one's characterization (by self or others) as *pobre*, or poor. The notion of race, as I have demonstrated in the previous chapter, is, on the other hand, viewed as immutable, natural and in some senses, deterministic. Race is thus seen as an unchanging bedrock of identity in a way that class is not. At the level of "dignity and autonomy" that Scott refers to (Ibid:23) and that I emphasize here, it may be that racist insults wound one more deeply and more irreparably than insults to one's class identity. While Daniel's tirade communicates a profound degree of anger and frustration, feelings of *tristeza*, or wounded sadness are not expressed.

I say that the issue of racism is implicit in comments such as Daniel's because neither race nor color is ever mentioned. His references to slavery are embedded within a discourse about the injustices of class and the exploitation of the poor. It is as if the specter of racism is raised but never named. Scott writes that "the hidden transcript has no reality as pure thought; it exists only to the extent that it is practiced, articulated, enacted and disseminated within these offstage social sites" (Ibid:119). Daniel's oblique allusion to the specter of racism is more than pure thought surely, but the inner dialogue from which it emerges remains, for the most part, suppressed, despite the overwhelming evidence that the wounds of race and class are interpenetrating.

I would suggest that the primary reasons that Scott's elegant and otherwise convincing analysis cannot account for silence in places where we would fully expect to hear a hidden transcript is related to his implicit assumptions about the nature of dominant ideology, and to his assumptions about the hydraulic flow of pressures towards resistance. I will briefly deal with each of these issues in turn.

Although Scott is clearly cognizant of many of the complexities characterizing ideology, as well as consciousness, he nevertheless discusses dominant ideology as if it were

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monolithic, somehow all of a piece. While he acknowledges that such ideologies may contain contradictions that can be fruitfully exploited by the dominated, he does not discuss the possibility that these contradictions can be at least partly embraced by the dominated -- that some of the dominant discourses that constitute what we think of as ideology can be ambivalently accepted while others are ambivalently or partially rejected. What I mean to suggest here is that "dominant ideologies" are in fact constituted by a congeries of overlapping and often contradictory discourses. While we tend to write about dominant ideology as if its successes were based on it internal coherence, its systematicity and its logical persuasiveness, it may be that its power often relies more on its ambiguity, lack of logical coherence, and "slipperiness." Racial ideologies in Brazil clearly do not constitute a monolithic script or discourse which poor people of color can either accept (or resign themselves to) or reject and resist.

Most in Morro so Sangue Bom do not accept the discourses of *democracia racial* as a description of reality, yet they frequently articulate its prescriptive claims -- in a nearly incantatory fashion -- to the effect that "everyone is equal." They thus participate to a certain degree, in a discourse that in effect, denies or masks the social reality of racism. Moreover, as I have suggested in both this and the previous chapter, they engage in an everyday discourse that articulates and supports the notion that *negros* are in many senses, inferior to whites. "*Vergonha de ser negro*," or the shame of being black, is a phrase familiar to all. Notably, as I suggested previously, there is no parallel discourse in Morro do Sangue Bom about the *vergonha* of being *pobre* or poor. While few of my informants told me that they themselves were ashamed of being *negro*, many readily attributed this feeling of shame to others and used the notion to account for "*o racismo do proprio negro*," or the racism of the *negro* himself.

I am not suggesting that people in Morro do Sangue Bom wholeheartedly accept and endorse the tenets of racism. Rather, in sharing racial and racist discourses with other Brazilians, they are subject to an ambivalent entanglement in racist assumptions about value and hierarchy. Within this entanglement, there is an estrangement from the stance of unassailable self-

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righteousness and unambiguous accusation that must naturally characterize full-blown hidden transcripts. As Yvonne said, in attempting to explain people's reticence in discussing racism, "It is fear also you know, fear of competing with the white. I thinks it's accommodation, fear, a lack of hope, of faith, of not believing in oneself." This is not a hidden transcript but a suppressed transcript. Moreover, the sense of hopelessness and practical futility Yvonne refers to was constantly expressed in others' accounts of silence: "Racism will never end"; "It will never get better,"; "There is no way to change things,"; "You don't stand a chance," and racism "shouldn't exist but it does."

Provisionally and with some qualifications, it seems that Scott's own description of the "thin theory of false consciousness," which he rejects on the basis of his claims concerning hidden transcripts, is, in fact, a fairly apt portrayal of the stance towards race, racism and silence of many of my informants in Morro do Sangue Bom;

> What ideological domination does accomplish... according to this version, is to define for subordinate groups what is realistic and what is not realistic and to drive certain assumptions and grievances into the realm of the impossible, of idle dreams. By persuading underclasses that their position, their life-chances, their tribulations are unalterable and inevitable, such a limited hegemony can produce the behavioral results of consent without necessarily changing people's values. Convinced that nothing can possibly be done to improve their situation and that it will always remain so, it is even conceivable that idle criticisms and hopeless aspirations would be eventually extinguished (1990:74).

What I object to in Scott's formulation is the implication that such a stance represents "false consciousness" -- "thin" or not. Such a label suggests that the intractability of material conditions and ideological forces is imaginary, or that the flow of power -- whether through brute coercion or symbolic violence -- is a mere smoke screen, which the dominated could dismantle if they but had an unobstructed consciousness. Oppression, seen from the broadest perspective, is neither "natural" nor "inevitable" but from the real-life perspective of people in Morro do Sangue Bom, it is a mountain that will not move. What Yvonne calls "fear, a lack of hope, of faith" is not false consciousness but a fairly realistic appraisal of the material and ideological conditions of her existence. While I support many of Scott's challenges to the notion

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of false consciousness, the scenario he describes above does, in fact, convey the very real and realistic sense of hopelessness -- and consequent silence -- that successful systems of domination produce.

As I have suggested, for many in Morro do Sangue Bom, talking about racism, especially in relation to one's personal experience, does not produce psychological relief, nor does it appear to elicit social support. Rather, to narrate one's experiences, or even to launch upon a denunciatory critique of racism seems to involve an exacerbation of feelings of powerlessness, anger, anxiety, sadness, humiliation and shame -- and one's interlocutor may respond to such a narration with silence, indifference or denial. Although Scott argues that engaging in the dialogue of the hidden transcript may increase or maintain one's standing in the community of one's peers, Roberto, especially, suggests otherwise: "Perhaps when you suffer over something, you don't want to tell people, you don't want to explain, because you're afraid that afterwards, people will treat you the same way. They might think it's your fault." As I have argued, informants' own accounts of, and accounting-for silence revolve around the containment of psychological pain.

It may be that the impulse to suppress such narratives is not unique to the kind of case I have described for Morro do Sangue Bom. Gwendolyn Etter-Lewis (1991), in a short but very perceptive article on African-American women's narratives of racism and sexism suggests that such narratives represent a "suppressed discourse," and when they are finally articulated, women are "speaking the unspeakable." As a sociolinguist, she analyzes the linguistic minutia of these narratives, such as deletion, repetition and semantic marking, and concludes that "the language of retelling that experience [with racism and sexism] is marked or otherwise distinguished from ordinary textual features" (Ibid: 428). She emphasizes the notion that such retelling involves psychological pain; efforts to distance oneself from the experience are discursively marked. "For some narrators," she writes in describing one example, "this kind of incidental telling of a stressful event may be possible because it is embedded in a larger story. Otherwise it might not be told." This narrative strategy, she continues, "provides a buffer through which a

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stressful/traumatic event can be safely reconstructed.... the narrator maintains some minimal distance from the event itself." In similar examples, certain kinds of narrative omissions "may make a threatening event seem less direct or less important" (Ibid: 431), and "the effect of hedging is unmistakable -- a reduction of the force of her words" (Ibid:434). Moreover, the impulse to protect oneself from the psychological stress of retelling is compounded by social and cultural commands to silence. Generally, Etter-Lewis asserts, "narrators acknowledged the built-in sanctions within society which reinforce silence and passivity" (Ibid:433). She concludes that what is spoken and explicit in African-American women's narratives of racism and sexism is "only part of the whole";

> We must also consider that which is left unsaid. In other words, we must acknowledge and understand silences that are woven into the fabric of their personal narratives. It requires of us "creative hearing".... in order to discover unarticulated or masked experiences and views. Furthermore, as women's history indicates, silence is not always the absence of voice, but rather a muting of voice... so that meaning must be determined beyond the whisper that remains (Ibid:434).

It appears then that attacks against ones dignity, such as those experienced in encounters with racism, do not inevitably lead to the outspoken expression of anger and resistance. Silence in the public transcript need not hydraulically produce outbursts in offstage arenas but may be mirrored, and in some senses, deepened there. Deeply wounding experiences -- which are simultaneously personal and collective -- appear to possess a force which can be carried across or even magnified within sequestered boundaries. And sequestered spaces such as the *morro*, must be, if nothing else, a kind of haven for the subordinate, places where a small measure of hope and the assertion of unsullied dignity is carefully nurtured and maintained. Such spaces must be protected from the deleterious and paralyzing effects that the constant narration of assault and victimization might very well produce.

Through silence, as an unvoiced dramaturgy of defense, the power of the other's racist insult -- which is directed against what might be felt to be the root of one's identity -- is reduced, and contained with stoic dismissal. Silence, as so many told me, is a refusal to *ligar*, or connect.

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The command to "*deixa pra la*," to "not let it get to you," implies a refusal to surrender, a refusal to be beaten -- a refusal to accept, finally, the horrific claims of racism. A kind of paradoxical triumph, as I suggested previously, is reflected in the silence that people in Morro do Sangue Bom so painstakingly observe. While silence may not constitute resistance -- even within the expansive definition suggested by Scott -- neither can its meaning be reduced to false consciousness. It is, ultimately, the deeply known and painfully felt cipher of the entrapment of racism.

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4

Narratives: Racism on the Asphalt

After spending months listening intently for conversations about racism on the *morro*, I began to elicit such conversations myself by conducting focused interviews with informants. I began by interviewing those I had come to think of as trusted friends and confidantes. Joia's family, for example, not only knew me well after the many evenings I had spent in their home, sharing their dinner and watching novelas on T.V., but they also knew something about the conduct and goals of my research. I had come to understand that racism was a delicate and difficult topic and I relied on my friends' patience and understanding as I tentatively began to explore ways to ask probing questions sensitively, while at the same time, offering reassurance that despite my whiteness and my foreigness, I recognized the fact that racism was a serious problem.

After I had interviewed Joia, Daniel, and their eldest son, Alberto, I interviewed Tiago, who as I have noted, was nine years old at the time. When I had first stayed in his family's home three years before, I joked that I wanted to take Tiago back to the United States with me. He covered his face in embarrassment and said he did not want to go. When Joia asked him why, he said, "Because there is racism there." While seemingly distracted in other pursuits, Tiago had obviously been listening to the conversations between his mother and me.

When I interviewed Tiago three years later, his understanding of racism had deepened, without becoming entirely crystallized into the organized discourse of an adult. When I asked

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him what racism was he said, "Those who don't like themselves." In this comment, Tiago implied that racism was not merely about relationships between people of color and whites but could also be about one's relationship with oneself and with other people of color. He later referred to "*brancos*" (whites) and "*ricos*" (the rich) as well as to "*pretos*" and "*pobres*" (the poor), making it clear that he understood that racism was also about class and power. When I asked him if his parents had ever discussed the issue with him he said they had not. He had, however, overheard at least one conversation between his parents:

> They even say that slavery in Brazil has not yet ended. They say it hasn't ended because the rich make the poor into workers. And this always continues. Slavery in Brazil has not ended.

Tiago also understood, it seemed, that racism was part of a historical trajectory extending from the institution of slavery to the current exploitation of black workers. Toward the end of the interview I wanted to ask Tiago about race/color terminology. I requested that he list all the words he knew that were connected to race or color. As I have noted, Tiago had a knack for linguistic explication that was far superior to that of any of the adults that I knew. While most informants understood my question about terminology as a request for words referring to the color or race of individuals, Tiago added a unique twist. He began his list with three words: "*estragou*," "*negro*," and "*branquelo*." I asked him what *estragou* meant. He responded,

> For example, I, who am *preto* make something and a rich person comes along who has more power than I do and he orders that which I made to be knocked down and he builds something bigger. He destroyed (*estragou*) that which I made.

Tiago's response clearly indicated a generalized kind of awareness of racism and its relationship to class. Specifically, his choice of the verb *estragar*, suggests that the rich (and presumably white person) wields a kind of power that is distinctly destructive. Despite Tiago's claim that his parents never discussed racism with him in a direct way, he understood not only the destructive power of racism in the lives of people of color but could also communicate his understanding through the use of an evocative and succinct metaphor. Far from totalizing, it

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would appear that the relative silence surrounding racism in Morro do Sangue Bom somehow left room for Tiago to find a vivid and creative language in which to describe racism to a foreigner. As I was to learn, his tendency to mix the vocabulary of race and color ("I, who am *preto*") with that of class ("a rich person who has more power") was typical of informants of all ages.

Tiago's second word, *negro* is often used, as I have emphasized in Chapter Two, to denigrate people of color, while "*branquelo*" is a slang term -- often used as an epithet -- that describes a white person with an arrogant and hostile disposition. His choice of words not only bifurcated the racial world but suggested opposition as well.

At the end of our interview, I asked Tiago if he wanted to add anything concerning racism that he thought I ought to know. He pondered for a moment and told me that that very day, he had spent the afternoon outside of the *morro*, in a park close to his school. He had been playing in the hot sun and had become very thirsty. He went to three houses asking for a glass of water and was refused. At the fourth house, he told me, a pleasant woman gave him a glass of water. "She was *preta*, dark also," he said, referring to the color he shared with her.

Although he was one of my youngest informants, Tiago's interview shared several elements --in addition to the marked tendency to refer to color and class in the same breath -- with those of many adult informants. Among the most notable of these common elements that merit emphasis here was Tiago's reference to what is usually called "internalized racism." Many of my informants in Morro do Sangue Bom referred to "*o racismo do proprio negro*" or the racism of the *negro* himself. Frequently these references were made during the early moments of interviews and they required no specific prompting from me.

A second element that Tiago's comments shared with those of many adults in Morro do Sangue Bom was represented by his seemingly abrupt and belated recall of an incident that he felt might be related to racism. Just as Tiago had, many informants recalled and described events in the very recent past as the interview was winding to a close. Because I have chosen not to quote interviews in their entirety, this kind of sequencing within the narratives can only be

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partially conveyed in the pages that follow. It should thus be emphasized here that the transcripts of many interviews reveal a frequent eruption of abruptly recalled experiences during the latter half of taped conversations. Occasionally, these eruptions were sparked by my own queries. More typically, they appeared to follow from the reflections produced within the process and progress of informants' narration. When I was interviewing Susana, one of Tiago's aunts, for example, she interrupted the flow of her own narrative by interjecting several times, "Oh! I remember something else now....." Undoubtedly, this pattern of abrupt recall is, to some extent, common to all narratives of experience. However, the belated quality of these eruptions was, I believe, unusual, and it is, I would suggest, a result of several overlapping factors.

Narratives of racism represent, in the climate of silence, a kind of suppressed discourse. Expressions such as "*deixa pra la*" (let it go) index not only a desire not to discuss racism in actual dialogues but are most likely also repetitive internalized commands not to dwell on incidents of racism. While recognizing the admittedly speculative and provisional nature of my comments, I would suggest that many of the narratives of racism that my informants provided represented not only a break with the cultural etiquette that commands silence on issues related to racism, but articulated as well a kind of psychological "excavation" or "unpacking." While my interviews with informants most often produced exchanges of a distinctly pedagogical rather than psychoanalytic character, I often had the sense that in conversing with me, informants were, by degrees, bringing to light a kind of suppressed inner dialogue. Significantly, when incidents involving racism were abruptly recalled, they were typically described not as unusual occurrences but as so routine and ordinary that their specificity was easily and quickly forgotten -- if only temporarily. This fact is a testament, I believe, to the pervasive and quotidian nature of many racist practices.

In narrating their encounters with racism, people in Morro do Sangue Bom articulated both the extreme and commonplace experiences, and interpretations of experiences, that informed them of others' visions of their place in the world. That they did not truly accept those visions is evidenced by their ability and willingness to provide such narratives, as well as by the

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moral suasion underpinning their stories. At the same time, they articulated something of their own vision of the world. Their vision, as will be seen, is markedly different from, and spoken against, the dominant "public transcript" (Scott, 1990) that portrays the Brazilian nation and the character of her people as given to spontaneous camaraderie and "color-blind" fraternal mingling. Silence, as I discovered during the course of my interviews, was neither as absolute nor as durable as it at first appeared.

Both this and the following chapter are devoted to narratives of racism. The present chapter concerns those narratives in which informants highlight relationships and experiences with people from outside the *morro*. Generally, but not always, these people are white and they are frequently identified as being of a higher class than the *pobres* or poor who reside on the hill. Wage labor is central in the lives of people on the *morro* and work "on the asphalt" arguably represents the most significant context in which racism is encountered. While I describe a number of distinct but related types of experience on the asphalt, men's and women's work-related experience is emphasized. As I hope to show, differences in men's and women's wage labor contribute to differences in the ways they experience, perceive and interpret racism on the asphalt. The chapter following this one concerns narratives which emphasize experiences with racism in the more intimate contexts of family and community and what many of my informants called "*o racismo do proprio negro*," or the racism of the *negro* himself.

Undoubtedly, many racist practices and discourses are shared by whites and people of color, just as they are shared across class boundaries. It can be argued that in separating what might be called "white-on-black" prejudice and discrimination from "black-on-black" forms of racism introduces an artificial distinction that runs the risk of obfuscating the systemic processes -- cultural, ideological, political, psychological and discursive -- through which racism is constructed and maintained. An emphasis on the "racism of the *negro* himself" moreover, might appear to lend credence to the view, expressed by a number of white Brazilians I met, that racism is more a "problem of the *negros*" than of whites, and that the "lack of self-esteem" among people of color is a cause rather than a consequence of racism.

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I argue however, that in failing to draw distinctions between the contexts of racism, one fails also to explore and expose many of the deeper, boundary-penetrating patterns of racist ideology and racialized oppression. An emphasis on the ways in which people of color participate in racist discourses does not "blame the victim," but rather, highlights the profoundly pervasive and deeply damaging power of hegemonic discourses of value and hierarchy. Furthermore, my informants themselves drew such distinctions in their accounts of and accounting for racism; many in Morro do Sangue Bom reserved their greatest invective for people of color whom they saw as racist in their talk and actions. The significance of these issues will be elaborated in the following chapter.

In the following section of this chapter I briefly define narratives of racism. While there is a current "boom" in the publication of autobiographical accounts of experience with racism in the United States, little attention has been paid to such "first hand" accounts in the literature of the social sciences. The work of Philomena Essed (1984, 1988, 1991) represents a notable exception. I briefly review her work and concur with her argument that narratives of racism represent legitimate descriptions of racist practices (including discursive practices) and are especially valuable in the attempt to understand everyday racism in places where its existence is typically denied in dominant discourses. Contrary to Essed however, I suggest that the legitimacy of such narratives does not require painstaking theoretical support. In some senses, my informants' narratives "speak for themselves" and embody, implicitly or explicitly, their own analyses. While I frame the narratives in a more or less conventional fashion, I attempt to avoid neutralizing, overshadowing or erasing their authority through excessive theoretical dissection and commentary.

The third section is concerned with a brief, introductory focus on the ways in which people in Morro do Sangue Bom tend to define racism. While racism is generally defined as relating to *cor*, or color, I note that many informants define racism more broadly. Class and color prejudice are viewed as interpenetrating and racism is often viewed as part of a larger set of discourses that emphasize stereotyped notions of identity and hierarchy.

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The fourth section introduces narratives of racism by focusing on two types of commonly reported experience: that in which people of color feel they are stared at, avoided and ostracized in public, evidently white-controlled spaces, and that of being subjected to or observing racist name-calling. In the first subsection, I quote accounts which describe typical scenarios that constitute the more infamously covert forms of everyday racism. The following section enlarges upon information provided in Chapter Two and illustrates the revelatory meaning attached to the use of racist epithets in public contexts. As both narrative genres and ethnographic descriptions, these two types of account are mutually illuminating. More generally, this section serves to introduce the ways in which people in Morro do Sangue Bom experience and represent the policing of racialized boundaries.

The fifth section is the longest within the chapter and is directed towards two related ends: discussing work-related experience and exploring gender differences as they relate to racism. Because work outside the community represents one of the most significant sites in which racism is encountered, I describe labor-related experience in some detail. I compare my informant's narratives to the work of Francis WinddanceTwine, which focuses on experiences with, and interpretations of, racism among upwardly mobile women and men of color in a rural area in the state of Rio de Janeiro.

The final section focuses more explicitly on a short selection of narratives in which informants engage in interpretive and theoretical discussions of the causes and consequences of racism. The comments presented here emphasize the construction and maintenance of racialized boundaries and the experience of racialized imprisonment. Beneath the everyday silence surrounding racism, these narratives suggest, there is a counter-hegemonic and at times, parodic vision, in which the claims of *democracia racial* are contested and mocked.

Representing Racism

I define narratives of racism as both accounts of specific encounters with racism and more generalizing theoretical, and/or speculative comments on the nature, functions, origins,

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causes and consequences of racism. While it might appear that anyone is theoretically capable of observing and providing a report of encounters involving racism, this is not, in fact the case. Particularly in countries such as Brazil where racism often operates within and through highly covert forms, or takes place in private contexts, members of dominant groups may (sometimes legitimately) profess a lack of awareness of racist practices -- including verbal practices. White Brazilians furthermore, are more apt to deny the existence and/or significance of racist discourses and practices. I am thus particularly concerned with the ways in which poor African-Brazilians, the targets of racism, narrate their experiences. Teun A. van Dijk, himself one of the most prolific analysts of dominant racist discourses, has noted that, "we need more research about the actual experiences, interpretations, and evaluations of minority members themselves. They are the real experts on our prejudices (1984:77). The dominant within any country or polity, it should be noted, remain by the very nature of their position, distant from a knowledge of how they are represented by subordinate groups.

An ever-growing interdisciplinary and international literature focuses on dominant discourses that articulate, produce, reproduce and disseminate racist ideologies (see for example, Billig, 1988; Condor, 1988; Crapanzano, 1986; van Dijk, 1984, 1987, 1993; Husband, 1977; Wetherell and Potter, 1988, 1993; Reeves, 1983; Sykes, 1985; Smitherman-Donaldson and van Dijk, 1988; and Wallman, 1981). While such works analyze the cultural and ideological "logic" of racist discourses, as well as, in some cases, the macro- and micro-structural operations and functions of such discourses, they do not address the ways in which those targeted by racism articulate their experience with, and interpretations of, prejudicial discourses and the discriminatory practices associated with them.

Outside of the richly illustrative genres of fiction and autobiography, published narratives of racism are remarkably rare, given the voluminous, international literature on racism. Some notable exceptions, in which collections of edited narratives have been presented in book form exist, and their reception within the academic community is instructive. In the anthropological literature, John Gwaltney's *Drylongso*, (1975; see also, 1986) is composed

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almost entirely of African-Americans' narratives of experience, including those related to racism, yet it has received relatively little attention since its publication in 1975. Somewhat equivalent in Brazilian "popular" literature is Haroldo Costas's (1982) *Fala Crioulo: Depoimentos*, ("Speak *Crioulo*: Testimonies") a collection of narratives by African-Brazilians. As is the case with *Drylongso*, *Fala Crioulo* has received little attention in the scholarly literature on race in Brazil. In the American "popular" genre, Studs Terkels' (1992) recent publication of *Race: How Blacks and Whites Think about the American Obsession* presents African Americans' narratives of racism (as well as whites' commentaries on the significance of race) but its popular framework appears to virtually preclude serious scholarly review. While these works address the need for narratives of racism in constructing cultural and political critiques of racialized domination, their lack of explicit scholarly artifice and commentary has contributed to their marginalization within scholarly discussions of racism.

Works which take narratives of racism as a unit of analysis within scholarly research are rarer yet. (See for example, Basso, 1979; Essed, 1984,1988, 1991; Etter-Lewis, 1991; Louw-Potgeiter, 1988, 1989; Sousa, 1983.) Philomena Essed, one of the few researchers explicitly concerned with narratives of racism, has constructed an elaborate interdisciplinary theoretical framework in which to analyze accounts of racism. Focusing on narratives provided by professional African-American women in California and professional women of Surinamese descent in the Netherlands, Essed emphasizes the everyday, routine nature of these women's encounters with racism, what she calls "oppression in the fabric of everyday life" (1991:146). I concur with her assertion that, "....racial and ethnic prejudice has been studied largely from a White point of view.... Generally little attention has been paid to the knowledge, beliefs, opinions and attitudes of Blacks with respect to the meaning of racism" (Ibid:7). She notes further that,

> Due to the prevailing macrosociological bias, micro-interactional perspectives on racism, as well as the phenomenological dimensions of racism have been neglected.... The lack of intellectual interest in micro manifestations and experiences may also be due to intellectual bias against the "ordinary" and the

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> underrating of insights of "laypersons." It is not surprising that so few people have engaged in systematic analyses of how racism permeates everyday life (Ibid:7-8).

Essed demonstrates that accounts of everyday racism are patterned in both their content and their form. She defines "scenarios of racism" as the familiar and common contexts in which women of color repeatedly encounter racism, such as in shops where they observe the obvious hyper-vigilance of sales people. Such scenarios tend to be described through the narration of specific incidents as well as in generalizing comments. In addition, accounts of racism, as Essed demonstrates, contain an identifiable narrative structure, composed of : "context" (a description of the context of the encounter); "complication" (the "disruptive or deviant" incident is distinguished from a "normal state of affairs"); "evaluation" (the incident is implicitly or explicitly evaluated as indicative of racism); "argumentation" (additional inferential and interpretative statements are made in support of an evaluation) : and "decision" (the plans, expectations and actions induced by the event are articulated) (Ibid:129-132). Essed is at considerable pains to demonstrate, through discourse analysis and supporting cognitive, historical and sociological arguments, that her informants' accounts of racism are not ad hoc stories but represent and articulate careful observation, and thorough-going interpretation, which includes the weighing of various hypotheses that might explain "unacceptable behavior." Interpretations and evaluations are based on prior knowledge gleaned from personal experience and a "vicarious" awareness of the experiences of others, as well as from a more general "cultural" recognition of the structures, practices and ideologies associated with racialized domination. Summarizing her analysis of accounts of racism, she writes,

> Accounts are reconstructions of personal experiences with racism when a.) they tell about personal confrontations with unacceptable situated actions, b.) these unacceptable actions are evaluated as racism, and c.) plausible alternative explanations are not available. I have tried to show that evaluations of particular events as cases of racism are based on knowledge about a.) rules and norms of behavior, b.) acceptable reasons for unacceptable behavior, and c.) the structures and processes of racial dominance in society (Ibid:142).

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Essed is concerned, it is clear, not only with a detailed analysis of the narrative structure of accounts of racism as an end in itself, but more particularly, with the utility of such an analysis in demonstrating the legitimacy of accounts of racism as a reliable form of data on the everyday practices which support and mediate racist structures and ideologies. Such a project may be crucial in the study of racism's more covert forms, particularly in countries such as the Netherlands, where dominant discourses emphasizing "tolerance" conspire to project a "massive denial of racism" (Ibid:7). Referring to the various forms of knowledge that constitute the basis for the evaluation of racist incidents, Essed writes,

> ...this knowledge is likely to become more and more sophisticated because it is challenged everyday by the dominant media and by others who provide counterarguments that problematize Blacks. Such counterarguments attempt to mitigate rather than acknowledge racism. This massive reproduction of counterarguments probably motivate Black women to assess their experiences even more carefully (Ibid:188).

Essed's description of racist practices and discourses is remarkably similar, although not identical to those in Brazil. The insistence that the Netherlands is highly "tolerant" of "racial" and ethnic difference effectively "problematizes" opposition and discourages everyday discourses that describe and comment on racism. Surrounded by, and to some extent, participating in the discourses that buttress the claims of *democracia racial*, African-Brazilians are similarly opposed and undermined in their attempts to assert the reality and routine nature of racism in Brazil. In addition, Essed's analysis of accounts provides a theoretical framework for asserting that narratives of racism, such as those articulated by my informants' in Morro do Sangue Bom, provide information not only on how poor Brazilians of color interpret racism but offer as well, carefully constructed descriptions of the interactional dimensions of racist practices and discourses.

My review of Essed's work only highlights some of the more basic elements of her theoretical apparatus. All of the central terms of her analysis (e.g. "everyday," "experience," "accounts," "knowledge," "heuristics," etc.) are theorized in and supported by an extensive interdisciplinary literature. While Essed's application of these terms to the study of racism is

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unique, her analysis serves largely to make explicit what is often implicit both in the discourse of social science and what might be called "common sense understandings." Ultimately, it seems, her theoretical apparatus "spells out" what most readers might view as the intuitively familiar cognitive and rhetorical processes involved in narrating "socially unacceptable" experiences. That such a painstaking approach is primarily directed towards the (defensive) legitimation of the truth value of accounts of racism for a scientistically-oriented audience is evident. That her theoretical framework tends to overshadow the accounts themselves and to reduce their capacity to persuade the reader in more immediate, ethnographic (as well as moral) terms is perhaps inevitable (cf. Essed, 1984).

A review of works like that of Essed suggests an underlying problematic in the effort to effectively edit and present narratives of racism. When such narratives are themselves the focus of analysis, rather than illustrations or embellishments of a theoretical argument, the risk of erasure or overshadowing of those narratives through an overbearing style of theoretical framing is always present. This problematic is endemically germane to all ethnographic writing. In responding to Clifford's (1983) call for a greater recognition of the dubious assumptions underlying the construction of monological and monophonic ethnographic writing, I have chosen to frame my informants narratives in a more or less conventional fashion, while recognizing that despite their mediated nature, they speak for themselves. In highlighting certain narrative strategies, enlarging upon the contexts my informant's describe, and in emphasizing both the similarities and differences in the ways in which encounters with racism are narrated, I have chosen the risk of an echoing redundancy over that of erasure. Moreover, because the narratives I quote do speak for themselves, I do not presume to "capture" their total, nor even their "essential" meaning within a static, monological analysis. The narratives are themselves a series of overlapping interpretations, and other readings of these interpretations are possible.

Exactly how the narratives I quote speak for themselves is, obviously, best left to the reader but I would highlight several related points. As does Essed, I suggest that narratives of racism serve not only as valuable representations of the articulation of experience with, and

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knowledge of, racism, but also as a form of data on the micropolitically situated interactions that most fully constitute racist practice. Unlike Essed however, I believe the legitimacy of the narratives does not require painstaking and overbearing theoretical support: they competently articulate their own claims to legitimacy, whether implicitly or explicitly. The narratives also articulate what Essed calls the "phenomenological dimension of racism" (1991:7) as well as what I might call its allegorical dimension.

These narratives, I would provisionally suggest, offer themselves as allegories of a far more broadly conceived humanity. The narration of perpetual injustice always slides towards and is framed, however implicitly, within a persistent dream of universal democracy and shared humanity. During my interviews, I often had the sense that conversations about racism became an occasion in which to reflect on the more fundamental philosophical and moral premises that clearly and powerfully guide the critique of human injustice. In the pages that follow, I allude to this allegorical dimension while trying to avoid a compulsive explication of what we usually and perhaps erroneously think of as "literary" forms of rendering experience. In thus standing aside, I hope that this dimension of the narratives can be read with at least a small measure of the "immediacy" in which it was originally communicated.

"Because of Color": Defining Racism

The implicit ways in which my informants defined racism will become clear as this and the following chapter progress. As was exemplified by nine year-old Tiago's comments, racism was defined by people in Morro do Sangue Bom in a multiplicity of ways and these definitions, while sometimes produced in response to my direct questions, were typically embedded within more extended narratives of racism. Partly because many of my informants suggested in their narratives that racism was a set of beliefs, attitudes, practices and/or ways of speaking that could be shared by people of color as well as by whites, racism was rarely defined, implicitly or explicitly, as an ideology or set of practices limited exclusively to whites. The broader implications of this fact will be highlighted in the following chapter. Here I want to very briefly

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highlight some of the more general, explicit ways in which people in Morro do Sangue Bom defined racism. The comments I make here will be enlarged and qualified both in the body and the conclusion of the chapter.

Most people in Morro do Sangue Bom defined racism as a situation in which a "person doesn't like blacks" (*nao gosta dos pretos*). While people used the word "racism" in their interviews with me, the words "*discriminacao*" (discrimination) and "*preconceito*" (prejudice) were used more often. As I noted in Chapter Two, "*preconceito de cor*," or color prejudice is the most common way of referring to racism generally, and "*por causa da cor*," or "because of color," was a ubiquitous phrase in narratives of racism. When people told me that they believed that a certain individual was racist, I asked them why they felt this way. Almost invariably, people began their responses with the comment, "Because he/she doesn't like *pretos*," or "He/She doesn't like my color." When I asked a teenager to describe racism generally, he said, "The person who keeps staring at us, who makes us leave [a place] because of color (*por causa da cor*)." Similarly, a man in his thirties said,

> Oh, racism is that person who doesn't really like the black color (*cor preta*), isn't that so? ... It can be in terms of jobs, but it can also be some other point, really general. .... I think it exists in [other areas]. It is in jobs but there are other things.

Comments such as these emphasize not only the notion of color and race. They also explicitly define racism as a personal characteristic or trait of individuals. Not surprisingly, many of my informants focused on the more quotidian aspects of racism in their interviews with me and while their comments often pointed to or explicitly articulated an awareness of the systemic nature of racism, prejudice and discrimination were often described within, and defined by, personalized experience. To a certain extent, as will be seen, women tended to emphasize the behavior of individuals and to implicitly or explicitly define racism as a product of individual character, whereas men more frequently made comments about the systemic nature of racism, defining it as a "problem of the *sociedade*" or society.

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When discussing racism both men and women explicitly referred to the interpenetration of class and color prejudice. One's appearance or identification as *preto*, or *da cor* (of color) and as *pobre* (poor) or "of the *morro*" were described as mutually reinforcing in their damaging consequences. For example, when I asked Tomas if he remembered becoming aware of racism as a child, he told me;

> I don't remember, I don't remember, no. I heard it said that white people didn't like black people, *pretos*, *negros*, right? When I was really a child. So, each one has his position, *negros* with *negros* and whites with whites. There aren't opportunities for those of us here on the *morro*, right? The opportunity to court the daughter of a white, because of color (*por causa da cor*) and because of the *morro*. You're discriminated against because of color and because of the *morro*. Because they think the "*morro* has this, the *morro* has that."

Although both scholarly arguments and popular discourse offer the claim that what might appear to be racism is in fact, class prejudice, this informant and others emphasize the entanglement of both forms of domination. As I have noted previously, many mixed the vocabulary of color with that of class.

In a few cases, color prejudice was explicitly compared to other types of prejudice. When I asked Paulinho, who was publicly gay, if he was aware of racism as a child, he told me about his upbringing in Bahia. He said, "In Bahia, when a black person (*preto*) passed by a white person (*branco*), the white would call him a monkey. Do you understand, 'little monkey' -- those things, right?" He continued,

> It's provocation, provocation, to make you angry, want to fight, a mountain of people ganging up on one. So racism was always declared. And then insulting you as a homosexual, right, they call you "faggot (*bicha*)," throw stones, that whole thing. Do you understand, that's part of prejudice also, right? Against the homosexual. I mean, for me, the two phases went together, as a homosexual and as a black (*preto*), right, and this, I already know -- this prejudice was a thing that was very -- until now, I feel it, do you understand?

A man in his early twenties told me that there were, in his opinion, racist people residing on the *morro*. He qualified his comments however, by referring to regional prejudices;

> There are certain people, I think, principally, on the part of the Northeasterners, they have certain -- They don't involve themselves with *negros*. I don't know if it's everyone but certain of them have racism. Or, I think it's not necessarily

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> racism. Prejudice can be more than that, right? [It can be] regional. If the guy, if he's from Paraiba, well the Rio native will accuse the people from Paraiba of being pigs, in the sense that they're dirty. [They'll say that] the guy from Bahia doesn't want to work, that the guy from Minas is untrustworthy. These are prejudices.

As such comments make clear, many people in Morro do Sangue Bom viewed racism as part of a larger tendency to objectify and dominate, or attempt to dominate, others. "Color," "race," "racism," "prejudice," and "discrimination," were frequently used as glosses for describing and interpreting experiences that were primarily, although not always exclusively, related to color and concepts of race.

While some social scientists concerned with racism insist that it is best understood in systemic structural and/or historical terms, and others, such as social psychologists, define it in individual terms, most people in Morro do Sangue Bom recognized the interpenetration of both "levels" or aspects of racism -- even while emphasizing one or another aspect. And while many social scientists are devoted to efforts to disentangle class from color prejudice in analytical terms, many of my informants suggested that such a project is misguided at best: the stigma of blackness and the disadvantages of poverty reinforce one another in ways that are perceived to be inexorable. To analytically separate the two is, in a sense, to miss the point.

Before turning to an examination of women's and men's extended narratives I will discuss two types of experience that continually emerged in the discussions of both: the perception of more covert forms of racism that occur in public contexts, and the overt practice that people describe with the verb "*xingar*." *Xingar* signifies the act of verbally insulting someone by "throwing hard words," in this case, racial epithets. Both types of experience motivate many of the concerns that people in Morro do Sangue Bom expressed and an explicit examination of them helps to inform an understanding of the experiential contours of racism and the narratives through which racism is more generally described.

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The "Evil Eye" of Racism and the Revelation of "Hard Words"

Soon after I arrived in Morro so Sangue Bom, I discussed racism with Joia. At the time of our conversation, she did not feel that any of her employers had treated her in an explicitly racist manner but she was troubled by the way she often felt when she went about her errands in the city, particularly when she went into certain stores. "People stare at you, give you *mau olhado* (nasty looks)," she said. "It's not even that they always think you'll steal something, although that sometimes happens. It's like they find you ugly or something like that, like you shouldn't be there." Turning her eyes sideways, in what we call "looking out of the corner" of one's eye, she said, "It's like this."

I learned more about the nature of Joia's experience and how it differed from my own and that of other whites when I went into a small clothing store in the city to look at some sale items. A woman of color who was dressed in jeans and a neatly pressed blouse -- much as I was -- came into the store and began to look at sale items as well. We had just begun exchanging comments about the clothing and the prices when a store attendant approached and asked her, "Would you like me to take your bag?" "No, I prefer to keep it with me," the shopper responded politely. After the attendant had turned away, she said to me in a disparaging tone, "Now, why would I want her to take my bag!?" Looking at my knapsack, she said, "Did she ask you about your bag?" "No, she didn't say anything to me," I told her. I could not help but notice that the attendant hovered nearby and observed her closely until she left the store. When she did so, I then became acutely aware of the extent to which my passages in and out of the fitting room -- with my knapsack -- seemed to be entirely unnoticed.

People in Morro do Sangue Bom are aware of the communicative power of what Joia had called *mau olhado*, as well as surveillance, whether blatant or surreptitious. *Mau olhado* is usually translated as "evil eye," but it is sometimes used in the more secular sense of a hostile gaze, glance or stare. Whether in the spiritual or secular sense, *mau olhado* can be highly threatening, even poisoning in its effect. It is more than the unwitting expression of curiosity. Although it often occurs when a person of color is alone among whites, (or analogously, when a

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lone woman is surrounded by men) it appears to be more than a "natural response" to someone (or a "type of person") rarely seen in a particular context. When it takes the form of surveillance, it communicates the fact that one's character is judged to be suspect. *Mau olhado* and similar, subtle forms of ostracism, suspicion and veiled hostility are not a paranoid invention but are a part of the finely drawn web of interactions that constitute "*racismo em baixo do pano*" that is, racism that is concealed "under the cloth."

In describing a scenario similar to that which Joia described, Susana, her half-sister, told me that she often took the initiative in chatting pleasantly with strangers in supermarkets.[1] Yet when she does so with white people, she sometimes feels uncomfortable and begins to second guess the progress of the encounter she has initiated:

> They're conversing because I'm talking. They're hearing me but they don't like me, my color, right? Like a lot of people look (*olhar*) [at you] in the supermarket... So they speak with me [but I'm thinking] "Could it be that they don't like me?" We were [waiting] in line conversing, and then I don't say anything. You know? I don't know, but it's ---

Susana paused. I asked her a question and our conversation proceeded as follows:

> R: So, many times you have a suspicion?
> S: That's right, that's right.
> R: You're not really knowing --
> S: That's right.
> R: What the other person is thinking --
> S: Yeah, yeah.
> R: If the person is racist or not.
> S: Yeah, because, in the supermarket line like that, right, I say something and the person laughs, they take their head like this [looks out of the corner of her eye], do you understand? But it's idiocy, isn't it!?

It was exactly the same sideward glancing that Joia had demonstrated for me. Susana's initial difficulty is characteristic of attempts to describe the more covert, yet powerfully felt, quotidian interactions that constitute racism. Although Susana cannot prove that the other

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[1] As my previous anecdote suggests, cordial chatting between shoppers is extremely common in Rio, but as Susana goes on to imply, whom one chats and does not chat with may depend, partially, on how another's status is read.

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person's response to her is a result of *preconceito* or prejudice. she feels rebuffed often enough that this species of experience sticks in her mind.

Men tend to encounter stares and similar covert expressions of antagonism on city buses. Such a scenario was decried by Guilherme when I asked him to describe racism. He said,

> Oh, there are various forms of racism. Sometimes you're in a place on the bus, on a very crowded bus. You see a person who is seated, you approach them and you notice that difference. People treat you in a different way.

I asked, "You mean they get nervous when you go up to them?" He replied, "No, more or less. I mean, they're not nervous but you feel -- the person changes, and it's totally different." Although a number of young men told me that white women tend to clutch their purses closer to their bodies when they are approached by men of color on the bus, this informant was unable to pinpoint the "change" he felt, although it was "totally different." For many people in Morro do Sangue Bom, I came to feel, the quality of subtlety within such interactions was not defined by their own difficulty in perceiving the interaction. That which was "*embaixo do pano*" was made subtle by the difficulty of describing it for someone else, particularly someone who has never experienced it.

The feeling of being stared at was described as occurring in other contexts as well. When I asked Yvonne about racism, she said:

> Oh, there are so many [kinds], so many. The kind like when a dark person arrives at a party. People keep staring. People who are better off (*melhor de vida*), you understand? So, people like that, generally they keep looking at us with little cause, these people. Staring for a long time, right? A party that you were invited to by another person, full of whites, where there are more whites. The little black one (*pretinho*) who arrives always -- right? -- feels that they're being a little mistreated.

This supposedly "subtle" form of racism, in which one is stared at in a place "full of whites" was the first example of racism that Yvonne provided. She calls it a particular "kind" of racism and she thus frames it as typical scenario of racism.

As though to confirm her point, Jacinto also told me about going to a party and feeling very uncomfortable. As he explained, it was *festa de quinze*, a party celebrating a girl's fifteenth

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birthday. These are usually elaborate affairs and huge numbers of family, friends and even barely-known acquaintances often attend. Jacinto said,

> It was over in Tijuca (a Rio neighborhood), [at the house of] an acquaintance of my brother's. So he and I went but I felt awful because there was not one *negro* there! [I thought] "What am I doing here?" And the people there didn't give us the minimum. The people just said, "Hello, how are you," and then they were silent. I thought, "I'm going to have a soda," and I had a soda and left. Because I was feeling awful! [I was thinking] "Shit, there are only whites here, nobody else!"

The party Jacinto attended was in a middle-class neighborhood. We might assume that he had not only crossed class boundaries but because he was the only *negro* present, a color boundary as well. As in Yvonne's more generalized description of such occasions, Jacinto felt mistreated. Although he does not describe this mistreatment in very specific terms, it is clear that he felt he was denied the courtesy -- the friendly exchanges, easy banter, and invitations to conversation -- that is expected during such festive occasions. The lack of such courtesy, the silence, he seems to suggest, is not merely an omission but an expression of hostility. Jacinto's reaction seems to be not one of anger but of anxiety, even fear. He gets a soda to cover his anxiety, to keep face, to appear relaxed -- and perhaps also to give the other guests a chance to relax and to recover their manners. They do not however, and his anxiety becomes unbearable.

The narrative devices Jacinto uses to describe this event are noteworthy. Jacinto repeats the private thoughts he had ("What am I doing here?"), while (on two occasions) deleting the narrative frame, "I thought." He repeats the dialogue or the comments of others involved in the event as well. As will be seen, this quotation of both inner and outer dialogue is one of the most salient characteristics of narratives of racism, as is the tendency to emphasize one's private thoughts and feelings ("I was feeling awful!"). While present in much of the verbal interaction among people in Morro do Sangue Bom, these narrative devices are especially pronounced when stories about conflict are being told. Such devices convey, more adequately than an "objective" monologic description might, the effect of the event on the speaker.

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After Jacinto told me about his experience, I asked him if he had later told the hostess what had happened. He responded, "I didn't say anything, no, I just said, 'I wasn't feeling well, so I left.'" He apparently felt constrained by the very courtesy which he had been denied.

The extremely uncomfortable feeling of finding oneself unexpectedly stuck in a place "full of whites" and being either ignored or aggressively stared at was described by other informants. Jorge recounted such an experience. His wife worked as maid and he spoke warmly about his her *patroa* or employer. He began by explaining that the *patroa*'s son and his friends had invited him to go a sports club that was broadcasting a televised soccer match:

> Last Saturday, late, my wife's *patroa* who is very nice, very cool -- she doesn't have this business, she has no prejudice, she drinks out of the same glass, that stuff. She has for example, the friends of her son, they're charming, nice. So what happened? He [the *patroa's* son] called on me, called me to invite me to watch soccer on [a major network]. I went with the son of the *patroa*. So we went in a car, "Let's go to Tijuca," [he said] and in Tijuca, [he said], "I'm going to get a friend who is also going with us." We get to the club where a video was being shown, and going in there, they're staring like this. (Imitates a hostile glare.) Shit, just me and this other guy are dark. This guy said to me that he was going to lose it soon (*vai esquentar logo*). [He said,] "A gang here that doesn't like us, a gang, a gang, a mountain of people that don't like dark people." [The *patroa's* son said,] "With me, no, none of that, you can relax," and he explained the thing [to the others and] said, "This guy is of color, but he could be my brother, [color] has nothing to do with anything." Then the people started to treat me better, you know?

Several of his statements bear emphasis. While Jorge often referred to "*negros*" and "*brancos*" in a way that rhetorically suggested a clearly divided world, he was, at other conversational moments, careful to point out that not all whites are given to racism. He believed that white racism contributed to his own impoverishment and that of other people of color on the *morro*, yet, like many others, he judged the whites he knew by the way they treated him in interpersonal encounters, rather than by their color or class position. Explaining his feeling that his wife's *patroa* was "cool" (*legal*), he said that "she drinks out of the same glass." A number of people on the *morro* made similar comments about whites whom they regarded as "not having prejudice." The willingness to abide physical contact -- even through the indirect means of drinking from the same glass -- is an index of being "*uma pessoa muita legal*" (a very cool

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person), one who is not racist. As will become clear, some informants (particularly women who worked as *empregadas*) were at pains to defend the character of certain whites whom they knew, even while discussing their own experiences with racism.

In describing a ride in a private car through a middle-class neighborhood, and his arrival at a private elite club, Jorge is marking what was for him, as for Jacinto, the crossing of class boundaries. He refers to the behavior of the people in the club in rather vague terms ("they're staring like this"), yet it is clear he has crossed a color boundary as well. In conveying his own sense of threat he quotes the other "dark guy" who was present. Fear, terror, even, is evident in the quotation. The people there are described as "a gang, a mountain of whites." His device is the same as Jacinto's, when he quotes his own thoughts, "What am I doing here?" It is clear once again that while the staring Jorge refers to was not experienced as "subtle" in the usual sense, it's effect, its meaning in fact, can only be elucidated by reference to his subjective reaction. Jorge is describing the power of the *mau olhado*: for those not subjected to it, it may remain invisible or close to invisible, and its force resists precise objective description. While concealed in this sense, its subjective impact (also likely to be concealed) can approach terror.

The description of such occasions reveals the undercurrent of tension and even hostility that can flow through social encounters that take place "on the asphalt," away from the more egalitarian community of the *morro*. Whereas few of my middle-class white informants referred to this tense climate in their interviews with me, many in Morro do Sangue Bom took pains to describe the often surreptitious, but nevertheless sharply perceptible practices that constitute what Essed calls "everyday racism."

While perhaps a quarter of those living on the *morro* are white or "*claro*" (light), the correlation between class and color appears to be much higher "on the asphalt" and it is here that a person of color from the *morro* is likely to become more acutely aware of *de facto* segregation and to ask him or herself, "What am I doing here?" when he or she crosses ostensibly invisible but subjectively perceived boundaries. Their sense of being out of place and the behavior of others that provokes these feelings, reflect and, in fact enact, the interpenetrating role of class

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and color in constructing and maintaining those boundaries. In referring to the sense of being "the only *negro* in a mountain of whites," it is apparent that whatever their white middle-class neighbors might say, my informants did not reduce the often surreptitious (if not truly subtle) forms of prejudice they felt to purely class-based expressions of hierarchy and opposition. Because people of color so frequently respond to these boundary-maintaining forms of prejudice by withdrawal moreover, they become ipso facto, forms of discriminatory exclusion.

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In their introduction to *Discourse and Discrimination*, Smitherman-Donaldson and van Dijk write, "According to the well-known proverb, words can never hurt you, unlike sticks and stones, which may break your bones....talk and text not only may hurt you, they may hurt you more effectively, more systematically, and more permanently..." (1988:11). While the words they cite are not the vocalized insults of everyday life but the discourse of dominant media, and while the hurt they refer to is not of a personal, but rather of a structural nature, similar claims can be made, I believe, for the different kind of words and of hurt that people in Morro do Sangue Bom talk about. My informants' constant recitation of the wounding power of "hard words" suggests that there is still more to tell.

Words, of course, mean different things to different people in different contexts and intentions are often, at best, difficult to read. Several years before I lived in Morro do Sangue Bom, I was boarding with a white middle-class family in the elite neighborhood of Leblon. Carla, one of the members of this family, told me a *piada* or joke in which a black person was referred to as a "monkey." I made a comment to the effect that I could not abide such "racist jokes." Carla turned to me as though considerably startled and said, "But *negros* laugh at them too." While she spoke neither sensitively nor ironically, her observation, ethnographically speaking, was an important one.

People of color, I noticed, often feel constrained to "go along with" racist *piadas*. To do otherwise involves the risk of a kind of self-exposure that produces extreme awkwardness or

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even overt antagonism. Objecting to racist jokes, as I did, represents, rather ironically, a breech of etiquette; such jokes undoubtedly have an underhanded, coercive force. Moreover, people of color may themselves tell racist *piadas*, and as I have noted, they often use derogatory words such as "*negao*" and "*crioulao*" in the intimate context of *brincadeira* or joking. As I suggested in Chapter Two, the indexical message of both the *piadas* and the *brincadeira* shared between people of color may often (if not always), be different from that carried in the joking of whites. Intimacy, as well as a complicated double-voiced irony can be, and often is, communicated in such instances. What Carla was apparently unaware of in observing that people of color often laugh at racist jokes is both the coercive constraint and the rueful irony -- as well as the delicate sense of danger -- within the laughter that she hears.

As the following narratives will make clear, jokes and epithets are in many contexts, anything but funny. Even when racist comments or name-calling are cloaked in the idiom of *brincadeira* or in the form of the *piada*, danger is always present and indignation, even if unexpressed, is often aroused. When I asked Jacinto if he thought middle-class blacks also suffered from discrimination, he told me:

> In a day-to-day way, also [they are] very discriminated against. Because sometimes they are not discriminated against directly. People make "little jokes." [They say,] "Oh it's just a joke." But the person who is on the outside always knows it's discrimination.

The use of epithets leaves little room for ambiguity and interpretation. Racism is not always "*embaixo do pano*," or concealed, but can be directly confrontational. Typically, in such cases, a few words are sufficient to signal and enact a profound antagonism.

Jorge had a another story to tell me, similar to the one quoted above. Like the previous story, this one opened with a reference to a white man who extended an invitation to Jorge. The man owned a soap factory, and went "up and down the *morro*," and "didn't have prejudice." Jorge occasionally plays the drums in *pagode*, a heavily percussive, more or less traditional genre of music that is often (but not exclusively) associated with poor African-Brazilians. His wealthy acquaintance invited him to play music at a party at his house in Niteroi, a large city across the

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bay from Rio. Although Jorge described the arrangement in the idiom of friendship, he was probably paid for his services.

> So, he invited me. The guys were playing *pagode* there. I wanted to go, so this guy came to get us in a van for a two-hour trip. So, we arrive there. What happens? The guys, myself, for example, I have, even, a feeling of shame when I see this guy's house. You know how it is? He's bringing the really poor, right, bringing *pagode*, right? -- And we come into the garage and his wife went to open the garage. That woman! And I said [to myself], "What am I doing here?" It was his wife, it was his birthday, and they were awaiting our arrival to do *pagode*. He came up, his wife came up to the door and said "Hey, where's the *pagode*?" .... God, they opened [the door]... It was all planted with grass up there, [there was] a pool, a waiter serving and everything. [I thought], "What am I here for?" So [the host] said, "I don't want you to serve the people here." The guy wanted me to make myself at home; rather than serve, he wanted us to be served. He got a bottle of vodka and put it on top of the table for us. But there were one or two people inside who were making a bad image of us (*fazendo um mau imagem da gente*), you know, making a bad image of us.... A bad image is speaking ill, speaking ill, [saying] "*crioulo*." You know how it is, "a *crioulo* race," "what is that *crioulo* doing here?" .... He spoke like this: "Two *crioulos* together are faggots or they're thieves." Do you understand? .... So, it was three o'clock in the morning and [I said to the host], the party is very good but we're going to take off." The guy said, "No, no, don't leave." And he asked what was happening. And I said, "I'm going to tell you, I'm going to tell the truth about what is happening." So, he asked, "What is happening?" "Fine. Two people are talking over there, shit, throwing jokes around, and I, for example, think it's too much. I don't like it." So, he asked, "What was it that they said?" [I answered,] " 'Two *crioulos* together are faggots or they are thieves.' We're leaving."

Once again, Jorge describes a journey across class boundaries. In this instance, the anxiety he feels is more acutely emphasized. He has "even a feeling of shame" when he sees the wife, the garage, the house, the lawn, the pool, the servant, and the vodka. His crossing of the color boundary does not become explicit until other guests "make a bad image of him." In telling me this story, Jorge might have wanted to pass over the recitation of the *piada* (that he was evidently meant to hear) but I pressed him to clarify the meaning of "making a bad image." His description of the conversation with the host conveys an even greater reticence in repeating the precise, powerfully shaming words of the *piada*. It is only because the host insists on hearing the details that Jorge resolves to "tell the truth."

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Jorge certainly knew that I was keenly aware of how he might be inclined to react to being called a "*crioulo*," a "thief" and a "faggot" in one breath. Jorge cannot respond to the insult as he chooses however, for in a very real sense, he is stranded in enemy territory. He added in closing that he had been invited back to this man's house. "But," he told me, "I'm not going anymore."

Racist name-calling, is of course, considered a more egregious offense against one's dignity than staring and refusing to exchange pleasantries. A number of people, particularly young men, told me that the police very often use racial slurs during incidents of harrassment, and they mentioned as well, that the color of the officer seemed to make no difference in their inclination to "throw" racist insults. Jacinto told me a number of stories in which the act of racist name-calling was figured as the coup de grace of racist attacks on one's dignity. Referring to the police, he said,

> The police themselves discriminate like this.... And really, the policeman is dark also. "*Negro!*" .... The *negro* himself has this nickname for the *negro*. Sometimes the white is the thief but he is never called "*negro*" or "*preto*." I've seen this happen many times and it's already happened to me also.

While the comment that a "white is never called a black (*negro* or *preto*)," may sound absurd, it demonstrates, rather precisely, the ways in which terms which are usually glossed as "black" can, in certain contexts, be easily twisted into attacks on one's character.

Jacinto also observed an incident on a city bus that illustrates the anger and indignation that racist name calling can provoke.

> I've seen it various times. Just listen: It was in Copacabana, on the bus, and it was a holiday. So a black citizen (*cidadao escuro*) [was on the bus] and he was passing someone and without meaning to, he bumped into a white woman (*senhora branca*). [And she said,] "Oh you impudent *negro* (*nego safado*), you would kick your own mother!" She insulted him, called him an "impudent *crioulo*." She lowered him, put him down, right? He didn't say anything, but I knew he was steaming, right? He simply .... he stopped the bus. There was a police car there. [He said to the police,] "Come here, that white citizen there ....." He was an official of the justice system but the woman didn't know it. He called two policemen and showed them his card. He said, "[I expect] to be treated like a man, like any white person. Because I am not a *negro*. I am a citizen of color (*cidadao de cor*)." Even he discriminated, because he said "I am not a *negro*, I

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> am a citizen of color." Why? Because he had power (*posse*). As if he were white, a white *negro*.... They put her in the police car like she was a man. It was the first time that justice happened like that.

Jacinto's story is a rather complicated one and his choice of words highlights the potentially freighted nature of all terms of reference and address in Brazilian Portuguese. In the first reference to the man who was the target of the attack, Jacinto uses the expression, "*cidadao escuro*," an extremely polite form which in this case, signals not only the color but the class of the man. The offending woman is called a "*senhora branca*." Generally, white people receive the polite, formal term "*senhora*" or "*senhor*" more frequently than people of color (regardless of the color of the speaker); it tends to signal both class and color. In Jacinto's quotation, the black man refers to the white woman as a "*cidada branca*" or white citizen. The coupling of these terms has the ring of redundancy. If Jacinto's quotation is accurate, it seems likely that the man followed a "hyper-polite" form to shame the woman and/or to convey a biting sarcasm. On the other hand, Jacinto may have modified the quote in order to narratively underline the distinction between polite and respectful and offensive and denigrating terms of reference. The man then refers to himself as a "citizen of color," a fairly common polite term of reference, and insists that he is "not a *negro*." Whereas Jacinto had previously suggested that the term *negro* is often used as an assault on one's character, he here implies that the man's indignant rejection of the term constitutes a failure to recognize or embrace his own negritude. This may appear to be a contradiction but it is, in fact, a window into the complicated ways in which such terms of reference and address communicate class as well as color-based indexical nuances. To Quito's ear, the man is not protesting racism against all people of color but is, on the basis of "power," distinguishing himself from "real *negros*," that is, poor people of color who have no power or position in society, such as Jacinto himself. In his narration, Jacinto appears to be somewhat constrained in his loyalties. He criticizes the man's assertion of class distinction and privilege, yet it is this very power that allows him to seek the redress that is his due as a man of color, and as Jacinto implicitly suggests, that is the due of all people of color who are insulted in this manner.

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Nearly all of the examples Jacinto provided in our interview centered around "hard words," the practice of racist name- calling. In detailing his dismissal from a job for example, he narrated a rather confusing series of events, relating to increasing tension between himself and one of his superiors. He told me that his superior, a relative of the owner of the firm, finally said to him, "That's why I don't like *crioulos*!" Jacinto in fact, framed the direct quotation of his supervisor as the dramatic denouement of his narrative. "She was insulting me (me *xingando*)," he said. For Jacinto, the woman's overt comment proved finally, that her criticism of him was not motivated by legitimate supervisory concerns but represented an underhanded form of racist harrassment.

The seriousness of the offense of using racial slurs was also communicated by a mother and her daughter. Both had described various forms of racism and white privilege. The mother brought up the issue of the anti-discrimination law that was recently incorporated into Brazil's constitution:

> Mother: [Racism] is quite something, isn't it? Here in Brazil, a law was invented. I can't discriminate. I can't discriminate against her [for example]. (Indicates daughter).
> Daughter: Here you can't, no one can call another "*negro*." You could go to prison.
> Mother: Not even discriminate against her, to say, "Oh you, you," how do you say, "You're a *mulata*, you're a *negra*," like that, like that. It's discrimination. I would even pay a fine, I would go to prison. It's discrimination. It is.

The mistaken belief that the mere act of calling someone a *negra* (or even, surprisingly, a *mulata*) constitutes a legally punishable form of discrimination indicates the significance that "hard words" have for many in Morro do Sangue Bom. Name-calling is considered an especially violent act, in and of itself, yet its force resides also, I believe, in its revelatory aspect. Racist name-calling exposes and unveils what would otherwise be implicit, suppressed, or as people in Morro do Sangue Bom are apt to say, "*incubado*" (incubated) or concealed. It directly violates the tenets of *democracia racial* and lays bare the racialized character of many everyday forms of social antagonism. Or, alternatively, it provides a framework, an ideological raison d'etre, a gloss, for what may be, at root, more complicated forms of antagonism that incorporate class- as

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well as color-based assertions of hierarchy and value. In either case, to *xingar* or insult someone by "throwing hard (racist) words" articulates racism in its own direct and shocking idiom. Hard words leave no room for doubt, no quarter in which meaning can be softened, euphemized, or negotiated. The narrative description of such occasions represents a revelatory commentary and contributes to what Essed calls "cultural knowledge" of racism. Because racist name-calling is both shocking and familiar, and because it directly spells the name of the prejudice that a number of my informants said is "deep, deep down," it serves as a cipher by which more covert or "incubated" encounters can be interpreted and named. I believe my informants frequently and emphatically recited stories about racist name calling not only because it is relatively common or because its explicitly violent quality makes it inherently memorable and highly amenable to particularly dramatic forms of narration, but also because such stories serve as a heuristic genre. They give voice to, provide proof for, and guide the interpretation of, the racist sentiments and covert strategies for expressing antagonism and hierarchy that my informants believe motivate *mau olhado* and similar, often silent encounters.

Working on the Asphalt: Women and Men

Between Monday and Friday, the day starts very early in Morro do Sangue Bom. Well before dawn, Reginaldo, a man in his sixties, goes to a wholesale bakery in the city to buy baskets of fresh bread to sell on the *morro*. "Fresh bread, fresh bread," Reginaldo calls out, as the sun rises over the hill, and children and women go out to greet him and pay for one or two loaves with wrinkled bills and change. Children and parents break the bread into chunks, eating it quickly with heavily sugared coffee. Those who are fortunate will have milk with their coffee; others must wait until the weekend to enjoy such an indulgence. Mothers take children to the day care center at the bottom of the hill, to the bus that will take them to school, or to the houses of friends or relatives who will watch out for them during working hours. Both men and women make their way down the hill to catch the bus and begin their work "on the asphalt," in various locations outside of the *morro*.

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Between five and seven o'clock the workers come home, wending their way slowly up the hill. Exhaustion is evident and almost no one, who lives high up on the hill, has the energy to make the climb without stopping several times to catch their breath and chat with friends and neighbors. Men often stop in one of a number of small bars, where they ask for a "cold one" and exchange stories about their working day with other men. Women are often burdened with heavy bags from the grocery store but by the time they are half-way home, someone is likely to offer help. "Give me one," young men say unceremoniously to older women. Muscles flexing, they bound ahead with the heaviest bags and leave them outside the doors of the women's homes. Children as young as four or five spring down the steps at a dangerous pace when they see their mothers laboring up the hill with groceries, sweating and reflecting aloud on how pleasant it will be to take a shower. "You are so strong," mothers often say to their little daughters. "You are a man already," they say to their sons, even while sternly admonishing them not to drop the bags. Such compliments never fail to draw an answering smile. "No, mom, I'm strong, give me a heavier one," I once heard a four year-old boy say when he was handed a bag of toilet paper. While countless books about the history and culture of Brazil emphasize the profoundly negative associations attached to physical labor in the country, people in Morro do Sangue Bom, many of whom are the descendants of slaves, cannot afford to indulge, for very long, in a fantasy of life without toil. Strength of mind and body and steadfast endurance are essential and highly respected qualities in both men and women. *Pobres* or the poor, are very explicitly defined as "those who must work in order to survive," whereas the rich are "those who don't have to work."

Wage labor and the search for jobs are the most time-consuming and stress-filled activities for nearly all adults in Morro do Sangue Bom. Even those with no formal employment typically engage in *biscate*, a word that refers to activities such as street vending and odd-jobbing. With few exceptions, the people I knew in Morro do Sangue Bom worked in low-paying jobs, and earned anywhere between one minimum salary (usually equivalent to US$80 to US$100) to five minimum salaries per month. Those earning in the upper range of this scale

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were a minority: I knew people in their sixties who had worked steadily since young adulthood yet still brought home less than one hundred dollars a month.

Although there is some overlap in the work that men and women do, their access to different forms of wage labor is highly divergent. An overwhelming majority of the women I knew worked as *empregadas domesticas*, or domestic servants. A smaller number worked in small firms where they made and served coffee and performed janitorial duties and an even smaller number worked as cashiers or clerks. If given a choice, most husbands in Morro do Sangue Bom would prefer that their wives not work outside the home. Women's desire for independence, coupled with men's unemployment, underemployment and extremely low wages forces men to accept and recognize the economic importance of women's wage labor. Husbands do not always view the situation with equanimity however. When Joia's *patroa* left town for an extended period while her husband stayed behind, Joia asked me not to mention the fact to Daniel. "It's ridiculous, there's nothing between us and besides, he's much too skinny for me," Joia explained, referring to her *patroa*'s husband. "But Daniel would become jealous even so."

Men's occupations were more varied. Among the men I knew well there were truck drivers, refrigerator repairmen, garbage collectors, plumbers, brick layers, general construction workers, bellhops, messengers and what are called "office boys." Despite their access to a larger variety of jobs, men were unemployed in higher numbers than women. Although a number of women told me that *patroas* -- the "patrons" or middle class women who hire *empregadas domesticas* -- prefer that their maids be white or light-skinned, jobs in this sector never dry up (although they are currently "shrinking") and they are not thought to require special skills or training, nor even, literacy. Domestic service represents a stable occupational niche for poor women of all colors. Men's employment depends to a greater degree on the shifting fortunes of public and private enterprise, and, by extension, on the fluctuations that characterize local and extra-local economies as a whole.

Both men and women are likely to go through a period of unemployment at some point during their adult lives. For men it seems, these periods are likely to be more frequent and to last

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longer than they do for women. Several of the men I knew well had no formal employment during the entire length of my stay in Morro do Sangue Bom. Jonas, whom I have quoted in the previous chapter, was one such man. He was twenty-six years old. He was particularly hard-pressed after his wife Maria, also unemployed, gave birth to their second child. Jonas, Maria and their two children lived in a tiny one-room house, barely more than a shack. Others told me that when Jonas was younger, he had been drug-addicted and sometimes stole small amounts of cash from others on the *morro*. Since he had settled down with Maria however, he had given up drugs and was trying to get his feet on the ground. The couple received some material assistance from Jonas's divorced mother, who lived several houses down the hill, but her support was limited; she was still supporting a teenaged daughter and a grandson on her small salary as an *empregada* and relations between her and Maria were very strained.

Jonas worked at *biscate* on the hill itself. During some periods, he would buy limes and other fruits and vegetables and sell them from his home or walk through the *morro* announcing his wares. As I noted, he sometimes served duty in the residents association. At other times, he would gather mussels from the polluted waters close to Rio's domestic airport. He would return to the *morro*, still dripping with sea water, carrying an enormous burlap sack on his back. He and Maria, sometimes with the help of several neighbors, cleaned and cooked the mussels in an old paint can set over an open fire in the cramped and littered area in front of the house. The mussels would then be put in small plastic bags and sold to people on the hill.

Jonas also worked for friends and neighbors in home improvement tasks, such as carrying bricks, cement and sand from the bottom the hill to the top, laying tiles, plastering, painting and building cement paths and steps. While all the able-bodied men on the *morro* performed these tasks for certain neighbors, relatives and close friends as part of a cycle of reciprocity, those whose financial situations were especially dire would be offered a small cash recompense, as well as beer, *cachaca*, and a hot meal. Jonas was not always satisfied with what he was offered and on one occasion, I saw him engage in a rather heated dispute with a woman whose ceiling he had plastered. Later, she said to me, "I know he's having a hard time and I feel

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badly for him, but I have to support three children on the little bit that I make." Jonas, it seemed to me, was usually treated with a mixture of genuine sympathy and impatience. As my quotation of his experiences later in this chapter will show, he was profoundly discouraged about his chances of finding a salaried job outside the *morro*. Jonas was bright, motivated and physically strong but he was turned away by potential employers, he felt, because of his color.

Men's and women's attitudes towards wage labor vary and change with shifts in relationships with employers and co-workers as well as according to shifts in family life. Everyone who discussed the issue with me felt that they were paid too little for their work, and many felt that their talents, skills, dedication, and often loyalty, were unrecognized. The demands of wage labor were especially stressful for mothers, whose work would continue well after they returned from the asphalt. The family's dinner had to be prepared, clothes had to be washed by hand, hung to dry and ironed, the house had to be cleaned, the dishes washed and the children's homework checked. While some of the men I knew helped with some of the cooking and child care, their input tended to be minimal. Single and divorced mothers and those whose husbands were unemployed felt a numbing exhaustion and anxiety with particular keenness.

Varena, who supported herself and her three children on what she made working for two families as an *empregada* often complained about having to work so hard, and she was frequently lonely and depressed over her separation from her husband. One night she vented her feelings about her work life when Joia and Daniel were visiting. "Being an *empregada* is very hard work, you know," she said, directing her comment to Daniel. "But what would you do if you didn't work? he asked her. "I'm so tired all the time!" Varena said. "You think being an *empregada* is easy but it's not." Daniel acknowledged her point but added, "But if you didn't work, what would do with your life, nothing, you'd sit around and drink all day." "I would like to do nothing," Varena wistfully rejoined. "No, you would soon go crazy, doing nothing. In a month you would be crazy." Although Daniel's comments sounded unsympathetic, I believe he intended to remind Varena that work was necessary not only in order to survive but to "do something," to "make something of one's life."

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Natalia was the only woman I knew who wanted to work but was forbidden to do so by her husband. Unlike most men on the hill, he earned enough to assert what was considered his masculine prerogative in keeping his wife from wage labor. Natalia was an exceptionally talented designer and seamstress and she told me, "I always wanted to do something, to have success in life. I always knew I had talent but he would never let me do anything. He always said my place is at home with the children." Her husband was so successful in fact, that he had managed, after many years, to save nearly enough to purchase a house in the North Zone and move his family out of the *morro*. He allowed Natalia to work as a designer and seamstress for a small cottage industry for several months, in order to make the last financial push necessary to purchase the house. "I go in and right away, I make something up and they love all my designs," she told me, beaming. Natalia was clearly more fortunate than most women in having her skill and talent recognized; she also liked the sense of purposefulness and independence her work brought. Finally, she could join the other wage-earning women of the hill, who for years had regaled her with stories about work on the asphalt.

Although people on the *morro* felt grievously underpaid and overworked, they took some pride in their ability to work hard and support their families. The community's unemployed people were a constant reminder of the necessity of work and the measure of independence it affords. Although the men and women of Morro do Sangue Bom were sometimes accused of being "lazy" and "indolent" by their middle class neighbors, those who had secured employment worked much harder than most of those neighbors and knew it.

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One of the central questions that motivates this section is, to what extent do men and women experience racism differently? In what ways are their interpretations of racialized or potentially racialized encounters divergent? Frances Winddance Twine (1995, 1996, 1997), an American anthropologist, studied this issue closely during fieldwork conducted in "Vasalia," a rural town in the northwestern interior of the state of Rio de Janeiro between 1992 and 1994. A

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comparison of her conclusions with my own provides an illuminating, if perhaps predictable contrast, and reveals the centrality of work-related experience in the construction of racial meanings.

Focusing primarily on upwardly mobile African-Brazilian women and men in a non-urban locale, Windance-Twine discovered that there is a very significant "experiential and perceptual gap" between men and women with regard to white racism. Men, who frequently work and pursue leisure activities in the city of Rio (or at any rate, outside of the community) are exposed to a much more public world than women. Traveling from a rural community to the city, they experience a disjuncture similar to the one my informants experience when they leave the *morro* and descend to the asphalt. The contexts in which Winddance Twine's male informants tended to encounter racism were the same as those described by my male informants: while on the job and while looking for jobs, while traveling to and from work, and in unprovoked episodes of police harrassment that occur outside of the home community. The women Windance-Twine interviewed worked as donas de casa, or housewives, or in low-paying jobs within the town and their leisure activities took place within the local community. Their ability to travel outside of the town was highly controlled and circumscribed, and as Windance-Twine notes, women's exposure to the world beyond Vasalia was extremely limited.

In a paper in which she analyzes the discourse of seven African-Brazilian women and men, Twine writes that in presenting an "analysis of inequality," all of her informants tended to privilege "socioeconomic status, not racial location." As is common throughout Brazil, her informants reproduced the discourses that assert that prejudice and discrimination are primarily motivated by class rather than color differences. Her male informants however, were aware that racism also played a role in the structuring of inequality, while women were not:

> The Afro-Brazilian women interviewed reported no encounters with racism in their professional or personal lives. Several women denied that racism existed at all in contemporary Brazil, while a few argued that an occasional incident occurred in urban areas. All of the men interviewed announced that they had either personally witnessed an act of racism or had been subjected to racism on more than one occasion. All of the seven brown skinned Afro-Brazilian men,

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> who self-identified as moreno/mulato interviewed reported that they had confronted racism. By contrast, all of the brown skinned Afro-Brazilian women denied personal encounters or witnessing acts of racism (1995:9).

Windance Twine thus argues that "women's restricted participation in the public sphere may shield them from the some of the more vulgar forms of racism in comparison to their male peers" (Ibid:2). Very much in line with my own description of the lack of everyday discourse on racism in Morro do Sangue Bom, she observes, in addition, that racism is rarely discussed among her informants: although they had experienced racism, the male informants she quotes did not discuss these experiences with their wives.

If Windance Twine's argument is correct -- that experiences with, and recognition of, racism tend to increase with travel outside of the local community -- we would expect most women in Morro do Sangue Bom to articulate experiences and perceptions similar to those of men. As will become increasingly clear, they do in fact. While some women told me that they had never had a personal encounter with racism, very few of my female informants denied the pervasiveness of racism, nor did they attempt to underplay its significance. On the contrary, some of the sternest and most illuminating critiques of white racism were articulated by women, some of whom were, in fact, light-skinned (as were, apparently, the majority of Windance-Twine's informants.) In comparing the way men and women in Morro do Sangue Bom discuss racism, it is evident however, that differences in both work and leisure-related activities contribute towards gender differences in both experiences with and interpretations of racism.

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Performing domestic servitude for others often begins early in the life of women in Morro do Sangue Bom. While a few of the women I knew were not engaged in domestic service during the time of my research, I did not know of a single woman who had not worked as a maid in a middle class home during some period in her life. Even Natalia had worked as an *empregada domestica* before her early marriage. Girls of thirteen or even younger often accompany their mothers to their jobs in middle-class neighborhoods, where they learn what is

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expected of a domestic servant. A girl may begin her first full-time job at the age of fourteen or fifteen. Many of the women I knew had spent at least a part of their adolescence as "live-in" maids, i.e., they lived with their employer families and went home only on weekends or Sundays.

Varena's adopted daughter, Rosemare was involved in such an arrangement during my stay in Morro do Sangue Bom. She slept in a very small maid's room -- an appurtenance in nearly all middle-class homes in Rio and elsewhere in Brazil -- and rose early to prepare breakfast for the family. While the children attended a private school, she studied for half a day in a public school. In the afternoons and evenings, she cleaned the house, did laundry and prepared and served the family's dinner. Afterwards she ate her own dinner in the kitchen, washed the dishes, put the children to bed, did her homework and retired until the next morning. She returned to Varena's house late Saturday and stayed until early Monday morning. For these services, she received approximately fifty dollars per month, or one half of a minimum monthly salary. Rosemare spoke favorably about the family however; they allowed her to continue her schooling and assisted her in paying for school supplies.

An elite white woman had on one occasion, said to me without a trace of irony, "It's so hard to find good *empregadas* these days. Nobody wants to live-in anymore." Such complaints are often voiced by middle- and upper-class women, in fact. With few exceptions, older women, for all of the obvious reasons, refuse to live with their employer families. One is constantly subject to surveillance, negative judgments and emotional isolation. One's social life is severely curtailed; male visitors are very rarely welcome in the employer's home. For married women with children, such an arrangement would be virtually impossible. The only older woman I knew who worked full-time as a live-in *baba* or nursemaid had no children of her own and she was separated from her husband. Over the years she had earned and saved enough money to furnish her home on the *morro* in a manner resembling that of middle-class people, yet she rarely had time to relax there.

Aside from the distinctions between full-time, live-in work and day work, and between those who primarily clean as opposed to those who primarily care for small children, a

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distinction is made between *empregadas* who work for one family five or six days a week and those who work one or a few days per week. The latter are often called *diaristas*, (day workers) *faxineiras* (charwomen) or *arrumadeiras* (literally, "arrangers"). Such women usually work for several different families and thus work full time. They earn more than those who work for a single family. While the economic crunch of the mid-nineties has forced many middle-class families to hire *diaristas* or *faxineiras*, the lower-paying, but less exhausting, more stable and intimate arrangement of the full-time *empregada* was still very common when I conducted fieldwork.

In most middle-class households, *empregadas* who do not care for small children are expected to do nearly all domestic chores. Grocery shopping and cooking are often included but some of the women I knew drew the line at ironing and insisted on being paid extra for this service. While positions for *empregadas* and *babas*, or nursemaids are advertised in the papers, most women found positions through their own personal network of women on the *morro*. Middle-class people, particularly women, who usually hire, fire and supervise the work of *empregadas* in familial households, also had personal networks through which information about available workers (gleaned from their own *empregadas*) was circulated. Jobs with "good *patroas*" or employers were considered to be relatively scarce however, and I knew some women who remained jobless for long stretches of time.

Some of the women I knew had worked for the same family, or different branches of an extended family for most of their adult lives. As the word used for the employer of a domestic servant suggests, a *patroa* (or *patrao*) may, in what is considered the most favorable arrangement, serve as a kind of "patron," as well as an employer. *Empregadas* may be invited to take left-over food home to their families, they are sometimes given cast-off clothing, and some ask for advances on their salaries or "a little help" during especially difficult financial shortfalls, such as those induced by medical crises. While *empregadas* may sometimes discuss personal, even intimate problems with their *patroas*, I had the impression that the reverse was more often the case. It would moreover, be impossible for an *empregada* not to know the intimate details of

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the lives of the families that employ them: they wash all the clothing and bedclothes, clean every inch of the house or apartment, shop and cook, overhear the conversations and arguments that make up family life, answer the phone and the door, and serve not only the family but also the family's guests.

Much of what goes on in employer's households becomes grist for the frequent and detailed stories that women in Morro do Sangue Bom exchange, and as I noted in the last chapter, for scathing critiques of the decadence of the wealthy and aspiring-to-be-wealthy classes. Stories are often told sympathetically however, and women often ask after one another's employer-families. When an *empregada*'s *patroa* or someone in the *patroa*'s family is undergoing a personal crisis, she may give daily updates to her friends on the hill, and her friends in turn, will express concern and sympathy, as though she were speaking of her own close friends or family. Undoubtedly, many women on the *morro* consider their relationships with their *patroa*s to be genuine and important friendships or even a kind of fictive kin relation. Sometimes when describing the *patroa*s they had as teenagers, they will speak gratefully of them as having "been like a mother" and when they refer to long-standing employment with a family with children, they will say that they have been "like a second mother" to the children.

It is thus impossible to generalize about *empregada*s' relationships with and feelings about their employers. Most of the women who discussed the issue with me had had both "good" and "horrible" experiences, and as one who heard many daily updates myself, it became obvious to me that those relationships which were considered to be "good" (and were thus long-standing) tended to pass through the same ups and downs as do most employer-employee relationships. Anger, frustration and hurt over unpaid wages could be at least temporarily offset by an unexpected gift: gratitude for cast-off furniture could later be overshadowed by the unpleasant behavior of "lazy" "disrespectful" children.

Women's experiences as *empregada*s (and their manner of recounting those experiences) contained a kind of personalized and ongoing drama that was not present, or not so emphasized in men's descriptions of their professional lives. Because of the intimacy of their work and the

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ambiguity of their role, *empregadas* often expressed feelings of hurt and betrayal in connection with their employers and their families, whereas men more often expressed feelings of indignation and anger. At least partly as a consequence of this intimacy and ambiguity, it seemed that women were more willing to overlook, excuse and forgive the lack of sensitivity and consideration, rudeness and unfairness that was occasionally or often shown to them. I had the impression that racism for them, when and if it occurs, may often be an explanation of last resort.

In my interviews with women in Morro do Sangue Bom, some, like Dona Janete did report (like Windance Twine's female informants) that they had never personally encountered racism. Usually, when they discussed this issue they interjected phrases like "Thank God, it hasn't happened to me!" Most of the women I interviewed responded to my first question about the existence of racism in Brazil with comments such as, "My God, yes, there is racism here, Beth! Of course! Too much!" Despite that fact, women's narratives did, on occasion, have a more equivocal character than men's narratives and on the whole, they reported less incidents of encounters with racism than men did.

Some of the ways in which men and women responded differently to my questions about racism were reflected in my interview with Rosa, who was in her forties. Her husband was present during the early part of interview but he was listening to a soccer match on the radio and made no comments as Rosa told me about her upbringing in Minas Gerais and her emigration, as a teenager, to Rio de Janeiro. When I asked Rosa if she thought there was racism in Brazil, however, he abruptly and loudly interjected a few comments. (His comments are followed by "H"):

> R: I have to say that in the house where I work, no.
> H: But some places have it! Some places have it!
> R: There are many racists here.
> H: The black (*preto*) is like ... the black is always avoided --
> R: --There are many racists here--
> H: --You have to have "good appearance."... Here in Rio --
> R: -- Here, here in Brazil, here in Rio, there are many racists, yes, you know. It's hidden (*incubado*). Hidden, hidden, people [say,] "Oh, there's none of that," but deep down they're racist.

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Rosa began her response with a favorable comment about her own *patroa*. Before she had a chance to enlarge upon or qualify her comment, her husband (who is, in fact, much lighter than she is) loudly qualified it for her and his continuing comments refer not to individual cases or personal experience but to general scenarios. His reference to "good appearance" was one that I had heard many times, particularly in my discussions with male informants. As is well-known, help wanted ads often request job applicants with a "good appearance" and Rosa's husband, like many others, interpreted this as meaning "*Pretos* need not apply." Rosa did not disagree with her husband's characterization of racism in Rio and in Brazil, and she elaborated on his comments by pointing out that racism tends to be *incubado*, or hidden and discursively denied. She continued however,

> With me, never, there was never racism, you know. I manage to work with people, you know, it's a good relationship..... But I have many friends who have racist *patroa*s. They prefer white [*empregadas*] over black ones (*pretas*). My *patroa*? On the contrary, she has more preference for a black (*preta*) *empregada* than a white one.... I think it's the manner of the [black] person, the way of treating others well. Because it's not the *empregada* who does the employing, it's the *patroa*. So I think when the person really needs [the job], they always treat them, the *patroa*s, with more -- with the most affection that they can. With the maximum attention. So, they know how to attend to their needs. This is what my *patroa* says. I don't know. I think that dark people sometimes have more consideration. They are sometimes more considerate than white *empregadas*.... So, there are many racist *patroa*s. But this one, my *patroa*, is not racist.

Rosa returns to the description of her relationship with her *patroa* and suggests that her own deferential behavior contributes to the lack of racialized conflict in the relationship. Her comments are remarkably similar to those of the *empregada* I quoted in the previous chapter, who suggested that one's own ability or inability to "get along with" and "help" people is a determining factor in whether or not one will be to subjected to racism. Rosa's (and her *patroa*'s) reference to the manner of the (supposedly typical) black *empregada* seems to be a description of her greater deference and hard work vis-a-vis the (supposedly typical) white *empregada*. This is the *patroa*'s formulation and while Rosa suggests that the black *empregada*'s greater deference may be related to her greater need to hold onto the job, she does

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not address the implications of this fact, nor the implications of her *patroa*'s favorable association of blackness with deference. Rosa is thankful for the fact that her *patroa*, unlike others, prefers black servants over white ones.

The often spontaneous positive comments that some women in Morro do Sangue Bom made about their employers reveals how they judge whether they are racist or not and suggests, more fundamentally, that *empregadas* view racism as above all, a personal trait. One day I was standing at one of the *morro's* little bars with an acquaintance named Simone, whom I was about to interview concerning her impressions of Nelson Mandela's recent visit to Rio; we had attended a public celebration in his honor with a common friend. Her aunt, whom I had never met, approached and joined our conversation. Simone told her that I was doing research on Mandela. Before I had a chance to correct this impression, her aunt said,

> No, I didn't go see Mandela. I had to work. But my *patroa* likes *negros* very much. She produces records. She is French, but she likes *negros* very much. She's not racist, no. We drink out of the same glass and we even wear the same clothes. The other day I was very cold and she said 'You can borrow my sweater,' and I put her sweater on. She's a very cool person.

The issue of sharing glasses, plates and clothes was frequently mentioned. What is also immediately notable in the comments of Simone's aunt however, was their extremely personalized nature. Racism as a local, national, or international issue is not raised, despite the obvious conversational entree provided by the reference to Nelson Mandela.

The issue of indirect contact through shared objects continued to surprise me when I talked to women about their jobs. Why should the sharing of a glass or a sweater be so noteworthy in a country that celebrated "interracial" sex and marriage in public discourse, in which white children were often cared for by black servants, and in which the grab-fest of *carnaval* almost required extensive physical contact among people of different colors?

Soon after I moved into my own home on the *morro* and set about trying to devise systematic research strategies, Joia and Cintia came by for a visit. I told them that I planned to begin interviewing middle-class people outside the *morro* soon and a conversation about their

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experience as *empregadas* ensued. Joia and Cintia began by referring to large middle-class apartment building situated on the asphalt at the bottom of the hill. I knew exactly the building they referred to. Attached to it was a large, nearly always empty swimming pool which was entirely visible from the *morro*. Although this conversation was not tape-recorded, I took copious notes immediately after their visit; the following reconstruction is thus not exact but very close to the original conversation:

R: So, I don't know how I should start this [interviewing people outside the *morro*].
J: I know someone who lives in that big building down there.
C: Oh, that building, they don't let *negros* go through the front door. There are two doors and they don't let *negros* go through the one in front.
R: What?
J: They have two entrances, one for the people who live there and one for service.
C: If you're black (*pretinho*) you have to go up in the service elevator, but if you're white like you, they let you go the other way. It's like that almost everywhere.
J: [Giggling] You know that swimming pool there? One time, when I was a kid, we snuck into that pool. We snuck in and they were trying to get us out. There's a big open space in there and we ran around and around and they.... [waves her arms around in a shooing motion].
C: *Negros* can't swim in that pool, only whites are permitted.
J: And a lot of people, there's this discrimination. For the *empregada* they have a separate room, even a separate bathroom. She can't use the same bathroom that the family uses. And everything is separate, separate plates and glasses and forks. And the *empregada* eats separate food.
R: What!?
P: Yeah, everything is separate, plates, everything, and you can't touch anything.
R: Really?
J: You know, they have a separate room, a separate bathroom, that just the maid is to use --
C: -- Yes, but that's good. I like to have my own room, to change my clothes, and the bathroom, all that, that's a good thing --
J: -- Yes, but that thing, yes, a room is good, fine, but separate plates and separate food? At [my *patroa*'s house] it's not like that. It's all together. I use the same bathroom they do, we use the same plates and all that, we all eat the same thing. But at other places, there's this thing. You have your food and they have their food.
C: You can't have anything of theirs. There's meat, whatever, you can't eat that.
R: And probably the *empregada* is cooking everything, right?
C: Yes, she cooks everything but she can't eat it.
J: Where Cintia works and other places, you can't go in flip flops, you have to wear shoes, good clothes, and even so, when you arrive in the morning, you have to take a shower and put other clothes on. Only then can you come out and do your work in the house. It's almost always like that. And everything separate. Well, they're not all like that. I was working for this woman, Sonia, and she wasn't like that. She would give me food to take home, saying, "Take this home to Daniel." Even meat sometimes.
C: But most places, you can't sit on the furniture or anything like that --
J: -- You can't sit on the sofa, it's always standing, you can't sit on the sofa.
R: Oh, yes, I've seen that --

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C: -- You can't touch anything --
J-- But Sonia wasn't like that. One time she was going out and I was working. She said, "Wash up this stuff and then you can sit on the sofa and watch T.V." So, after she left, I turned the T.V. on and laid down on the couch and fell asleep. After, I heard her key in the lock. I jumped up. I hadn't done the work. I was so ashamed, oh God, I was so ashamed! [She laughs, covering her face with her hands.]
R: What did she say, was she mad?
J: No, she didn't say anything, she just said, "Oh, you must have been very tired." I kept saying, "I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry." My God, I was so ashamed! I felt awful! But she was like that, she said I could sit on the sofa --
C: -- It's not usually like that. If I did that [draws her flattened hand through the air]. I could never lie down on the sofa, no. I was working for a woman in Niteroi. She said, "If you get dengue [a usually non-fatal, short-lived, tropical disease carried by mosquitoes], you can't work here, don't come back here."
R: What!?
C: She said, "Don't come back here if you get dengue."
J: And you know, dengue isn't contagious that way, you get it from mosquitoes.
R: I know.
J: What ignorance, right?
C: Besides that, there was a lot more dengue there, it was more in Niteroi than here.
R: What did you say to her?
C: Oh, what could I say? I left there, I couldn't work there anymore, I couldn't bear it. What a thing to say, you know? There was nothing I could say back.

Cintia's abrupt comment about racism, was, in my experience, unusual in what had begun as an ordinary conversation, but her references to separate "social" and "service" elevators is a very common one in directly elicited narratives of racism. Nearly all high-rise apartment buildings in Rio have two separate elevators and *empregadas* are usually expected to take the service elevators, even when they are dressed in ordinary street clothes. This fact rankles many people in Morro do Sangue Bom and Cintia's belief that it is a fundamentally racist expectation was shared by many.[2]

Cintia's reference to racism continued in her comment that *negros* are not allowed in the swimming pool that is attached to the building. Although it is unlikely that black residents of the building were forbidden to use the pool, Cintia had never seen a black swimmer there and the building was almost entirely occupied by whites. In any case, I believe she intended her remark

[2] The requirement that women of color use service elevators -- always based on the assumption that that they are empregadas -- has received a great deal of attention in the more recent literature on racism in Brazil. This scenario animates Hanchard's article, "Black Cindarella: Race and the Public Sphere in Brazil" (1994).

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as a clarification of Joia's story about her childhood caper: her act was one of trespass not merely because she was not a resident but also because she was black. Joia introduced another example of racism by describing the practice of separating those items used by the *empregadas* and those used by the employer's family. She referred also to the separate room and toilet used by the *empregada*. As I have noted, nearly all of the older and larger middle-class apartments and houses in Rio have very small rooms with a tiny bathroom attached, usually located next to the kitchen. While both *empregadas* and middle-class people agree that "live-in" maids were much more common in the past than they are now, the tiny maid's room is still considered a standard appurtenance in middle-class dwellings.

While the issue of racism is directly invoked by Cintia only at the beginning of this conversation, it frames all the comments that follow. It is clear that both Cintia and Joia intend their descriptions to be taken as further evidence and examples of racism. While it could be argued that the middle-class practices they cite could be interpreted as class-based rather than as evidence racial or color prejudice, a number of my informants were adamant in their insistence that such practices -- particularly the separation of plates and glasses -- are motivated by distinctly racist ideas. The references of both Cintia and Joia to separate rooms, separate plates and utensils, and the mandatory showering and changing of clothes seem to suggest a fear of pollution and contamination. Cintia's comment about her *patroa*'s irrational fear that she would spread dengue through her household carries this implication further. Both Joia's past and present *patroas* are lauded, on the other hand, for their willingness to allow Joia to use the same bathroom, eat the same food from the same plates and sit on the sofa. Both women suggest that such *patroas* are rare exceptions.

Joia's comment that "it's almost always like that," may have been somewhat exaggerated but the existence of the practice of "separating everything," as though some kind of "racial" contamination is feared was confirmed by Rosa:

> There's a friend of mine who said that she had, her *patroa* separated everything, glasses, plates forks, everything. So, [the *patroa*] said it was because she was a

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> negra. She didn't like *negros*. [And my friend said,] "I am black (preta) but the same blood that runs in your veins runs in mine." But [the *patroa* said,] "Oh no, because who knows, the color, no." So everything was separated.

Although this incident was reported second-hand, Rosa's description of the *patroa*'s flustered inability to defend her actions and attitudes was familiar. When such confrontations are described in narratives of racism, racist whites are often portrayed as stuttering and stumbling over their words and becoming "*sem graca*," literally, "without grace." In such contexts, the expression suggests that the person's true motivations have been exposed and they are thus embarrassed and tongue-tied. While Cintia's feeling that "there was nothing I could say back," is probably a more common response, overt verbal confrontations, when they occurred and were described to me, always involved an attempt to shame the racist offender. As in Rosa's comments, the confrontations are described through the quotation of dialogue.

Varena told of a similar experience involving evident notions of contamination and pollution. She favored a *patrao* whom she had worked for many years and when he divorced and moved with his children into another woman's apartment, Varena continued working for him and his new girlfriend. Once ensconced in the new apartment, Varena's *patrao* decided that he wanted to convert the maid's room into a study. According to Varena, his girlfriend asked, "But where would Varena sleep if she stayed overnight? Which bathroom would she use?" Her *patrao* responded that Varena could sleep in his daughter's room and use the daughter's bathroom. In explaining to me why both she and her *patrao* thought this a reasonable arrangement, Varena said, "You know how children are always making a mess in the bathroom, right?" Although the daughter's bathroom was already in this sense, "polluted," and should thus have been, even by racist standards, acceptable as a place that Varena could use, her *patrao*'s girlfriend would not accept the arrangement. She insisted that Varena use only the tiny bathroom attached to the maid's room. Varena, I want to emphasize, did not for a moment believe that the conflict involved a polite regard for her privacy, nor evidently, did the *patrao*'s girlfriend attempt to conceal the racist nature of her preoccupations. She was "very rude and very racist," Varena told me. She was relived when her *patrao* finally separated from her.

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Many of my informants told me that the *negro* is considered "*sujo*," or dirty. The expression, "If the *negro* doesn't make a mess (or in some versions, "shit") on entering, he does so on leaving," is an old and well-known saying in Brazil. Many whites also insist that *negros* have a pungent and unpleasant body odor; when I told them that I myself had failed to notice this, some expressed disbelief. Undoubtedly, people in Morro do Sangue Bom had a sharp awareness of these racial stereotypes and the women I quoted above implied that it was just such stereotypes about dirt and pollution that informed their *patroa*s' attitudes and behavior.

Several women like Rosa, whom I have quoted above, explicitly stated that many *patroa*s preferred white or light-skinned *empregada*s. Elena briefly described an ambiguous relationship she had had with a *patroa*. While there was some affection between them, Elena felt that her *patroa* was racist. She always arrived for work very early, before her *patroa* was out of bed. "She was racist," Elena said. "She would always say, 'I like to wake up and see your face, you don't even have to be white.'"

Analucia spoke very directly about the preference for light-skinned maids. As I have noted, she herself was very light-skinned. When I asked her if she had ever had an experience with racism, she responded:

> I have. I came to notice prejudice more when I came to Rio, you understand? Principally in my work with the *patroa*s. They would look at me and say, "Oh, I think I'll keep you because you're not totally *negra*." I wasn't a pure *negra*, right, I was a *mestica*. [So they said.] "I'll keep you, you aren't *negra*. If you were a *negra*, I wouldn't want you."

I interrupted Analucia:

> R: They said this to you directly?
> A: Many times.
> R: Openly?
> R: They said it, Beth. I told them that I am a *negra*. My family is *negra*. My father is a *negro*, so then. So, sometimes they said that to me. You know, sometimes a friend of mine who was a *negra* would come with me, right and she -- they would say, "No, you can't [work here]. No, my husband doesn't like black people (gente negra)." But sometimes the husband didn't even know that the house had an *empregada*! [They said to her] "Oh, I don't want you [here], no, because my children don't get along with *negras*." So, they would say to me,

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> "Oh, I'll keep you." Many times I didn't go because if they didn't want a *negra*, they're not going to accept a *mestica*, right?

I asked Analucia, "And when you said those things like, 'But I am a *negra*, my father was a *negro*,' what did they say?" She responded,

> They said to me, "Oh, but you don't look like one. You don't seem like you're from a black family, you're not dark like the black race (*raca negra*)." My family has *negro*. I have the blood in my veins, I am a *negra*. Many times I didn't go because I thought, "Here, I can't!" She didn't want [my friend] because she was a *negra* and they wanted me because I was yellow? It's got nothing to do with it, right, it has nothing to do with it! And many times I didn't have a job because I thought that this was discrimination and I didn't go... And you see that it's rare, you know, a family that accepts totally black (*negra*) women. Right, especially as nursemaids. They want a white nursemaid. But black people (*pessoas negras*) they prefer that they be *empregadas*, you know, cooking and cleaning.... Beth, if you go around like this, in the houses, you will see.

As a light-skinned woman who identified as a *negra*, Analucia was particularly aware of certain forms of overt racism. The openness of her *patroas*' comments about not wanting *empregadas* who were *negra* suggests that they assumed that Analucia would in fact, share their views. Analucia was clearly offended not only because she identified herself as a member of the *raca negra*, or black race, but also because her *patroas* attempted to engage her in an act of complicity. Although the racist notions her *patroas* articulate in fact work to her advantage in the competitive job market for *empregadas*, Analucia refuses to surrender to what amounts to a kind of "racial" and ideological cooptation. As Rosa had, Analucia portrayed her *patroas* as *sem graca* (graceless and awkward) in their attempts to justify their prejudice and discrimination. In this case, racist sentiments are clumsily displaced onto husbands and children, although as Analucia suggests, husbands are rarely involved in decisions related to the hiring of *empregadas*.

While I was unable to gain additional data in support of my informants' contention that white middle-class families prefer white or lighter-skinned *empregadas*, there can be little doubt that this is sometimes the case. They may, on the other hand, sometimes prefer darker *empregadas*, as did Rosa's *patroa*, because they believe they will show greater deference to their employers. In any case, most of the women I spoke with in Morro do Sangue Bom had had a

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variety of experiences while working as *empregadas* and many felt they been subjected to overt racism.

Hierarchy is both a defining structural feature and a symbolically marked, socially negotiated understanding in *empregada-patroa* relationships. Domestic servitude is always, regardless of racial or color issues, a particularly vivid enactment of class differences and the unequal privileges and burdens associated with class differences. Poor women's access to wages depends, minimally, not only on their ability to perform work that is culturally demeaning, but also on their ability to outwardly accept their subordinate position. Although middle-class whites often say that their *empregadas* are "like one of the family," an informal, usually unspoken, contract between the employer and employee stipulates the delineation of boundaries, both visible and invisible, that set them well apart from the families they work for. Many women tend to describe these hierarchical relationships -- the rough edges of which are often smoothed by intimacy or the presumption of intimacy -- as a "natural" part of their taken-for-granted world. Those women who liked their *patroas* felt they were liked in return. They felt that they were respected to some degree, and that their work was (at least occasionally) appreciated. Allowing an *empregada* to sit on the sofa, to eat the family's food from a common set of plates and utensils, and conversing warmly, were all taken as indications that one was liked and respected, if not as an equal in a pecuniary sense, then at least as a human being.

Accusations of racism were not made in a facile manner by my informants who worked as *empregadas*. None of the women I spoke with explicitly emphasized the racial structuring of *empregada-patroa* relationships, i.e., the fact that most *patroas* are white, while a majority of *empregadas* are of color. When talking about their work, the issue of racialized employment structures were rarely invoked at all by *empregadas*; racism was defined and described through the personalized traits of individual *patroas*. When accusations of racism are made then, they tend to revolve around the demarcation of boundaries that are felt to be extreme, rigid, unnatural, symbolically freighted and, implicitly, contrary to the tenets of *democracia racial*. They may in addition, revolve around a *patroa*'s explicit comments about blackness and racial difference.

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Implicitly, my informants seemed to suggest that such behavior represents an assault on one's dignity that is distinct from the paternalism and other enactments of hierarchy that construct the *patroa-empregada* relationship. Racism, *empregada*s seem to suggest over and over, is personal.

A few women recounted other types of work-related experience which they felt involved racism. Yvonne for example, wanted to stop working as an *empregada* but she had little success in applying for jobs that involved interaction with the public. She told me,

> This type of thing with jobs, for example, right? There are jobs in which they won't accept [blacks]. For a long time I have been struggling to get a job as a receptionist. I can't find a job. I think it's because of racism. I've already been to various places. I've already been to agencies, and to the firms themselves. They always said they didn't have an opening. And I knew they had openings because there was no one there in the position. And later, after a time, I returned and there was a person working. And the person wasn't -- They were white.

Yvonne's narrative was an extremely familiar one. The comment, "They always said they didn't have an opening," is, with small variations, a constant refrain in narratives of racism. Despite my informant's claims (and my own impression) that they rarely or never discussed racism, this comment is so ubiquitous in my field notes and audio tapes that it has the familiarity and character of a community watchword. Soon after I began interviews, I came to understand that "*Falou que nao tinha vaga*" (He/She said there was no opening) was probably both a verbatim quotation as well as a shorthand for "I was not even considered because of my color."[3]

Most women do not actively seek jobs as receptionists but are hired as maids through word-of-mouth exchanges within localized networks. As Windance Twine notes, women are "culturally trained to have lower expectations regarding their job opportunities" (1995:12). I would add moreover, that because of their double subordination as women of color working in the homes of middle-class whites, their expectations of respectful treatment may also be somewhat lower (and more qualified) than men's expectations. Fair treatment, as several women implied, must be won through a carefully maintained deference, through giving what

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[3] The existence of such shorthand expressions may partially explain the gap between some informant's claims that they never discussed racism and the fact that information about experiences -- however abbreviated -- was in fact, exchanged.

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Rosa called the "maximum attention." Rosemare, the fifteen year-old I previously referred to, was actively trimmed by her adoptive mother to take on domestic service and she was not, to my knowledge, encouraged to entertain other possibilities. As Yvonne's experience demonstrates, this cultural training is constructed within and supported by discriminatory practices (and associated prejudicial discourses) against women of color. As several informants told me, "They think we can only be *empregadas*."

Because their entry into wage labor occurs early and their work on the asphalt is almost constant throughout their adult lives, women in Morro do Sangue Bom are exposed to and recognize far more racism than the more rural, upwardly mobile women interviewed by Winddance Twine. Although some of my female informants described covert encounters while on the street or while traveling in buses, nearly all of the work-related scenarios they described depicted more overt forms of racism. Despite the relative silence about racism on the *morro*, I had the sense as well that most women were aware that their menfolk not only suffered from job discrimination but were vulnerable to racially motivated police harrassment. Nevertheless, their understanding of racism is filtered through their personal experience as domestic servants. Racism, as many women imply, is a individual trait that becomes manifest in personal, if deeply hierarchized, encounters. For that reason, it can perhaps, be deflected through deference. While most women certainly recognized the systemic, class-encumbered nature of racism, they seemed to think of it as principally embodied within personal encounters between individuals .

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As I have noted, there is a great deal more variety in men's employment. Men in Morro do Sangue Bom engage in skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled labor, and their professional experiences and trajectories tend to be more varied than those of women. Some men i knew had very stable jobs and these tended to be in the public sector. I knew several men for example, who worked as *garis*, or garbage collectors in the employ of the city government. While often

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involving grueling labor, the position of *gari* was considered especially favorable because it affords some benefits as well as stability.

Most of the men I knew had held a variety of jobs and unemployment, as I have noted, was higher among men than among women. For those without recognized skills or previous experience in a job such as garbage collecting, information about jobs tends to be, as it is for women, exchanged via the *morro* grapevine. Many men were sporadically employed, and worked in temporary, part-time jobs. During moments of unemployment, it is typically a wife's wages from domestic work that keep a family afloat. As was the case with girls, some boys begin working part-time at the age of about fourteen, often as "office boys" and messengers.

Joia's eldest son Alberto, began working as an "office boy" at the age of thirteen. He attended school in the morning and went to his job in the city five afternoons a week. While on the job, he began to learn about computers and software applications and by the time he was sixteen, he was able, to the surprise of his supervisors, to serve as a troubleshooter when much higher- ranking and better-paid employees had difficulties with software applications. On weekend afternoons, Alberto would sometimes recline in a hammock studying data base manuals and he fantasized about owning a computer. His mother knew it was a distant dream however. Not only was the price tag beyond reach but the house was being slowly and painstakingly reconstructed and enlarged; the inevitable dust, grime and rain water entering through the holes in the roof would surely damage a computer. Joia was very proud of Alberto's growing expertise and she felt he was exploited and was not treated with the respect that his abilities warranted. "There's a crisis in his office," she told me," and no one knows what to do. Alberto says he can fix it but no one believes him. They think, 'What can this poor kid from the *favela* do.' But he asks for a chance, he fixes it, and everybody is just so surprised." Like Rosemare, Alberto was only paid one half of a minimum monthly salary, about fifty dollars a month. Brazilian labor laws do not require that minors be paid more, regardless of their position or expertise.

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Although women work outside of the *morro*, their world typically remains more circumscribed than that of men. Men tend to seek jobs in the public arena more often than women. They thus have more experience with the job application process, which typically involves speaking with managers, filling out job applications, and sometimes taking a written test. If their job search is successful, they tend to have a circle of coworkers and "*chefes*" or bosses, whereas women who work as domestic servants remain within the more private, circumscribed sphere of the employer's home.

Men not only travel to and from work, but also often go out to visit friends in bars or on other morros during weekend nights, while their wives and sisters care for children, perform household chores and visit one another on the hill. Whereas women are generally fearful of leaving the community after dark, it is not unusual for men to return to the *morro* at four or five o'clock in the morning on weekends, and many stop in at bars for a few *chopes*, or glasses of draft beer on the way home from work. Men's experience on the asphalt is thus far more varied than that of women.

When I asked men about racism, they were more likely than were women to immediately introduce the issue of job discrimination. Daniel's brother Nestor, said for example:

> Even though our society wants to hide it, racism is evident. It is in schools, it is in work. The job market for the *negro* is very restricted. It certainly exists, yes. Everyone wants to deny it, but it exists.

Many of my male informants, as I have noted, referred to the experience of applying for jobs and being rejected by potential employers. Usually, these experiences were summed up with the comment, "They always say they don't have an opening." While my informants felt convinced they were turned away "because of color," they were also aware of the fact that in most situations, they could not prove that they had been discriminated against. The experience of Jonas, whose odd-jobbing on the *morro* has already been described, was an exception. When I asked him about racism, he said, "Hell, I'd like to discuss what happened to me. This has already happened to me." I urged him to continue and he told me the following story:

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> It was a while ago already, more than a year. I was talking to a guy from here who encouraged me to go [to the place where he had a job]. And he was lighter than I am. His name is Jose and he is lighter than I am. He was employed [at this firm]. He sent me there to take the position that they had open there. ...He promised me, he promised me a job as a messenger. It was in a firm in the city. I went there and filled out the application properly and [showed] my documents. Then that whole thing started, "Come back on another day, come back on another day." And the day I went back, the woman said [my application was fine], they only needed to open the position.... Then the guy [my friend] said, to my face, "They don't hire black people (*gente preta*) here. They don't employ black people, of color." The guy said that to me.... After three days, [I went back] and the woman said they didn't have an opening.... So, it was racism.. And like that, I got very angry. I got on the elevator and went right to the police.... I got [to the police station] and the guy there asked me to explain what had happened and I explained... I arrived there crying, crying, crying. I don't know what all, and they told me to take some medicine, a glass of water with sugar. [I said], "There is a law that can, you know, punish these people, this is a crime, this can't happen!" .... I told them everything and [the policeman said], "Don't get hotheaded, no. Let it go" (*nao esquenta a cabeca, deixa pra la*). And he gave me a glass of water because I was so upset (*nervoso*). .... And I stayed there for a long time. He gave me a glass of water with sugar. Then I started to go. Nothing was resolved.... They didn't do anything. I was a bit upset. Let it go. So, these things exist. At the time I was very upset. Speaking with the firm? A super-millionaire? To complain wouldn't have done anything. It's sad, isn't it? I was just wanting a job. Because of color! If you don't like a person's manner, [that's another thing]. So [racism] exists. I think it exists -- no! -- I don't think! I know it does!

In a telling comment, Jonas says, "Then that whole thing started, 'Come back another day, come back another day.'" Jonas's framing of this experience as a typical job-application scenario was corroborated by the comments of other informants. While one may be rejected summarily, repeated polite but distant evasion seems to occur more frequently. While Jonas appears to have been treated with a kind of routine and expectable politeness during his first encounter at the firm, the friend who brought him in is evidently later told by a supervisor that Jonas will not be hired because he is black. Being told so, "to his face," without evasion or euphemism, is evidently a shocking experience for Jonas. As he described the experience, Jonas's intonation and other cues gave me the impression that he may have been more angry at the evidence of his light friend's color-based insider privilege than he was thankful for the information, the proof really, to which he had access. His friend becomes, in a sense, implicated,

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and furthermore, he has witnessed Jonas's humiliation. Despite the fact that he is told that he will not be given a chance, Jonas returns to the firm and is told there is no opening.

Perhaps partly because he feels he has proof of racial discrimination, Jonas's narrative initially relies less on references to his subjective feelings and thoughts than it does on a description of his outward physical behavior. His agitated condition becomes the focus of much his narrative; his references to the policemen's insistence that he drink sugared water ("medicine") and not lose his temper, or get headed, are repetitious. Jonas highlights this aspect of his encounter in the police station in order to convey the severity of his anger and emotional distress, as well as to convey the possibly sincere, but ultimately ineffectual and evasive nature of the policeman's concern. Condescension and professional indifference are communicated here. Jonas is told to "let it go," and he himself intones the same command after saying he was "a bit upset." The remainder of his comments have the tenor of hopelessness I described in the previous chapter on silence. As I noted there, Jonas told me that in his opinion, the best way of "resolving" such incidents is to "let it go," to "forget." While Jonas suggested that he had resolved not to dwell on this experience it was clear that he was profoundly discouraged and the wave of anger that propelled his words seemed fresh, only partly tempered by the passage of "more than a year."

Jonas's story is unusual not only because his friend who had inside information told him that he would never get the job because of his color, but also because Jonas went to the police to register a complaint. Despite the silence that typically surrounds experiences with racism, several informants told me similar, second-hand stories about job discrimination. Analucia told me about a conversation she had had with a male friend:

> In general, he complains, he says he will stay -- he will continue being poor because no will accept him as a worker because he is of color. There's a lot of prejudice. Many times he said, "Hell, I'm not a thief, I'm not anything, it's just that I'm a *negro*." So, they don't accept [people of color] Beth. Here in Brazil no one accepts the *negro*. He never went [to the police to lodge a complaint]. He thinks it wouldn't do any good. He simply leaves the place with nothing resolved. So, it will never be resolved. He thinks it's never worth the trouble, and he stays angry.

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Jonas's sense of hopelessness and his conviction that racism can disbar him from even the most menial of positions was shared, I believe, by many men in Morro do Sangue Bom. There is a sharp awareness, of course, that lack of education and identification with the lower class (as "*favelados*") constitute significant disadvantages on the job market, yet many men feel that color represents a particularly severe (and immutable) burden in seeking employment and fair treatment. I presented a hypothetical scenario to many informants in which a man of color and a white man, each bearing the same educational and professional qualifications, apply for the same job. Their agreement that the white man would probably succeed at the expense of the man of color was unanimous.

The struggle to support oneself and one's family in the face of prejudice and discrimination does not end once a job is secured. Other men, in addition to Jacinto, told me that they were discriminated against while on the job. Nestor, for example, described such an experience:

> I went to work in a bank and I managed to begin. I was taking a course along with the job and I managed to get a better position... They put me into a supervisory position.... But they didn't give me, they didn't recognize me as a boss, because I was a *negro*, I was of color. I made it into the position but I wasn't recognized as a boss because I was a person of color. The boss, the president of the business was white. And most of the people in the bank were all white. So, they preferred a person of the light color... I felt this even more so because my other colleagues were making it sometimes to a higher position and after analyzing it, you can perceive this. They have the light color, right? Their position was recognized and mine wasn't.

Nestor, like Jonas, was unemployed during the entire period of my research. He spent much of his time composing samba music and writing poetry. Many of his poems, which he read to me, concerned what he called the "social difference"; he had poems about the neglect and abuse of street children, the poverty of those who live in "the *favela*," and the "shameless" hypocrisy of politicians. Nestor was undoubtedly unusual in the extent to which he remained actively engaged in explicitly political issues related to poverty and injustice and his interview with me, in which he talked about racism in education, in the popular media, in the labor market

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and in the criminal justice system, suggested a great deal of sustained and sociologically sophisticated reflection on the systemic nature of racism. Despite his obvious intelligence as well as his considerable musical talent, Nestor's first wife, Yvonne, felt that his chances of achieving professional success as a musician were very slim: "By being black and living on the *morro*, and being poor you know, I think it's going to be very difficult for him. Really very, very difficult for him to be able to succeed." Yvonne was careful to point out that she was not sure if Nestor shared her pessimistic view of his professional future. He did, in fact. Nevertheless, he kept up his work as an unrecognized artist devoted to that which was "always polemical, always critical, always fundamental."

Many men told me that they encountered racism, either directly or indirectly, while traveling to and from work. While some women narrated experiences that occurred on the typically crowded city buses, men's stories were so common as to constitute a distinct genre within narratives of racism. In many cases, these stories involved police harrassment. It occasionally happens in Rio that "bandits" -- usually two men -- will board a city bus, and while it is in transit, hold up all of the occupants at gun point. I know of only one individual who had actually witnessed such an incident, yet many people in Rio, particularly members of the middle class, are fearful of riding city buses, especially at night. Such incidents are presented as justification for a far more common practice of the police: entering city buses, scanning the passengers and ordering some commuters -- nearly always young black men -- to get off the bus for a "*geral*" (literally a "general") or a "*revista*" (literally, a "review").

Typically, those who are subjected to a *geral* or a *revista* are frisked, ordered to turn their pockets inside out, to reveal the contents of any packages that they may be carrying and to open their mouths for inspection. (The assumption is that small amounts of cocaine may be concealed in the mouth.) They are also likely to be interrogated about where they live, where they are traveling from, what their destination is, and why they are going there. As I previously noted, many of the men who narrated bus stories told me that the police often engage in gratuitous, racist name calling while conducting *revistas*. If no drugs or weapons are found, the

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"suspects" are allowed to continue on their way, after waiting for another bus and paying an additional fare.

The day before our interview, Nestor told me, four friends of his were subjected to a revista. He was not given the "general" he believed, because he was particularly well-dressed on the occasion. Speaking with deliberate understatement he said, "But it's a thing that isn't cool, right? You're leaving work tired and all of a sudden [claps his hands together loudly] you fall into a scene like this, right? It isn't cool."

Often these stories are narrated in a very brief fashion. As Guilherme described it,

> Several years ago this happened to me. I was in back of the bus, out in the suburbs, and four cops got on. Two went in front and two went in back. They ordered me to get out. I asked why and they said it was because they were looking for arms. I was wanting to know why I was the only one they ordered off the bus and the cop said, "Because you are the only one under suspicion." The only difference between me and the others was that I was black.

Tomas told me a similar story,

> Oh, this has happened to me various times... I worked in Copacabana and I was going to Ipanema to make a delivery. So, when I came [on foot] to a square in Ipanema, the bus was stopped at the traffic light. So I ran after the bus. The bus kept going but I ran [alongside of it] to the next traffic light. And I knocked and knocked on the door. The guy opened the door for me and I got on and sat down to rest. I sat down to take out the money for the fare. So, the police saw me running to get on the bus and they got on and took me off the bus. I was delivering flowers.... So then, I had to get on another bus; they wouldn't let me go on that bus because they saw me run for the bus and they thought I would mug the people on the bus. They gave me a geral, they asked me to follow them, up to the police car and at the police car they looked me over. They were looking for drugs or arms. They went through my pockets. They didn't find anything so they let me go, right? They thought I would assault the people on the bus because I was running and they were watching and they came after me. This is an example of racism. Here in Brazil there is a lot of racism, really a lot.

Tomas's decision to chase after the bus and bang on the door, I should note, is not an unusual one. In the chaotic, crowded streets of Rio, the aggressive pursuit of city buses is an accepted part of commuter etiquette: I adopted it soon after I arrived. I asked Tomas if such an incident were likely to occur to a white man of his own age. He replied, "No, because I go out a

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lot with my friend. I have a friend who has a very light color, right, and it doesn't happen, this type of thing, because we go out together, you know?"

Men also described conflicts with other passengers while on the bus. When I asked Jorge if he had ever encountered racism directly, he began with the following story:

> It has happened to me. In this case, I was on the bus. A bus going to the south zone. So then, I got on the bus and what happened? I saw a woman (*uma senhora*). She was looking for a place to sit. The guy sitting next to me got up, so there was a place. There was a place but this white woman didn't want to sit in that place, you know? After three or four minutes, she didn't sit down there and she went up to a guy who was sitting in front and requested of him, "Oh, you go sit back there with that dark one there, I'm going to stay up here in front." She said, "I don't want to sit close to that dark one." I looked at her and I said, "Shit, how ridiculous! What a ridiculous thing! It could be that your flesh is more putrid than mine!" That's what I said to her. So, she didn't say anything, she felt ashamed, right? She was *sem graca.*

In this case, we can only speculate whether the woman feared that Jorge (and by implication, black men in general) might be criminally dangerous or, if she believed, like the *patroas* described by my female informants, that blackness is somehow polluting. Jorge's exclamation, in which he says her "flesh is putrid," suggests that he interpreted her behavior in the latter fashion. The association of blackness with criminal behavior is also extremely common however, and some men felt that other passengers looked upon them with fear for that reason. Robertson, a man of twenty, told me that when he got on the bus he often noticed that white women would clutch their bags more tightly and dart anxious glances in his direction. On one occasion, he decided to say something. "I'm not a thief," he told the woman. "Oh, no, I wasn't thinking that," the woman responded. "She was embarrassed," Robertson told me. "Later she will be thinking, 'Why did I do this?'" Like Jorge and others who occasionally challenged those whom they thought had acted in an insulting racist manner, Robertson intended to shame the woman.

While their stories about encounters with racism frequently centered on discrimination in the labor market and confrontations that occurred on city buses while they were traveling to and from work, men's leisure activities outside of the community also entailed experiences with

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racism. Although women may be eyed warily in shops, men who spend their leisure time on the asphalt are far more subject to the suspicion that they may be criminals. A man in his thirties for example, told me that at a late hour one night, he and his friend stopped in a bakery on their way home from a soccer game. When they stepped into the bakery the other customers left abruptly:

> No one stayed inside. They went out so afraid because we were *negros*. With fear! Then the police were there, at the side of the door. They kept looking at us.... We paid for the bread [and other things] and we sat down. The whole bakery was ours! [Laughs briefly.]

Men may also be harassed by the police when they go to visit friends or go to dances on other morros in the city -- which they do far more often than women. Jacinto told me the following story, almost as an aside:

> It happens constantly. Because it's a thing -- if two or three *negros* are walking together, for sure, if a police car passes, they will stop us. It doesn't do any good to say anything. Yesterday! Yesterday! I went to Cantagalo (a *morro* in Copacabana) yesterday, up on the *morro* of Cantagalo with a friend of mine... And when we were going back down the hill, a police car stopped. It was about two thirty in the morning. And these people, two couples, two white couples went up there to buy drugs, to buy cocaine. They went to buy and they passed right by the police. And we, who weren't doing anything, they stopped us. They looked me over, ordered me to open my mouth.

In the midst of making generalizing comments about police harrassment then, Jacinto abruptly recalls an incident that had happened the previous day (less than 24 hours before our interview, in fact). His framing of the story corroborates his opening comment that "it happens constantly" and suggests that such encounters are so routine that their specificity requires no special emphasis.

Tomas told me of a similar but even more difficult experience. He began by describing the difficulty he had, as a black man, in hailing a cab and proceeded to narrate -- again, in the manner of an aside -- an experience he had while visiting a nearby *morro*.

> Those of us here don't have it easy..... Here it's very difficult for people of color. [Cab drivers] think we're going to rob them. I just did this, this past Thursday. I went out to get a taxi from Rio Comprido to here. I put my hand out and didn't get one, right? I kept putting my hand out and not one taxi stopped for me. In the

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> middle of the street, and I was close to Morro do Sao Carlos, that *morro*. They thought I lived there and that I would rob them. The car [that finally] stopped for me charged so much, it was very expensive. You understand, I stayed there for more or less a whole hour waiting for a taxi. It was already eleven at night and I had already been stopped by the police up above. They thought I was there to buy drugs, right, but I was there for this dance the people up there were having. It was me and my cousin who lives here. So they thought I must be up there to pick something up. And they gave me a *geral*, right? "Where are you going?" they asked me, and I said, "Oh, I'm going to that other *morro* over there, I live there." Including even, I had to tell them where I lived and all. Sometimes at night, sometimes it's very dangerous [with] the police, there can be violence. So this happened up above [on the *morro*] and down below the other thing happened. I don't have much luck when I go out, no. [Chuckles softly.] When I go down from my home here the police car stops me. They check me out, give me a *geral*, go through the whole thing, right? They don't find anything.... So [on this occasion] the taxi didn't stop. At night around here we go out on foot, and the police stop us to give us a *geral*, constantly. Because we don't have cars to get around in the city. We don't have the conditions to hail a cab whenever we want, right? So, sometimes we have to reflect a little, right? I've already traveled by foot so much in Santa Teresa.

As in previously quoted narratives of racism, Tomas describes his activities on, and traveling within, the asphalt as though they were part of a dangerous journey within enemy territory. It is a constant, even banal kind of danger, however. In saying "Sometimes we have to reflect a little," Tomas is referring to the calculations a man of color must make about how to return home during the night. If one goes on foot, a confrontation with the police is very likely and as Tomas suggests, such confrontations may turn violent, even if no wrongdoing has occurred. Yet the effort to travel safely by hailing a cab is often ineffectual and extremely frustrating. As had Jacinto, Tomas describes, in a fairly casual fashion, a series of incidents that occurred in the very recent past. In both the opening and closing sections of his narrative, he refers not to himself alone but to "us" and "we," marking what is clearly a routine, familiar scenario of racism. It is no wonder that men prefer to travel by night in groups of two or three. While they know that those who live on the asphalt may see them as all the more fearsome, they are, for their part, hoping for safety in numbers.[4]

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[4] Ironically, not only cab drivers but policemen are extemely fearful of entering the area around Morro do Sangue Bom at night. When a friend and I were stranded with a broken-down car close to Morro do Sangue Bom, the policemen who stopped were so noticeably anxious -- they clearly expected to be shot at by snipers in the woods -- that I felt an impulse to reassure them.

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Men's experiences with racism are thus far more varied than those of women, and the encounters they describe tend to be more impersonal. Both men and women protest, implicitly and explicitly, that their personhood, their individuality, their character is neither recognized nor respected by racist whites. Yet their framing of this protest, in many, if not all moments, reveals differences in both experience and interpretation. Men articulate, to a degree greater than do women, the conviction that racism is a part of the backdrop of everyday life, informed by, and structured through, the agency of individual personality perhaps, but nevertheless partaking of a routine, anonymous and systemic character. Whereas women tend to emphasize relationships between individuals, and to rely heavily on a discourse that emphasizes the moral judgment of character, men tend to emphasize relationships between groups of people, categories constructed through experience -- and we must assume, despite the relative silence -- through discourses that construct the dangerous other of the asphalt. Men are more apt to frame racism as a problem of "society," of *political* economy, whereas their wives may frame it as problem of "persons" whose engagement is signified within, and constitutive of, a fundamentally *moral* economy.

Nestor told me that he and wife Cintia had disagreements about the nature and meaning of racism. I had asked him if they had ever discussed racism. His lengthy response, which spells out far more than his figuring of the differences of opinion between himself and his wife, is worth quoting at length:

> Occasionally we converse, yes. She understands it in another way. She thinks that [systemic] racism doesn't exist. She thinks that it is inside of each person. Each person makes their own racism.... She thinks that black doesn't exist, white doesn't exist, it is people who differentiate themselves, right? Racism doesn't exist for her. I think, on the contrary, that is does exist, it clearly exists in our country, right? It reveals itself in all senses.... You never see a private school with *negros* studying there.... It is closed, a lid exists. The only ones with the right of access to the best schools are those with greater financial power and consequently these people are whites. Because generally, the *negro* is a *favelado*.

At that particular moment, Nova Epoca and the police, so far as I knew, were observing a truce. Promising to inform other officers of our car trouble, they speedily drove away. On the occasions when I took a cab to Santa Teresa after dark, the drivers often warned me about the *boca de fumo*; they did not always believe me when I told them that I myself lived on the *morro* and was known by the "owners" of the *boca*.

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> We have already suffered for many years and our education is denied us because we have been manipulated, we have been enslaved. Meaning the *negro* is struggling, struggling, struggling this entire time to find a space. But how is he going to find this space if he doesn't have access to culture, which is basic, right? Discrimination. It is rooted.... Until today, society draws a connection between the *negro* and service, always manual labor... The best sectors of work, the best businesses, they prefer to employ those people with a greater cultural capacity. And the *negro* is always rejected because he never has access.

Nestor's references to "culture" and to "cultural capacity" are, it must be noted, very similar, if not identical to Bourdieu's notion of "cultural capital." Nevertheless, it is a clear, distinctly sociological notion of structure that Nestor describes. I remained confused about his characterization of Cintia's position, for she had described her experiences and wounded feelings to me. I asked him to clarify:

> I think that Cintia thinks that the *negro* discriminates against himself. The *negro* makes his own prejudice... So, Cintia thinks that the *negro* himself discriminates, that's how she puts it. I see it completely differently. I think that racism comes from -- it is inside of the formation of our country, do you understand? When the *negro* came here, he was already a slave. And up until today, the society -- now it wants to hide it, but it preserves [racism].

I knew Cintia recognized the pervasiveness of white racism, just as she recognized the ways in which people of color, particularly those who were upwardly mobile, sometimes failed to show solidarity with others. Yet Nestor was at least partially correct in his comment that Cintia viewed racism as more visibly present "inside of each person," rather than what Nestor called "inside of the formation of our society."[5]

Such differences were also expressed, in separate interviews, by Jorge and his wife Angela. Like Nestor, Jorge viewed racism as a systemic form of oppression that operates, at its most basic level, through the mutually reinforcing entanglement of racial and class oppression:

> It begins through the great society right? They don't like, in any way, the black race. They don't like the black race and those of us who are of the black race remain people of the poor class. And also the word "*favelado*" comes into being... This consists of thieves, muggers. The majority, 75 percent, right, come from the poor class. Because the guy doesn't have the minimum [necessary] for survival. Because he's dark he can't -- no one wants to employ him... The firm

[5] Nestor's comments represent a rare case in which an informant described a conversation about racism. His summation of Cintia's views however, suggests that his conversations with her may have been very truncated and incomplete.

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> doesn't give him an opening. So he goes to the other side, thinks of something [else]. What? He sells drugs, he steals, he mugs people. But in reality, the real thief isn't just the little dark one, it's the society.

Jorge's wife, Angela, told me that "in Brazil, the *negro* isn't given a chance," yet in a way similar to Nestor's framing of Cintia's position, she believed that racism "comes from the person":

> You don't see many black (*preto*) people with cars, with luxury, living in apartments, you know, with good jobs. I don't know, maybe it comes from us, ourselves. You know, the race. One keeps thinking, "Oh, I'm not going to study, why should I study? I'm not going to be anything in life because I am *preto*." I think it comes from the person, it doesn't come, you know from, from -- There are many *pretos* [who say] it is because of society, but I think it comes from him.... It's not so much discrimination, it is from himself.

Angela was one of several women I interviewed who appeared to see racism everywhere while saying that she herself had never been personally confronted with it. Her comments are contradictory and she appears to reserve a degree of skepticism about the systemic nature of racism. The continuing poverty of people of color she suggests, is due primarily to low self-esteem, to a tendency to internalize racist discourses, which she quoted: "The *preto* doesn't have value, so I don't need to study." Living in the sequestered world of the *morro* and working for a *patroa* whom both she and Jorge feel is without prejudice, she has not experienced or cannot recall experiences such as those her husband had narrated for the benefit of my research.

I suspected another angle as well, an additional, personal reason for her emphasis on what she viewed as the self-defeating attitudes of people of color. Jorge remained unemployed over a period of many years, while she worked as an *empregada* and continued to have more children than her meager income could be expected to support. When I asked Joia how they survived, she threw up her hands and said, "God only knows!" Jorge was known in the community moreover, as something of a rogue, given to excessive drinking and rowdy behavior. Angela's patience seemed inexhaustible, yet she may have come to privately blame her husband for his chronic unemployment, and because her own employer was "cool," to believe that he ought to muster more faith in the "society" that he felt had turned his back on him.

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I believe that Cintia was also frustrated by her husband's chronic unemployment. While she herself had expressed (to me, at least) a deep indignation over the racism she had encountered on the job, she continued to endure her position as the family's sole bread-winner. She may have felt that Nestor retreated too easily, that his masculine pride made him, ironically, dependent on her.

Such comments are speculative however, and the fact that women often emphasize the personalized nature of racialized encounters whereas men emphasize its inexorable sytematicity remains. These differences, to be sure, stem from the gendered nature of men's and women's wage labor and leisure activities, as well as by the gendered nature of racist ideology and practice itself. Women of color are seen as submissive and subordinate, suitable above all, for domestic labor, as possibly polluted and polluting (or contrarily, as sexually alluring and available) but not otherwise dangerous. "White women for marriage, *mulatas* for sex, and black women for work," is a well-known aphoristic expression throughout Brazil and it captures the historically entrenched and constantly fortified view of black women's place in the world.

Black men are not only viewed as polluted and polluting but, in certain contexts, as dangerous. When they, unlike women, ambitiously seek better jobs on the asphalt and wander the streets outside the "*favela*," they are demonstrating an ominous refusal to "stay in their place." "A white man running is in a footrace; a black man running is a thief," as the well-known saying has it. Black men are also viewed as fit for little more than strenuous physical labor. Such ideological notions both powerfully reflect and structure the boundaries within which most Brazilians of color live and work. While such a formulation is undoubtedly simplified, it captures what is essential in what men and women in Morro do Sangue Bom know to be the racist vision of their place in the world.[6]

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6 To a certain extent, I believe, men view their reputed fearfulness as laughable. Although it puts them in danger, it may be less damaging, in psychological terms, than the imputation of qualities like incompetence and servility. Men's encounters with racism often entail not only an attack upon one's *cor* or *raca*, but upon one's masculinity. One is constrained from defending one's masculinity, just as one is constrained from defending one's *raca*, and the withdrawal, passivity, and retreat that seemed to characterize the stance of chronically unemployed men was,

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I do not wish to overemphasize the distinction between the ways in which women and men experience and understand racism, for their narratives bear more similarities than differences. To a much greater degree than do the upwardly mobile, rural women and men interviewed by Winddance Twine, the men and women of Morro do Sangue Bom live in a shared world of oppression and understandings about oppression. When I asked my informants if they felt men suffered from racism more than women, or vice versa, few people uncritically accepted my simplistic phrasing of the question. Yvonne, for example, acknowledged that men tend to be feared more than women and she thought their situation might be "worse" in some senses, yet she evinced little interest in the question. She did not believe, it was clear, that her life was less difficult than the lives of the men she knew.

After he told me about police harrassment, I asked Nestor if he thought men had to endure more racism than women and he said:

> Well, I would say the following. In some cases, right? The woman also suffers prejudice. Even in her work. The *negra* for example, I think that she only -- the society implies that she only has the right to be a domestic, to be a servant. I think they should be judged by their intelligence, their culture, their capabilities, right?

I believe, conditioned by this fact. Such a stance, I suspect, is experienced as a kind of inner resistance, no matter how compromised (cf., Willism 1977) at the same that is clearly motivated by a desire to avoid exposing the gendered, as well as the racialized self to assault. Although my quotations of Nestor, Cintia, Angela and Jorge might suggest that women fail to understand the gendered basis of masculine resistance/withdrawal, I do not believe that this is the case. Daniel's outburst, which I quoted in the previous chapter, was, as Joia knew, a "hidden transcript" that was not only about class and color but about Daniel's wounded masculinity. The sympathy that Joia extended to him, while nearly impossible to describe in the clumbsy language of social science, was thickly present in her face and her posture; her verbal support was simply the most obvious index. Women's feminization -- their servility and long-suffering loyalty for example -- could not, I came to feel, be reduced to what is conventionally understood as the more or less straight-forward structures and processes of male domination. To a significant degree, I believe, women's gendered behavior is conditioned by their awareness of the layers of vulnerability to which poor men of color are subject. As Nestor suggests below, men, for their part, are not deaf to women's partly gendered complaint that they are regarded -- through the assumptions and discourses that characterize the public arena -- as unfit for anything but domestic service. (See Hautzinger, 1995 for a discussion of the relationship between "disadvantaged social locations" and male violence in Brazil's Northeast.)

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The burden of racism then, is a shared one, and were husbands and wives, and brothers and sisters to challenge silence and openly share their views with one another and articulate their interpretations of the causes and consequences of racism. I do not believe they would disagree to the degree that Nestor suggested that he and Cintia had. The experiences and visions of both are but two sides of the same coin. The differences I have drawn are a matter of emphasis moreover, and both men and women do, on the whole, articulate a set of (normally suppressed) discourses which describe both the individual and the social or political nature of racism. While social scientists investigating inequality currently tend to favor a view like that most forcefully articulated by the men of Morro do Sangue Bom, there is nothing in the vision of a hegemonically ordered, culpable "society" that contradicts a domestic servant's insight into the interpersonal dimension of quotidian racism. The moral economy that women invoke and the political economy of racism articulated by men, are, I would suggest, equally compelling narratives of racism in Brazil.

Accounting for the Unaccountable

Often, with little direct prompting from me, informants not only described their personal experiences but also offered general statements about the causes and consequences of racism. As is evident in some of the narratives I have quoted above, these statements often have an interpretive or theoretical cast. In this way also, my informants' comments diverged significantly from those of Winddance Twine's informants, for she writes, "My research in rural Brazil reveals that daily encounters with racism do not necessarily lead to an awareness by Afro-Brazilians that racial inequality is a problem in their lives. In Vasalia, few residents appeared to have access to a paradigm for thinking through racial inequality" (1995:4).

The comments of people in Morro do Sangue Bom suggest that many use a number of overlapping paradigms for thinking about and critiquing racism. The mystery, the paradox really, that underlies this fact resides in the juxtaposition of their thoughtful comments with the relative dearth of discussions about racism in everyday discourse, and people's own

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confirmatory claims that they rarely talk about racism. As I have suggested previously, people in Morro do Sangue Bom must surely talk about racism more often, and perhaps even, in more detail, than they themselves indicate, yet, for all that, such conversations do not seem to approach the level of a distinct discourse -- quotidian or otherwise -- that could reasonably be expected to constitute what Windance Twine calls a "paradigm for thinking through racial inequality."

As I continued to interview people in Morro do Sangue Bom, I was struck by the extent to which my attempt to detect patterns, trends, and similarities (or "paradigms") within and between informants' comments was challenged. By the time I left the *morro*, I was able to begin identifying and analyzing these patterns -- they constitute the narrative framing and analytical emphases of this ethnography, in fact -- yet the order that I have imposed on informants' comments must be qualified by noting the fact that there were contradictions, inconsistencies, and discursive divergences both within and between informant narratives. That the data of ethnographic analysis always presents itself in such a fashion (whether or not we are inclined to acknowledge the fact) is not my point here. While I have asserted that most informants recognized the entanglement of class- and color-based prejudices, a few informants, I should add, never alluded to the racialized structuring of class. The fact that perhaps of a quarter of those living on the *morro* were white, combined with the example of Pele -- a rich and internationally famous, dark-skinned athlete -- was presented as evidence that the correlation between poverty and blackness was incidental, an epiphenomenon at most, of history. Some informants viewed white racism as a failing of individual character, others saw it as a problem of society and of history, and a few felt that culpability should be laid at the doorstep of politicians who could, if they but had the will, eradicate racism in Brazil. Three of the informants I interviewed insisted that racism, if it existed at all, was insignificant.

Aside from the structuring of gender, and work and leisure-related experiences however, I could not detect solid and consistent correlations between the ways in which informants framed their comments about racism, how they articulated their beliefs about its causes and

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consequences, and other aspects of their identity -- color, age, occupation, regional origin, religion, or education. A set of questions different from my own might, perhaps, uncover some correlations. Especially in the light of Winddance Twine's conclusions, it must be emphasized that discursive and cultural paradigms for understanding racism were not shared equally by people on the *morro*, nor were the paradigms that individuals used necessarily stable over time. This fact is hardly surprising. Static and unqualified consensus, which may be chimerical in any community, is further undermined by the relative silence surrounding racism in Morro do Sangue Bom and elsewhere in Brazil. Narratives of racism tend to crystallize not around public discourses or paradigms but around experience and thoughtful, often private reflection on experience.

Having offered such corrective qualifications, I will return to patterns. Many, if not all of my informants articulated broader, deeper, and in some senses, more abstract understandings of the causes and consequences of racism than those offered in narratives of personal experience. What these understandings share is a recognition of the intractable power and moral hypocrisy of domination and a narrative form which is internally dialogic. When accounting for racism, most informants frame their comments as an argument against silence and what are figured as the platitudinous, naive and/or obfuscating claims of *democracia racial*. As such, they have the character of an externalized inner dialogue, a belatedly vocalized *esprit d'escalier*, which finally gives voice to the insights and understandings that remain, for the most part, unspoken in everyday discourses. Their comments challenge the notion that knowledge must proceed from an exposure to coherent public discourses, that internalized paradigms can only solidify in response to dominant, external paradigms. Voiced or unvoiced, oppression is mediated through the bedrock of experience and many people in Morro do Sangue Bom (silently) argue against the discursive claims that deny the racialized meanings presented by such experience.

The analytic insight, irony, discursive creativity and eloquence, and the fundamental recognition of the moral absurdity of dominant discourses that are embodied within my informants' comments, seem to suggest that a heteroglossic and parodic vision lies just beneath

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the surface of both silence and dominant everyday discourses. It is a biting rather than a humorous parody. That this should be true in Morro do Sangue Bom, while it is evidently not in Vasalia, offers testament to the significance of experience, particularly the experience of wage labor in the highly differentiated world of the urban "*asfalto*."

Below I quote only a few of my informants in order to suggest some of the similarities, as well as differences in the ways in which racism is accounted for. My own comments are minimal, for here, more than anywhere else, their statements speak for themselves.

Analucia, whom I have quoted a number of times, offered one of the most scathing critiques of racism in what she called "our Brazil." I believe she viewed our conversation as a pedagogical exercise, and indeed, it was. History and the critique of mystification informed her statements. I quote the progress of our conversation:

> B: In your opinion, in their own heads, why do they have this prejudice in terms of *empregadas*, for example. Why don't they want a domestic who is really *negra*?
> A: I think it comes from way back. You know, it's rooted, because look how the foundation of our Brazil began. The discrimination against *negros*, they were slaves, they worked on the plantation, but they were outside of the slave quarters, [even though] they were true slaves. It didn't [start] now, Beth... A part at least were separated, the domestics, had sort of, white children and they weren't raised with the *negros*. They didn't go to the fields or the slave quarters. They were separated, put inside the [master's] house, educated, right, and they stayed in the house. And when a black woman (*preta*) stayed inside the house, she was an esteemed black woman in that house. So, this didn't come from now, it was back in the foundation of our Brazil. But it's never going to end, this prejudice, Beth. If it came from now, well -- but it didn't.
> R: But tell me more about what you think is in their heads. Do you think they're afraid, do they have, what? What is it exactly?
> A: They think Beth, that the black color, I think it's like this, that the black color doesn't deserve anything. That's my understanding. Because you see that when [a *negro*] wants to study, they go like this, "But shit, study?! The *negro* isn't going to manage anything, why is he going to study?" So, I think they always discriminate against the *negro* even on this point. You know, they think the *negro* doesn't have the conditions to raise himself up, to know things, to arrive at the level of the white. This is a great discrimination. They go like this, "Shit, the guy is *negro*, he's in the kitchen, why is he going to study?" So I think they have fear that the *negro* who studies will succeed, that he will become equal to them. This is what I have thought, it's a little of my impression, I almost have certainty.... So I think this is the fear that they have, that the *negro* will get on his level, in work, and in society. You know how it is.

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> B: So, you think they don't want to improve education? They want education to stay --
> A: -- Less than theirs. You know, because they think that if the *negro* remains less than they are, they will manage to dominate the *negro*. [He will] work in exchange for a plate of food and a piece of clothing. He doesn't have education, he has nothing so... [Throws up her hands and shrugs.]

Analucia clearly, can engage several overlapping paradigms in accounting for the existence and pervasiveness of racism in her country.[7] Jonas, who told me about his experience of discrimination while searching for a job and being subjected to the condescension in the police station, generalized from his own experience:

> It exists, it exists... There are so many whites who don't like *pretos*! They don't like them, no way! They don't even like to look at us, to give us jobs, and in truth, there are many *pretos* who are better than whites. ..... It is rarely commented upon. The people who know this thing exists can't do anything you know, [even when] they understand that there's a law against racism... In a job, color is not important, what is important is personality, that you are a correct person, that you have certain abilities. Nothing more [is needed for] that job. So why not? They don't ask you to take a test, they don't ask you to do anything, they just look at you and say they have no openings. And a white goes in after you and he gets the job. So, it exists, but what are we going to do? We have to put this in front, to put it in front of the person who thinks [racism] doesn't exist. But even so, I think it's always going to exist. It will always exist. There are many people who don't like the black race. They don't like them. They only like to use the black race. To do some event, they call you for this. Aside from that, no way. There are people, whites, who like [blacks] but there are many who don't like them. Now, I will tell you that in race -- because I am of the black race -- for me, there is no difference. Black (*preto*) and white, for me, any race -- to chat, to converse -- [race] has nothing to do with it, you know? This is how I think, do you understand?

Jacinto's manner of highlighting the moral absurdity of racism was to discourse at length on the ideological implications of the common practice of requiring black employees to take service rather than social elevators:

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[7] Brazilianists are apt to hear in Analucia's comments an almost uncanny echo of some of the most astute scholarly discussions about racism in Brazil. Although literate, Analucia had no books in her home, save for the schoolbooks of her children. I mention these facts in order to highlight the experiential and reflective bases of my informants' understandings, as well as to question the degree to which "etic" understandings that challenge and contradict conventional, public, dominant, and national forms of self-representation are inaccessible to people such as Analucia. My quotation of our conversation also helps to spell out the directly collaborative and dialogical nature of my research.

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> If you're going [into an apartment building] after swimming, fine. But if you're dressed normally, why do you have to go in the service elevator? Not even the housekeeper should, because everybody is the same as everybody else. Even the constitution says that we have the same rights. Why does there have to be this business of the discrimination between the worker (*empregado*) and the employer (*patrao*), each one with their own entrance? Is the blood of one different from the other? Isn't the worker a human being!? Is it a disease to be a worker!? Because deep, deep down everyone is the worker of someone else. So, everyone is a worker. I think it's racial discrimination, because of the skin that you have. And why is this!? Because the worker isn't a human being? If that worker goes out from day to day because he has a patron..... If it wasn't for the maid, then [*the patrao*] wouldn't even know how to leave the house. It is the worker who does everything, it is the worker who is the master of the house (*dono de casa*) more than the actual patron. There are *patroas* who don't even know how to deal with their own clothes because they have a worker who goes there, who washes, irons and puts the clothes away. [The worker] is there from day to day in his house and is more the master than the actual patron. So why does he have to take this discrimination of going in the workers' entrance, rather than the social entrance? Why can't we go in the same way? Aren't we all going into the same ground? When [the *patrao*] dies, is he not going to the same place? Isn't the blood of everyone red?

In these comments, Jacinto engaged the discourses that claim that it is class and the status positions associated with it, rather than its interpenetration with color, that constructs discriminatory practices. Because everyone is, at bottom, a worker, the supposedly immutable and natural difference imposed by color is the unspoken, unconfessed justification for the apartheid suggested by social and service elevators. The elevator, Jacinto suggests, is clearly intended as a form of symbolic domination, and it is just another pathetically transparent means of keeping the racialized worker -- who is, as everyone knows, "more than master" of the labor that holds the world together -- in his or her place.

Finally, Tomas, who was still a teenager, talked in very direct terms about the entrapment within poverty of people of color. As had so many people in Morro do Sangue Bom, Tomas asserted that racism is, at bottom, the systematic denial of life chances to people such as himself.

> There are many ways, many ways, many ways like this, that we citizens of color don't have much opportunity. We can be musicians. Because I am a musician and when I arrive at a place they treat me well but when I'm not playing, it's another thing, they treat me differently. ...It's a bit difficult for us, it's difficult because we don't have time to study. We have to work. So, it's difficult for us to

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> open a window. Because we're workers, the majority are domestics, women as much as men. And he who has a better job is the one who knows someone, who has a contact. But the person who doesn't have that and isn't educated doesn't do anything. So, there's no chance in life for anything. We don't have a chance, do you understand? ... Everyone is human, so white and black, it's all the same thing for me.

Such comments are conventionally, and I believe, inaccurately read not as denunciations of racism but of class-based discrimination. They in fact refer, I would argue, to the structural functions and processes of racism. Tomas is describing a vicious circle whose contours, no matter how concealed by the discourses of *democracia racial*, remain perceptible to "citizens of color" such as himself.

In describing the racialized nature of many everyday encounters, in framing such encounters as examples of boundary-maintaining incidents that occur "all the time," and in accounting for racism in the language of a structured and structuring hegemony, my informants reveal what is "*embaixo do pano*" or under the concealing fabric of dominant narratives of race (and silence about racism) in Brazil. Most of my informants are aware of the pedagogical, demystifying character of their narratives, for they constantly refer to the dominant and contradictory claims of *democracia racial* in their bitterly parodic quotation of its discourses. "Shit, the guy is *negro*, he's in the kitchen, why is he going to study," Analucia says, mocking a discourse that she has evidently heard with her own ears. "Some don't want to talk about it," she informs me, and quotes what one is likely to hear on the asphalt, "Oh, there isn't [any racism], there isn't, there isn't." While the discourse of denial is an empty one, my informants suggest, it is insistently and tediously repeated. "Even though our society wants to hide it," Nestor instructs me, "racism is evident... It reveals itself in all senses." Although he feels himself to be wounded soldier in a battle that has already been lost, Jonas asserts, "We have to put this in front of the person who thinks racism doesn't exist." *Democracia racial*, as many in Morro do Sangue Bom seemed to suggest, is, above all, a fairly transparent form of national hypocrisy, which insists that the racialized bases of their powerlessness and entrapment remain unnamed.

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5

Narratives: Racism at Home

Soon after I arrived in Morro do Sangue Bom, Joia began to tell me stories about her family, her youth and the early years of her marriage to Daniel. Both Joia and Daniel had been born and raised on the hill and their parents had been among the community's early settlers. Joia's father had left her mother when she and her twin brother, Jorge were infants. He had another daughter, Susana, by another woman on the *morro*. Joia's mother married Jose and had another son, Eduardo. Joia thus had two half siblings. Her mother, she told me, had been light-skinned while she described her father as "very, very black." Her mother's second husband Jose, was described by many people as "*sarara*," light-skinned with "hard hair." Joia herself had skin of a medium brown and her twin bother Jorge was somewhat darker, as was her half-sister, Susana. Eduardo had coloring like that of his father, Jose: medium-light skin, freckles, and reddish "hard" hair. Joia's oldest son, Alberto was lighter than she was and her youngest son, Tiago was darker, "really *preto*," as he himself told me. All of those I interviewed, Joia (and her husband, Daniel), Jose, Jorge, Susana, Alberto and Tiago considered themselves "*negros*," "*pretos*" or "of the black race," although all but Tiago and his uncle Jorge, used other terms such as "*moreno*" and "*pardo*" as well. Differences in skin color, hair color and texture and facial features are common within families of color on the *morro*, as indeed they are within families who are white.

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Joia and Daniel began courting when she was fifteen, the same year her mother died from an unspecified illness, probably related to cirrhosis of the liver. Joia told me that when she was a teenager, she wanted to marry a man lighter than herself so that her children would not be "very dark." Daniel was emotionally very supportive of Joia when her mother was dying and they began living together soon after the funeral. "His mother was against it," Joia told me, "She said to him, 'What do you want with that *negra*, that dark woman?'"

As was the case with many couples on the hill, Joia and Daniel could not afford a wedding. Distinctions are rarely made between those who are legally married and those who live in common-law marriages, so they were considered "husband and wife" from the moment they set up a household together. Some years ago, Dona Sonia, Daniel's mother, moved away from the hill but she frequently returns for special occasions like birthdays and holidays. She is an old woman now and Joia is a solicitous daughter-in-law but the two have never been especially close. While Joia remembers her mother-in-law's disapproval, I doubt they have ever discussed it.

Joia's comments about Daniel's mother surprised me, not only because Dona Sonia is herself a woman of color, descended from an African-Brazilian father and an Amerindian mother, but because to my eyes, the difference in color between Joia and Daniel was quite subtle. As I continued to discuss the issues of race and color with many people on the *morro*, my eyes became more attuned to Brazilian perceptions and the difference between Joia and Daniel, which had once been barely noticeable to me, became -- while never dramatic -- more apparent. Although a number of people in Joia's personal network of family and friends told me that "if you don't pass as white, you are *negro*" and derided the significance of color distinctions, there were clearly moments in which such differences were important -- so important in fact, that familial relationships could be severely strained by them.

Differences in color may not be, in certain contexts, the principal cause of tensions within relationships. Derogatory comments about color may represent an idiom through which other kinds of conflict are incompletely expressed or alluded to. Daniel's mother may have

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objected to Joia's "background." That both of her parents were alcoholic would have been no secret in a community like Morro do Sangue Bom. Dona Sonia may have objected as well to her son's early marriage at the age of seventeen and his almost inevitable entry into fatherhood less than two years later. While early marriage and parenthood are fairly common in Morro do Sangue Bom, they may cause considerable anxiety within extended families already beset by economic hardship.

These possibilities however, do not dampen the significance of color but rather, call attention to the prevalence, within communities of color, of discourses in which familial conflicts and the issue of color become intertwined. Joia's own expressed intention to "marry lighter" was moreover, both without self-conscious irony and was part of a common desire and set of discourses. Alongside of both anti-racist discourses and the professed belief in the inherent equality of all members of the "*raca negra*" (black race), there are discourses that emphasize the notion of a hierarchy of color. Despite claims to the contrary, lighter skin and straighter hair appear to be viewed by many as better than darker skin and "bad hair" -- particularly when one's descendants are concerned. The notions of "*clareando a familia,*" or "lightening the family," and "*melhorando a raca,*" or "improving the race" were ones that I heard articulated, directly and indirectly, many times on the *morro*.

Joia's experience calls attention to the larger issue of what is often called "interracial marriage," or miscegenation. Although the "mixed" heritage of Brazilians is celebrated by social scientists, by novelists, and within everyday discourses, many of my informants told me that "mixed" marriages are often fraught with and surrounded by tension and discord. There is perhaps no other area in which contradictory notions about the significance of race and color are brought into relief. Discourses about the shared identities and experiences of all those within the "*raca negra*" or black race are contradicted by those that attribute different aesthetic and moral values to people of different colors.

Joia's experience also articulates with two other related issues that were emphasized by my informants: what they called "*o racismo do proprio negro,*" or the racism of the *negro*

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himself, and racism within the *morro* community. In the previous chapter I have described the ways in which informants represent the world of the "asphalt" as a racially bounded, white-controlled space in which people from the *morro* must make what are sometimes described as perilous journeys away from home. Yet racism itself is not restricted to the social milieu of the asphalt nor are prejudicial and discriminatory discourses and practices the exclusive province of privileged whites. Encounters with racism on the asphalt may involve other people of color (who are strangers) and racism may be encountered, as Joia's story suggests, not only within one's own community, but within both consanguineal and affinal relationships. Racism must certainly be viewed as a set of ideologies and practices that penetrate class and color boundaries and attention must be given, as I have suggested in the introduction to the previous chapter, to the different contexts in which it is articulated. Although recent scholarship on domination has tended to de-emphasize the extent to which subordinate groups participate in hegemonic discourses and practices, while highlighting often "symbolic" forms of resistance, I would argue that a fuller critique of domination requires an examination of hegemony as seen from the ground of subordinate communities.

As in previous chapters, my examination of these other forms of racism -- that between people of color, within families, and within the community as a whole -- is informed less by explicit theoretical paradigms that attempt to address abstract notions of consciousness than it is by the direct comments of informants. This chapter continues the focus on narratives of racism, and takes its direction from informants' emphasis on the significance of forms of racism that are, in one sense or another, closer to home. The narratives I quote are, once again, both ethnographic descriptions and analyses, and while they refer to disparate contexts, they are united above all by a sense of betrayal: betrayal within "the race," within the community of shared poverty, and within the family.

In the section following this one, I briefly review the ideology of *branqueamento*, or "whitening," as it was developed by Brazilian elites of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The belief that the Brazilian population was progressively "whitening" developed in

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tandem with *democracia racial*. Elite discourse thus reflected contradictory ideological notions such that the hypervaluation of whiteness and the denigration of blackness existed alongside of nationalist claims that Brazil was relatively free of racial prejudice and discrimination. While scholarly discussions of racial ideology in Brazil tend to focus on elite discourses of this period, I argue that such discourses must have reflected earlier and more widespread constructions of the meaning of race and color that articulated with the political economy of slavery. The durability of the notion of "improving the race" is likewise related, as the conclusion of this chapter will demonstrate, to strategies of progressive upward mobility among people of color.

The second section of the chapter concerns black racism generally.[1] I suggest that while many informants seem to view black racism as especially reprehensible, it is nevertheless considered an integral and expectable product of a racist society. As a tendency, black racism is defined as located not only on the asphalt and in the community but within the public trajectories of black celebrities of international standing. Narratives of black racism suggest an underlying expectation of and hope for solidarity within "the race," that challenges the belief that notions of "black community" are absent in Brazil. The embracing of "black community" however, is continually undermined by the internalization of racism and participation in racist discourses.

The third section examines racism within the *morro* community more directly. My informants accused both "white" and "black" neighbors of racism, and their narratives demonstrate the fact that racism penetrates both class and color boundaries. Racist whites on the *morro* are implicitly accused of a kind of class-based betrayal. Racist people of color are similarly described as thinking "they are better than everyone else," while also betraying, in implicitly racial terms, their own neighbors and families. Open confrontations appear to be

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[1] I use the term "black racism" for lack of a better one and to distinguish it from the contexts of racism -- in which the arrogant prejudice of whites is figured -- that I describe in the previous chapter. Although some writers prefer the term "internalized racism," I find it misleading for all people who engage in racist practices and discourses have "internalized" racist ideologies, regardless of their color. As this chapter demonstrates however, "white racism" and "black racism" have different structural, cultural and psychological consequences.

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relatively rare however, for the evident necessity of, and high value placed upon, the maintenance of cordial relations with one's neighbors prevails.

The fourth section concerns conflicts over race and color within the contexts of courtship, marriage, and to a lesser extent, childrearing. Such relationships, contrary to conventional notions, may be problematized and fragile when they involve people of different colors and/or "races." "Lightening the family," and/or preserving lightness or whiteness are preoccupations shared by whites and people of color on the *morro*, and such notions pit families and members of the community against one another. The ambiguities and contradictions introduced in the first section are very evident here; both racist notions of hierarchy and anti-racist discourses collide around the issues of romance, marriage, and family.

The fifth section concerns the roles of race and color in the conduct of family life and in constructing personal and family histories. The latter part of this section focuses on a single, brief but emblematic narrative in which race is figured as a central motif within one family's history. Although unique, this narrative echoes familiar representations of Brazilian history. It illustrates the fact that while stories of "mistura racial" are often celebrated within national discourses, they may, for poor people of color, involve a tragic dimension which is deeply resonant on personal and symbolic levels.

"Improving the Race": Historical Considerations

The notion of "*melhorando a raca*," or "improving the race" is historically rooted in Brazil and it was, in fact, critical to the development of Brazilian ideologies concerning the nation and national identity. A brief discussion of these ideologies helps to locate the issue of contemporary black racism within the broader trajectory of historically documented discourses about race and "race mixture." As I have noted in the introductory chapter, the development and articulation of the "whitening thesis" among Brazilian elites of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has been meticulously documented (Skidmore, 1993; 1990; see also, Silva, 1989; Seyferth; 1985, 1989). Brazil, in addition, had its own eugenics movement, and to a

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significant extent, the discourses of this movement overlapped with notions of race and "degeneration" (Borges, 1993; Stepan, 1991). Confronted with, and ideologically vulnerable to, the pseudo-scientific theories of racial superiority/inferiority emanating from the cultural centers of Europe, Brazilian elites were undermined in their attempts to assert Brazil's membership within the elect circle of "civilized nations." Miscegenation, widely and openly practiced in Brazil since its inception as a colony of Portugal, was believed by European, North American and Latin American elites to lead to moral, genetic and physiological degeneracy. The preponderance of both *negros* and people of "mixed race" in the Brazilian population was conceived as a threat to both national progress and national "ethnic" or "racial" unity.

It was in this context that the ideology of "*branqueamento*" or whitening, and its contradictory ideological corollary, *democracia racial*, effluoresced. While the belief that the "black race" was "improved" through dilution with "white blood" and the notion of the unprejudiced "friendly master" predated abolition and the creation of the republic, such ideas became explicitly codified during this critical moment of nation-building. Relying on a different, more "modern" set of theoreticians, and in response to of Brazil's "racial" reality, notions of racial degeneracy became subject to open debate within elite circles. To a very limited extent, the notion of black inferiority was questioned by a few elites, but more significantly, and to a far greater degree, the notion of interracial degeneration was challenged. On the basis of dubious statistics and what at least one writer has called "wishful thinking," (Skidmore, 1993) a number of Brazilian elites began to argue that the black population was withering away, while the population on a whole was "whitening." "White blood," many elites came to believe, would triumph over and erase the negative characteristics carried through undiluted "black blood." European immigration, while directed towards an expected post-abolition labor shortage, received elite support and governmental subsidization for the additional reason that such immigrants would provide an increased "infusion" of "white blood" (Seyferth, 1989). Within a relatively short period of time, it was proposed, Brazil would become a homogeneous nation of "whites." What had previously been regarded as a fatal and

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insurmountable weakness of the Brazilian nation, became its strength; continued miscegenation would not only whiten the population but would also operate against the development of the racial antagonism so evident in the United States.

As Skidmore (1993) has noted, this reversal within elite ideology did not represent a rejection of racist ideologies, but rather, a compromise with them. Elite public discourse of the era frequently asserted that racial prejudice was relatively absent from Brazil, even while a fear of blackness, and a belief in black inferiority were explicitly articulated. In 1899 for example, the noted literary critic, Jose Verissimo wrote in a newspaper article;

> There is no danger... that the Negro problem will arise in Brazil. Before it could arise it was already resolved by love. Miscegenation has robbed the Negro element of its numerical importance, thinning it down into the white population. Here the mulatto, beginning with the second generation, wants to be white and the white man, harboring no illusions and with some insignificant exceptions, welcomes, esteems, and joins with him. As ethnographers assure us, and as can be confirmed at first glance, race mixture is facilitating the prevalence of the superior element. Sooner or later it will perforce eliminate the *negro* race here (Quoted in Skidmore, 1993:73).

Although some writers have suggested that this discourse and the informal and institutional practices associated with it amounted to a genocidal policy (Nascimento, 1979), *branqueamento* was touted by Brazilian elites as an extremely fortuitous inevitability. The celebration of miscegenation as a morally superior and uniquely Brazilian "solution," wedded to the notion of *democracia racial*, was, as I have noted in the introduction, further codified and popularized by Brazil's most famous sociologist, Gilberto Freyre.

The fundamental contradiction, (or rather set of contradictions) within the ideologies of *branqueamento* and *democracia racial*, while rarely remarked upon in everyday discourses, has been frequently noted in Brazilianist scholarship. Giralda Seyferth writes for example,

> What makes the recognition of the racial question so problematic is the existence of an ideology of racial equality based in miscegenation which is not supported in social life. As in many other multi-racial societies, racial differences are not taken as simple differences but as indices of inequality and inferiority (1989:31).

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Contradictions reside not only in the contrast between ideological claims and the concrete structural features of Brazilian society, or what Seyferth calls "social life." Roberto DaMatta, one of Brazil's preeminent anthropologists calls "*racismo a brasileira*," (Brazilian-style racism), "an ideology which permits the conciliation of a series of contradictory impulses" (1984:68) These impulses, it must be noted, pervade everyday discourses and their associated practices.

In rearticulating an analysis which is, by now, familiar to most Brazilianists, Silva emphasizes the "mythic" nature of ideologies of *mesticagem* and *democracia racial* and she notes that outside of the "restricted circles" of scholarship and political activism, the discussion of the "racial question" is always "located on an ideological level which goes back to a 'primordial time.'" Within everyday discourses, in other words, neither contemporary social configurations nor the durability of racism tend to be examined. What is evoked rather, is the "primordial, mythical union" of the "races," within Brazil's colonial history. Yet, as Silva notes, "under this primordial naturalized equality, all the prejudices and negatives stereotypes that serve to discriminate against the '*negros*' are perpetuated" (1989:166-67). She emphasizes these contradictions further in remarking that "the logic of '*democracia racial*' is perverse: if all the races are together since their point of departure [in the mythical Brazilian past], the fact that the *negro* finds himself in a disadvantageous position must be a result of an inherent incapacity in his race" (1989:167). Such ideologies, she notes in a familiar vein, serve to conceal racialized structures of inequality;

> The "elegy to *mesticagem*" appears as a fundamental ideological recourse for the concealment of concrete inequalities between the members of "racial groups." It postulates a primordial equality, given through a mythic origin, between the "formative races." The individuals who develop concrete relations in Brazilian social life, in historical time, are not contemplated within this thought (Ibid:166).

The celebration of miscegenation (and, by extension, of *democracia racial*) in other words, occurs within what might be called "official" public discourses and such discourses are only tenuously attached to social behavior. It must be noted in addition that scholarly

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discussions of these discourses (usually referred to as "racial ideologies") tend to concern elite constructions of race as they were codified in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Skidmore's seminal and influential work focuses exclusively on the "members of a tiny minority that enjoyed the privilege of higher education within this largely illiterate society" (1993:218).

While it is undoubtedly true that Brazilian elites formulated the whitening thesis in response to the racial preoccupations of Europeans and Americans, the notion of "*melhorando a raca*" could not have been a purely elite construction, nor indeed does it seem likely that such a notion would emerge, more or less fully formed, within such a short period of time. Moreover, while Brazilianist scholars associate the celebration of miscegenation and *democracia racial* with the work of Gilberto Freyre, his work is undoubtedly informed as much as by what might be called Brazilian "folk" understandings -- the historically entrenched public discourses of ordinary Brazilians -- as by the intellectual currents of his time. If the contemporary everyday discourses of uneducated Brazilians appear at times to echo Freyrian discourse (and the discourses of other elites) to a nearly uncanny degree, it is not because Freyre has had a profound influence on ordinary Brazilians but because he was, in fact, an astute observer and mimic of public discourses about *brasilidade*, or Brazilianness.

There is very little historical documentation that might reveal, in a concrete fashion, how the foreparents of Brazilians like those living in Morro do Sangue Bom talked about miscegenation and color. It is tempting to suggest that contemporary discourses that exalt the "whitening" process reflect the hegemony of nation-building elites, yet such a formulation clearly simplifies much broader historical and ideological processes. As I have indicated in Chapter Two, color was associated with status and status mobility from the earliest days of the colony and the notion of a color hierarchy -- and its attendant discriminatory practices -- certainly predated the Republic. While my brief discussion of the well-documented elite "whitening thesis" serves to introduce some of the contradictions under which Brazilians of color continue to labor, those contradictions did not begin with the "members of tiny minority" but

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were formed through centuries of white domination and a hegemony so pervasive and entrenched that it is difficult if not impossible to identify its origin.

In contemporary terms, "*melhorando a raca*" (improving the race) and the cultural construction of a color hierarchy are more aptly conceptualized not as elite ideologies, nor even as "white ideologies" but as more universally Brazilian ideologies of remarkable durability. While undoubtedly stemming from white power and the onus of slavery, the notion of "improving the race" was most likely adopted by people of color as a strategy towards progressive upward mobility (particularly among freemen, who were numerous) during the colonial era. Although most of my informants explicitly reject such ideologies, their narratives of racism within an imagined black "community," within the *morro* world, and within families, reveal the prevailing power of forms of white domination which have ceased to be exclusively attached to, or practiced by, whites. "Improving the race," "lightening the family," and "cleaning the color," however contested within the *morro* world, are, in many senses, native to the community (and others like it) and they reflect the yearning for mobility away from that world. The exaltation of whiteness and the denigration of blackness, as my informants' narratives suggest, is, while nearly "incomprehensible," a part of the fabric of everyday understandings of the cultural and structural significance of race and color.

"The *Negro* Himself Discriminates Against the Other *Negro*"

The notion of "improving the race" is perhaps a particularly glaring example of racist ideology, yet it is articulated within a much broader discursive domain that emphasizes overdetermined and often contradictory notions of race. The vocabulary of race is, as I have suggested, a multivalent one and "racial identity" while a particularly thorny issue in Brazil, inevitably informs discourses that implicitly concern the overlap between "white racism" and "black racism." This section focuses on those narratives which speak to these larger issues.

There were only a small number of occasions during which people in Morro do Sangue Bom introduced the issue of racism in conversations with me that were informal and outside of

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the interview context. Several of these occasions concerned conversations about the American pop star, Michael Jackson. Like those of other American popstars, the music, image and videos of Michael Jackson circulated widely in Brazil; people in my generation were familiar with the Jackson Five, in which Michael Jackson became famous as a teenage vocalist, as well as with his solo career and his rapid climb to super-stardom. One day, I met Jonas on the steps and after we exchanged greetings, he said, "Can I ask you something? What do think of Michael Jackson?" I told Jonas that he struck me as an "odd person," but that I was impressed by his music and dancing. "I remember when he was a kid, in the Jackson Five, you remember?" Jonas said. "He was *negro* then, dark, with hard hair. Now he's white. Is he ashamed of being a *negro*?" Jonas also asked me how Jackson had succeeded in becoming white and I could only respond that as far as I could tell, no one knew for sure.

During the time of my stay in Rio, Jackson's music video, "Black or White" was released and it was broadcast on national Brazilian television amidst considerable fanfare. The video portrays an unnaturally pale, long-haired Jackson cavorting with a large multiethnic cast and includes stereotypical "ethnic" costumes and stylized dances. Nearly everyone I knew had tuned in to watch it. Later, Nestor asked me, "What is that song about?" I told him that Jackson had apparently intended the song as an anti-racist statement and I translated the refrain of the song which was, "It doesn't matter if you're black or white." "That's just what I thought," Nestor said and added with considerable sarcasm, "If it doesn't matter, then why did he turn himself white?" Like Joao, Nestor had liked The Jackson Five but had nothing favorable to say about Michael Jackson's more recent incarnation. He had become, it appeared, a race traitor.

In interviews, many volunteered their opinion that Pele, the internationally renown Brazilian soccer star, is racist. Later in my fieldwork, I began to ask directly about Pele and the responses I heard were remarkably consistent. It appeared that with only a few exceptions, Pele, who is arguably Brazil's most famous man of color (and perhaps, internationally, the most famous Brazilian of any color) is reviled by people in Morro do Sangue Bom. I was told that Pele "stands only for himself," and that "if he wanted to help *negros* he could, but he chooses not

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to." The greatest stain on his reputation was his courtship with Xuxa, Brazil's blonde, blue-eyed mega-star, as well as his involvement with other white women. "He only with goes with blondes, never women of his own color," I was told. Like Michael Jackson, he was viewed as a traitor, who "denied his race." When I asked why Pele was only seen with blond women, several exclaimed, "Because he can of course! He has money." While he was not excused, the choices Pele[2] had made, as a man of wealth and prestige, were viewed as predictable, and to an extent, understandable.

Very often, it was informants themselves who broached the issue of the "racism of the *negro* himself" during interviews. While many informants reserved their greatest invective for black racism, I was surprised by the fact that comments about black racism were sometimes embedded within, rather than marked off from, broader descriptions of racism. Although black racism seemed to be viewed in some senses, as a "special case," a subcategory within the larger issue of racism and "*preconceito*" or prejudice, only a few informants, such as Nestor, suggested that it was "exceptional," or uncommon. Like my white middle-class informants, people in Morro do Sangue Bom portrayed black racism as an integral, even expectable correlate of white racism. My early anxiety about broaching the issue with informants was misplaced and unnecessary.

Sometimes informants' discussions of black racism revolved around personal experiences; at other times, the issue was discussed more abstractly. Few of my informants of course, asserted that they themselves favored light skin over dark skin, or preferred whites over people of color; Joia's candor in this regard was unusual. Dona Janete, however, told me that she preferred to visit white doctors and dentists. "I don't want dark dentists, I don't want dark doctors, I don't want any of those problems," she said "Because the dark one himself, when he has more power, discriminates against those who have less power than he does." I asked Dona

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[2] I disclaim any support for the views my informants expressed concerning Pele. In recent years especially, he has been building a record of public service. He has, for example, played a prominant role in governmental efforts to promote AIDS awareness.

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Janete if black (*preto*) doctors were more apt to do this than white doctors and she replied, "Yes, more than the white. Because the *preto* discriminates against the other." She told me of an experience in which she had seen a black doctor in the local hospital; he had acted very distant and did not touch her.

Not surprisingly, a number of the stories I heard which were intended to illustrate black racism concerned name calling. Analucia for example said,

> The funny thing is the *negro* against the *negro*. He has prejudice. They say, Hell, you're a *negro*, and you want to lower that which is *negro*?" To debase the other *negro*, you know how it is? I am a *negro* but I debase the other *negro*. You know how it is? [Chuckles.] There exists a funny type of policeman, he may not [truly] be against *negros*, you understand how it is, but the *negro* [policeman] generally calls the other "*crioulo*." Do you understand? He calls the other "monkey," while being himself a *negro*.... I don't know Beth, I don't know if it's in the head of each one. I don't know. I don't think it should exist, prejudice between us, the *negro* against the *negro*. But you see that when a dark person is with another, [they say] "That *negra*!" and I don't know what, "It's that *negra* person!" They could say their name, right, or "that guy," but no, they call them by their color. "Oh, that abusive *negro*, that lying *negro*." So, a little of that exists, yes. They don't want other people to call them "*negro*" but they insist on calling others "*negro*," calling them "monkey," "negao," I don't know what all. Sometimes the word negao is affectionate and at other times it's a different word altogether. I've already heard this dispute between [people]: "Why are you calling me negao when you also are *negro*!? Why are you cursing me, you're a *negro* also, hell!" [Chuckles]... Here on the *morro* I have heard this, it exists.

As I have noted in the previous chapter, Analucia's criticism of black policemen is far from unique. Commenting on his encounter with a black policeman, a young man said, "Here in Brazil, it's true. The black (*preto*) guy wants to trample the other *preto*. Any black policeman that you see, the majority want to trample the *preto*." While Analucia, in commenting that the police "may not truly be against *negros*," suggests that racial epithets are more a "manner of speaking," than the expression of an avowed racist position, others make no such distinction. The use of racial epithets is viewed as diagnostic of genuine racism, which as many informants point out, is inevitably and paradoxically turned against the self, as well as against "the race" as a whole. Narratives of black racism often involve the description of antagonists who are in some sense more powerful than the narrator.

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This is not always the case however, and as Analucia notes, she has witnessed racist name-calling on the hill, where everyone is ostensibly "equal." Analucia's description of two *negros* hurling racist epithets at one another was one that I heard over and over, and usually, laughter accompanied these descriptions. Because of the multivalence of so many racial terms, misunderstandings no doubt frequently occur and such misunderstandings are revealing. The sensitivity surrounding the use of racial terms clearly operates within the community as well as on the asphalt, and the color of the speaker, as so many told me, made no difference to the reception of hard words by their hearers.

Jacinto told me a story about an encounter with black racism on the asphalt. Unlike Angela's story, it concerned a dispute between strangers, and like similar stories about the police and others in positions of authority, the dispute seemed to be as much about power as it was about color or race. Of all the stories Jacinto told me, this one was told with the greatest invective and his narration required very little prompting on my part. Jacinto told me that he had been a "trusted" employee for two years in a firm. He was sent to deliver a package containing money to a client staying in a hotel in Copacabana;

> When I got to the gate, the security guard was a *negro* who was [so dark he was] nearly blue. He told me I couldn't go through the social entrance. Why? Because I was an employee, [he told me]. And just because I am an employee? That's what I said, "Just because I'm an employee?" ... I thought it was an abuse, he was a *negro* and he didn't let me go through the social entrance. [So I said,] "I'm an employee but I'm not a domestic employee. I've come here on my job. If I don't have the right to go through the social entrance, then I won't deliver the package." "Well, then, you're not going in," [he said to me]. And I said, "Why am I not going in?" And he said, "Stay in your place *neguinho* (little black one)." He's going to "put me in my place," put me in my place as a black employee. So I looked at him like this [and said], "Hey, my friend, what are you? Are you white? Are you something else here? Are you the owner of the hotel? From my point of view, you are an employee also and you are a *negro*. Why are you discriminating against me?" [And he said], "Well, I work here." "Just wait," [I said], and I went out on the street to call [the client]. "Oh, Doctor Nelson? I'm not coming up there, no, because my coming up has been made impossible because this citizen of color here at the gate will not allow me to come up. Because he says I'm a *negro* and I'm an employee. Since this is the case, I'm not waiting over there [by the entrance to the building], I'm staying right here." So, [the client] came down and came out into the middle of the

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> street. He was white.... The doctor asked the security guard, "Have you looked in the mirror? Have you already looked in the mirror?" And [the guard] became embarrassed [*ficou sem graca*], right? [The client said], "Because you are *negro*, you are not white, you are *negro*, you are nearly blue! And besides, you're an employee also, like him! Now, you are discriminating against your own color.... Because he's from outside, he is a visitor. You have to treat him well, like he was a visitor."

Once again, the scenario involves the humiliating request that one use the service rather than the social entrance. Partly because the guard is black, Jacinto challenges him; from his point of view, as he says, they are equals. The argument began before the guard said, "Stay in your place *neguinho*," but it sharply escalates from that moment. The guard evidently makes this comment not because he believes he is lighter than Jacinto (who is, in fact, of a medium brown color with hair that is not quite "*duro*," or hard), or because he believes himself to be in some sense "racially superior," but because his position of relative authority provides him with the license to insult Jacinto, and remind him that as far as he is concerned, Jacinto has no authority whatever. The guard's use of the word "*neguinho*" is primarily indexical; it is not intended to refer to Jacinto's color but to his menial position as a courier, vis-a-vis his own more (symbolically) "powerful" position as a uniformed guard. The assertion of relative power is articulated through the idiom of race.

It is precisely in this sense that so many informants told me that racism, particularly black racism "is the person who thinks they are better" -- better, often, not in a racial sense, but in the sense of authority and/or, what is often called "acquisitive power." Analucia's comment that black police officers who use racial epithets "may not truly be against *negros*" also illustrates the point that the language of race is, in some contexts, primarily indexical and is only tenuously attached to real racial or color differences.

It is tempting to suggest that Jacinto had misunderstood the guard, confusing his indexical use of the term *neguinho*, for a referential one. Yet this is not the case. Jacinto understood that he was likened to a slave, a person with no power, dignity or autonomy. However, such words remain anchored within race and color associations, even if at times, tenuously or ambiguously. As Jacinto said in another context "whites are never called *negro* or

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preto." When Jacinto calls the guard "*negro*," he uses the word in both its referential and indexical senses, to assert that the guard is both dark-skinned and thus low in the color hierarchy and, more significantly, a mere employee himself.

The white client for his part, may or may not have been sensitive to the fact that the dispute was primarily about the assertion of authority and the right to respect. In Jacinto's telling at least, the "doctor" emphasizes both race and color in a way that is obviously meant to be profoundly humiliating. In language even stronger than Jacinto's, he invokes the notion of a racial/color hierarchy.[3]

Later in the same conversation, Jacinto told me that he thought one of the men associated with the residents association on the hill was racist. The man he referred to, Helio, was, in fact, one of the very few people I spoke to on the *morro* who insisted that racism is not a significant problem in Brazil. Jacinto's comments about Helio, and later his own brother, help to further elucidate the commonly articulated notion that black racism is a trait of those who are "*ambicioso*" (ambitious) and who "think they are better";

> Helio, Helio is racist. He doesn't like the *negro*. Helio discriminates. He's up there and he thinks he owns the world. So, he's very arrogant. I don't like him. In a party he wants to be the owner of everything. Weren't you ever in his house? You didn't notice!?[4] He wants to be superior.... He doesn't stay in the middle of -- he keeps talking in the middle of the whites.... He thinks he's superior to everyone. So, I think it's racism. Because I worked with him, [at the same place]. [People] have even helped him, they put him inside [in his current position of authority].... Many people here even call him, [they say] he became a "white *negro*." Meaning he's only a *negro* in his color, but in his personality, he's white.... You've seen Michael Jackson? Because he was a *negro* with hard hair, he was with the Jackson Five, completely *black* [uses English word]. After he began to ascend in his life, he began to take baths in milk, to take baths in the moon, I don't know what!... After he began to achieve fame, he made his hair

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[3] This was, in fact, the second time I had heard a story about a white person intervening in a dispute between two men of color. In the former case, I was told, a white woman had told the disputants, "Both of you are racist and you are not giving value to your own color." Such occasions suggest the possibility that whites are not entirely aware of layers of meaning that racialized epithets entail when they are "thrown" between people of color.

[4] I did notice in fact, but I avoided speaking ill of people in the community, for all of the obvious reasons.

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> straight, took a milk bath to get white... So, it's this. I think that when a person of color, right, *preto, negro*, begins to go up, he forgets. The very *negro* who helped him, when he [succeeds], he forgets. My own brother is racist. If he achieves fame in life, I doubt he'll think about anyone. The day he becomes someone, if he should get there as a musician, if he succeeds, he is going to forget us. He is already racist. He is very arrogant. Everyone is angry with him.

I knew that Jacinto's disapproval of the behavior of these two men was shared by others on the *morro*. While I had never attributed their behavior to racism, I too had noticed an arrogant aloofness in these men, an apparent disdain for others that was perceptively at odds with local etiquette. My being white did not in fact, afford me respectful treatment from these men. What these comments suggest is that for many in Morro do Sangue Bom, black racism, perhaps to a greater extent than white racism, is not merely a matter of color prejudice, but is conceived as a way of behaving that deliberately sets one apart from, and hypothetically, "above" others in the community.

Although many writers have suggested that there is very little or no "race consciousness" among people of color in Brazil, such comments reveal the existence of an expectation of solidarity among people of color. This expectation extends well beyond the community of the *morro*. Jacinto evidently expected the black doorman to recognize a kind of shared identity -- both in color and in social location -- which would lead to a subversion of the assumptions and authoritarian practices associated with the distinction between social and service entrances. When his expectations were disappointed, he insisted on the equality between himself and the guard. Had the guard been white, it is unlikely that Jacinto would have balked at the request that he enter the building through the service entrance. Although young men appear to view racist harrassment by white police officers as predictable and routine, racist treatment at the hands of black officers, no matter how common, still evokes a special kind of outrage. People expressed disappointment in Pele in terms that were almost personal. "He doesn't care about us down here," I was told. Michael Jackson's foreign lyrics are understood by very few poor Brazilians of color, yet his color-shifting trajectory, well-known to everyone in my own generation, is described in terms of a clear and unforgivable betrayal of people of color everywhere.

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On the surface, it would appear that there is little justification for speaking of a "black community" in Brazil. The distinctly American expression is a political one, and it is predicated on, among other things, historically situated and entrenched anti-racist movements and discourses that support and constitute a shared sense of cultural distinctiveness. As I have noted, few people in Morro do Sangue Bom are even aware of either historical or contemporary Brazilian black movements and as this chapter demonstrates, black racism, is, according to my informants, pervasive. Yet it is precisely the way stories of black racism are narrated that suggests a set of underlying assumptions and expectations about black solidarity which belie the notion that there is no "race consciousness," no sense of a "black identity," no sense of a larger "community" among Brazilians of color. Although the sections that follow focus primarily on tensions surrounding race and color within the *morro* community and within families, it is important to remember that the preoccupation with black racism points in unexpected directions and can incorporate not only local, but international perspectives.

Black racism and concern over the issue however, are often identified as residing within the self, and what typically remain as mostly implicit notions of black "community" and black "identity" are continually challenged by the internalization of racism. Narratives that suggest a kind of betrayal within "the race," within the community and within the family are supplemented by, and to an extent accounted for, by narratives that place special emphasis on forms of racism which revert, both logically and psychologically, back on the self. In concluding this section, I focus on several narratives which concern the internalization of racism, (especially among children, who are less guarded in their speech than adults) and/or attempts to account for the fact that "the *negro* himself discriminates." Several of the themes introduced here will be more fully fleshed out in following sections.

As I noted in the previous chapter, Tiago immediately defined racism as "Those who don't like themselves." As my research continued, his comment seemed less and less remarkable, for a number of parents I spoke with expressed concern over the tendency of children to adopt and internalize racist ideas. As in any community, children in Morro do

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Sangue Bom respond to both implicit and explicit cues and often repeat aloud what is whispered behind closed doors and spoken behind people's backs. A number of parents therefore told me that children often develop racist ideas and say racist things, regardless of their own color, "because they hear others talking."

When I interviewed Varena, she told me that when she was fourteen, she was courting a dark-skinned boy. Her mother, who is very dark, as is Varena, said to her, "What are you doing with that *negro*, with that monkey!" Immediately after telling me this, she said, "You know, Beth, we have a racist in the family." I thought she was referring to her mother but she added that her eight year-old daughter Lucinda, was racist. "She says that she only likes whites, that she doesn't like black boys, things like that." Varena had spoken to her daughter about the issue but she did not seem overly concerned about it; she seemed to believe it was a phase she would grow out of. Nevertheless, she suggested I interview Lucinda.

When I asked Lucinda if she preferred that her playmates be of one or another color, she replied that any color was fine with her. She evidently understood that her previous remarks, which her mother had overheard, were, while common enough within her surroundings, somehow not entirely acceptable. At the age of eight it seemed, she had learned two different discourses about color, one that denigrated blackness and gave more value to whiteness and one which insisted that all people are equal.

Angela, Jorge's wife, on the other hand, seemed to be sharply concerned about her oldest daughter's evident inclination towards racist thinking. When I asked Angela if she had ever discussed racism with her children, I was wondering quite specifically if she had given her daughters warning, counsel, and or a kind of prophylactic support in order to prepare them, psychologically, for the possibility of future encounters with white racism. As I indicated in Chapter Three, most parents answered this question in the negative. Angela interpreted my question differently;

> No, to her, no. Sometimes I speak to her because she says [things like], "Oh, that guy is *preto*." So I explain to her that *preto*, or a black person, is us. We are

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> *preto*! Because sometimes we grow up like that. Because there really are a lot of children who don't like *pretos*, who grow up with that business, [saying things like], "That *negro*," or, "I don't like *negros*." One time [my daughter] said, "That boy hit me because he is a *preto* and I don't like *pretos*." You know, because she had that idea. So I explained to her that the a "*preto*," is us, ourselves. "You are *preta* also," [I said to her]. "You can't say that you don't like *pretos*, because you would not be liking yourself. Because I am *preta*, your father is *preta*, your grandfather is *preto*." So she grows up [with this idea of] not liking *pretos* and I had to explain. She would become a racist if she didn't like *pretos*, and she wouldn't like herself either.

Our conversation reminded Angela of a movie she had seen, which, she told me, had been made in the United States. The movie concerned a "girl who was a *mestica*, the daughter of a black woman and a white man." The girl rejected her mother and was "ashamed of her because she was a *negra*." She wanted to marry a white man to "lighten the family," but her boyfriend left her on discovering that her mother was black. She was trapped in shame and self-hatred. Apparently, the movie ended with the "*mestica*" accepting her blackness and replacing the shame she had felt towards her mother with love and respect. Such themes are recurring ones in Brazilian literature, and the movie would have been far more resonant for Brazilian audiences than for North American ones. "It was such a moving film," Angela told me, "I cried at the end." Angela continued,

> Marrying a white man to lighten the family would be racism. It was because of this that I explained [to my daughter], "You are *preta* also. You are a *negra* also. You are *preta*, the same as him. It can't be like that, you have to treat everyone equally, you know, whether they are *preto* or white. You have to treat them in the same way.

"Where do you think she got these prejudiced ideas?" I asked Angela. She described racist comments as part of an everyday discourse on the hill, although they were often made in "*brincadeira*" or joking. Yet, she re-emphasized, such comments, overheard by children, could be damaging to their self-esteem;

> It's because she listens. A lot of people talk. Because there are many black people here who say, "Oh, I don't like *pretos*." Sometimes it's joking, they're talking by the [open] window [as children are passing by]. Sometimes it's just playing, [like when people yell], "Get out of here! I don't like *pretos*!" So, you know, [my daughter] remembers it like that and then she says it. I am not going to let her grow up with [that idea of] "I don't like *pretos*." She would become a

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> racist and I don't want that because she is *preta*, I am *preta*, her father is *preto*, her grandparents are *pretos*. She has heard things like, "I've never seen a white doing this, only the *negro* does this," so she says, "I don't like *pretos*." So she begins to devalue her own color... So, many times, the child gets [this idea], they don't like *negros*, they think it's a bad thing to be a *negro*, right? They're going to grow up with this and -- you know?

For Angela, the possibility that her daughter might grow up not liking herself (nor other people of color) was not an abstract one. She told me, "Here, there are many, many racist people, you know? Many *negros* actually, who are racist, you know? I think that the quantity [of racists] that you have among whites, you have among *negros* also. There are many racist *negros*." As other informants suggested, "One grows up with these ideas."

When I interviewed Roberta, a woman in her late twenties, she described racism very generally and told me that people "do not valorize the *negro*." "Who doesn't?" I asked her, "Are you speaking generally?" She replied;

> In general. We ourselves. You grow up in society, with this idea. If you encounter a man on the dark street at night, you feel a certain fear. If you see a white man, who is well-dressed, oh, then it's fine, right? But if you see a *negro*, you think he is a bandit, a mugger, and you become afraid. But why? Because you grow up with this idea in your head. It passes [to you] from society.

I asked Roberta if everyone had these ideas in their heads or if they were more common among whites than among people of color. She continued;

> No, everyone! Everyone is racist. The Brazilian people are very racist! We ourselves are. It is unfortunate but it is so.... You have the idea in your head. You grow up with this, without even wanting to. Shit! It's the society.

When I asked Angela, why in her opinion, *negros* as well as whites were sometimes racist, her response was simultaneously more tentative and more specific than Roberta's;

> I don't know, it could be -- oh -- who knows? There are people who don't like themselves, who have shame. Because the *negro* was a slave. You know, so they are ashamed of this. There are *negros* who are ashamed of being *negros* because the *negro* was a slave and they think this is dishonorable. There are many *negros* who don't marry *negra* women, of their own color. They prefer white women, blondes, you know? An aunt of mine in fact, said that she had to "lighten the family," you know? To marry a white, because some *preto* would darken the family, you know? This to me is offensive, I feel offended, you know? Because to me, this is racism. .... Because she isn't giving value to her color, I mean,

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> because I think that a racist *preto* is devaluing his color, so I don't think it's cool, you know? If I am born a *negro*, I have to adjust and to adore my color, right?

Others on the hill also suggested that some people of color "had shame," because "the *negros* were slaves." One woman even clarified the point by invoking the common belief among Brazilians that the "Indians," also enslaved by the Portuguese, fought back and died in great numbers because they did not "accept slavery," while the *negros* "accepted" their servile position.

Earlier in our conversation however, Angela also said that some *negros* have "*raiva*" or rage over "their own color." This was neither the first time nor the last time I had heard this expression. When I asked Jacinto why, to his thinking, "some *negros* discriminate against other *negros*," he continued to emphasize the snobbery of upwardly mobile people of color but then suggested a more explicitly psychological (or even psychoanalytic) explanation;

> The *negro* can't -- he can't be someone. The *negro* can't rise in life... Or when he begins to rise -- even when he is your equal, he begins to trample those below, to become prejudiced. He is *preto* but he has everything the white has. So, he thinks he is white. He doesn't like the other *negro*. He is a racist, and not even his mirror tells him [who he is]. Because he has rage against the race (*tem raiva da raca*). Like, he has rage against his own color. Sometimes that climate inside the home --he has rage against his father and his mother for being *negro*, for putting him in the world of the *negro*, so he dismisses them.

In the scenario Jacinto describes, the one who has "*raiva*" or rage over his own color does far more than merely reproduce, in an unconscious fashion, the discourses that devalue blackness. He becomes alienated from himself in a profound, even psychopathological way. Jacinto's scenario is reminiscent of Franz Fanon's anguished descriptions of colonized consciousness, in which "a Negro is forever in combat with his own image" (Fanon,1967:194). Many of the narratives quoted in this chapter in fact, invite comparison with Fanon and W.E.B. DuBois (e.g., 1961) and the psychological literature on what has been called "black self hatred" initiated by Kenneth B. Clark in the late 1930s, (e.g.,Clark, 1939; 1940; 1947; 1950) and, additionally, with more recent debates on African-American identity and self esteem (see especially, Cross, 1991). While many of my informants suggested that black racism inevitably

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circles back upon the self, only a few delved into the notion of a Fanonian alienation as Jacinto had. Moreover, a comparison of dated American studies with the discourses of contemporary Brazilians of color would, at best, produce dubious results. Agreeing with Dona Janete's comment (the conversational context of which I quote later in this chapter) that "the heart of another is such that no one can enter it," I have followed the lead of my informants in focusing not on the psychology of black racism but on its effects on community and family. In addition, black racism is embedded and located within larger, more ethnographically accessible discourses that are shared with whites. White racism, as the following section demonstrates, appears to be nearly as prevalent on the hill as it is on the asphalt.

Racism in the Community

At times, informants themselves brought up the issue of racism within the *morro* community but I sometimes asked directly if this was perceived as an issue. Many people told me that racism did exist on the *morro* and provided examples, yet these examples often had a vagueness that other types of narrative did not. Jonas for example told me,

> There is racism on the *morro*. One hears various conversations. People say, "I don't like *pretos*."... The person who doesn't like someone has to have a motive, isn't that true? Why don't they like the person?

Angela, who acknowledged in the comments I have quoted in the previous section that racist comments could frequently be heard on the hill, responded to my comments in a somewhat equivocal fashion;

> It's rare, people don't show it much, you know. It's rare. There was a woman who lived over there and she was racist, she didn't like anyone. She was really a vicious racist.... And she was *preta*, black, almost blue! .... She was really racist but aside from this, I haven't heard, you know. Well, sometimes, people are joking, [they say], "Oh, you shameless *negro*," but you know. You can't see if the person is serious or not... At least here there isn't so much here, I haven't heard so much.

Generally, many of the responses I heard were equivocal, and others besides Angela suggested that it was often difficult to tell "real racism" from *brincadeira* or joking. This fact is

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partly due, I believe, to the very ethos I mentioned previously. While the *morro* is plagued by the same kinds of everyday conflicts and tensions that characterize any small, tightly-knit and economically stressed community, people prefer to emphasize "*uniao*" or union. My question about racism on the *morro*, while recognized as a legitimate and important one, involved the risk of fomenting unfavorable and potentially wounding gossip. While a number of people referred to specific neighbors (and even, as Jacinto's comments indicate, family members), I did not press for more details than those that were readily provided and I did not reveal such details to others.

When I asked nineteen year-old Tomas about racism on the *morro*, his response, while somewhat more favorable than those of most, was revealing;

> That which exists is little. It doesn't do to distrust people. Because each is the neighbor of the other. And the majority is very much of color, right? As I already said, the majority here is entirely of color. So, there is very little. There are people here who come to be racist when one is darker than the other. Or those with money who live in suffering together with us. There is this. He who can buy something better, a color television, or can buy a second-hand car which is neither bad nor good, he thinks he's better than the other. But the majority is really of color.

Tomas is correct in his characterization of the hill as composed mostly of people of color. As I have noted, approximately one quarter identify as white while the remainder identify themselves as of color. Stories which concerned the racism of particular individuals who resided on the *morro* were about equally divided among those that accused whites and those that accused people of color.

Analucia was one of the informants who brought up the issue of racism on the *morro* without specific prompting. She referred to a specific individual;

> My neighbor here in back [of my house] doesn't like *negros*... So my husband even came to the point of discussing it with her, because she said, "If it were up to me, I would kill everyone who is a *negro*." That one who lives here behind me. She said it to another neighbor. Jair [my husband] is a *negro* and she told [my other neighbor] that she would kill everyone who is *negro*!

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I asked Analucia if she herself had had a confrontation with the woman and she continued;

> No. I wouldn't even have known that she didn't like me, you know? She is white but she is married to a *negro*. So [my husband] approached her and said, "Hell, why don't you like me when I have spoken with you [in a neighborly fashion]? But there are many *negros* who are even better than whites!" But me too, I mean if she doesn't like *negros* then she also doesn't like me, right? Because my family, it's a *negra* family. Yes, it exists, Bete.

Rosa, and her husband told me that "there are many people here on the morro who don't like *pretos*." They told me about a white neighbor who openly announced her prejudice. Rosa's husband told me that he conversed with the woman when he encountered her on the steps and paths that traverse the *morro* but he did not trust her. "You have to talk with everyone, right?" Rosa said, referring to the *morro*'s neighborly ethos. Nevertheless, others were aware of the woman's racism and Rosa told me that "No one likes her."

A sense of betrayal is evident in these comments as it is in the narratives quoted in the previous section. When the racism of whites on the *morro* is described, betrayal is not linked to a sense of shared "race" but to community and class, and more broadly to the prescriptive tenets of *democracia racial.* As one informant said, commenting on the racism of white families on the hill, "Why don't they go live on Avenida Atlantica?" The reference was to Copacabana's main thoroughfare, which continues to be associated with wealth and glamour, and by extension, with whiteness. "Why doesn't she go live down below?" Rosa said of her neighbor. Such comments are sarcastic of course, and they refer, in an ironic fashion, to the shared poverty and class status of all who live on the hill.

Rosa's neighbor, Dona Elza was one of the few white people I managed to interview on the *morro*. While Rosa and her husband refrained from naming the person they referred to (nor did I wish to ask them), I later came to suspect that it was Dona Elza herself. While only in her early fifties, she was always addressed as "Dona," a formal term rarely used for those on the *morro* who have not yet advanced well beyond middle age. Dona Elza had emigrated to Rio

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from the state of Minas Gerais some twenty before and she still nursed a "passion" to purchase a house in her home town, where, she told me, there were "almost no *pretos*." Her description of her first years in Rio were very similar to those I had heard from other immigrants on the *morro*;

> It was very difficult. When I arrived I suffered from hunger, I suffered a lot. I didn't have a place to live. So, my husband came before me and he was living in a crude shack. Later we lived in a bigger house and then I came to be here.... It was very difficult, it was. I worked for a family, I was a maid. At seven in the morning I would be there.

Later in our interview, I asked Dona Elza if she thought there were any differences between people of color and whites. She lowered her voice to a whisper;

> I think so, I think so. They are gross. They are gross. They are badly brought up. They don't like themselves. They don't like themselves and they don't like us. If they were... I don't like black (*preto*) people. Very, very *preto*, who really have the color, you know? That really black (*preto*) one, it's impossible to understand him.

I asked Dona Elza to explain why, in her opinion, these differences existed. She continued;

> I don't know. Because they have... Because we, who knows, you can see that in jobs, no one wants people of color. My father was terrified [by people of color]. My father, in that time, way back... in that time people would come to the house of [my father's father] and they would say, "Senhor Branco (Mr. White), may I come in?" So, my father, no, my grandfather would say, "You may come in." If they spoke humbly (*humiliada*). Now, these days, these days, they are very rude. They are arrogant. And it's just too much. My father also didn't like them, no.

Dona Elza's presumption of a "natural" white superiority is very evident here. That she suffered the same hardship as did most of her neighbors -- both in the process of moving to the city of Rio from the countryside, and in her continued poverty and grueling profession as an *empregada* -- does not seem to enter her equation of her own status vis-a-vis that of her darker neighbors. Her expectation that others address her formally as "Dona," and use the formal "*a senhora*" rather than the more common "*voce*" became much clearer to me after our interview. Her central complaint about people of color appeared to be their failure to accord her the respect she felt she was due as a white woman. As I had with many other informants on the *morro*, I asked Dona Elza if she had ever heard people talking about slavery when she was growing up and she told me;

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> Yes. They worked... That business of the whip, they had to have respect, no matter what. Now, no. Now it's the biggest abuse. I don't trust them. Some treat you better, right, but it's hard to find [such people]. It's hard. There are some who have a certain education, they have a certain respect for people. But it's very difficult to find them, very difficult. The majority, no.

I asked Dona Elza if her mother also had a "*pavor*" or terror of people of color and she said, "My mother wasn't very -- well, she didn't complain [about *pretos*]. [Her father] was quite *moreno*, he wasn't *preto* but he was *moreno*, so she had no way of speaking, right?" Dona Elza laughed after this comment. When I asked her if her father had forbidden her to date men of color, she gave me a surprised look and exclaimed, "No, it wasn't necessary!" I asked her if her husband, from whom she was estranged, shared her thoughts, and she told me, "He thinks this. He thinks the same thing."

At the conclusion of our interview, I asked Dona Elza if she had anything else to add to her comments about relations between whites and people of color and she repeated, in slightly different terms, her complaint about "their" lack of humility and respect; "As I told you, they don't like whites." I asked her why she felt this way, if a person of color had ever spoken to her aggressively or treated her in an overtly rude fashion. She continued in a whisper,

> No, it's just the disrespect they have for us, so we are knowing they are different. It's the way the *preto* treats us... Inside the bus [for example], there are people of such bad character that I am afraid to look in their faces. I have a terror of even looking in their faces. Some whites are bad too but they are imitating [the *preto*]. I never liked swear words, I never liked to go out mingling with people, it doesn't serve me in my life, including -- I never liked my house to be full of people, I never liked this.

Needless to say, Dona Elza's comments about the fear she experienced while riding the bus immediately brought to mind the complaints I had heard from young men of color: white women viewed them with suspicion and seemed convinced that they were criminals. In her latter comments, Dona Elza seemed to be referring, somewhat elliptically, to the frequent social gatherings on the hill, in which people crowd comfortably into living rooms and converse animatedly, often punctuating stories, jokes and expressions of opinion with "*palavroes*" or swear words. While I knew white people who joined both planned and impromptu neighborly

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gatherings, I wondered if Dona Elza perceived the social life of the *morro* as somehow related to the "differences" she had told me about. Searching for a way to introduce this question, I asked her if she felt there was something called "*cultura negra*" or black culture. While many of my informants responded to this question by listing practices and traditions that are associated, both popularly and academically, with black culture, such as *samba*, *capoeira*, and "*Macumba*," Dona Elza asked for clarification. I said, "Do you think there are different kinds of social activities or in terms of behavior?" She responded, "No, but there should be. I think there should be a separation."

I was confused and upset after my departure from Dona Elza's house. I was acquainted with her through several friends, including Joia and Elena, both of whom were Dona Elza's next-door neighbors. While neither considered her a truly close friend, both were very cordial with her and invited her to parties. Several weeks before our interview, Dona Elza had in fact gone to the birthday party of Elena's husband, Jose, although she sat quietly by herself, and did not *samba* on the verandah with the other guests. Her husband, who reportedly shared her prejudice, worked as a carpenter for Joia's husband, who had hired him, over a long term, to help him reconstruct his and Joia's home. When he became extremely ill and bedridden, it was Joia who took him covered plates of hot food and urged him to build up his strength and see a doctor. It may be that Dona Elza (and her husband) made exceptions for people like Joia and Elena, seeing them as not "very, very *preto*." I could not, of course, ask Joia if she was aware of Dona Elza's views which while not entirely public, were also not entirely private; both Rosa and her husband knew that Dona Elza "did not like *negros*."

As Rosa and her husband had explained however, "You have to talk to everyone," even, they suggested, people like Dona Elza. Or, as Tomas told me, "It doesn't do to distrust people. Because each is the neighbor of the other." Such sentiments and the cordial behavior associated with them appear to override, in most ordinary contexts at least, the kinds of confrontations and social distancing that the expression of attitudes such as Dona Elza's might otherwise be expected to produce. Dona Elza's views, besides being racist and without any discernible

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justification in personal experience, were extremely un-neighborly. As Rosa told me, "No one likes her." Yet Dona Elza whispered throughout the interview and asked me not to tell our common acquaintances what she had said. Evidently, both Dona Elza's views and her neighbors' dislike remain submerged, for the most part, beneath the surface of the routinely polite exchanges that characterize social interaction on the *morro*.

It is clear on the other hand, that overtly racist comments are sometimes made in more or less public contexts on the *morro*, and those who make them, gain, like Dona Elza, a reputation as racists who believe "they are better." While social confrontations may occur, as was clearly the case when Analucia's husband heard that his next-door neighbor harbored genocidal sentiments, they appear to be relatively rare. Analucia herself, while clearly outraged by what she viewed as an unjustified denigration of herself, her family and her "race," did not confront the woman. She nursed her shock and anger privately. That such would be the case in a community whose members both avoid discussions of racism and eschew overt confrontation generally, is not surprising. Yet, as several informants told me, "everyone knows."

Jacinto also reported that on the *morro* "there are many people who say they don't like *negros*." He told me about a particular individual who had a reputation for being racist. Married to a white man, she herself was what Jacinto called a *negra*;

> She talks, talks loudly, for everyone to hear, that she doesn't like *pretos* and she doesn't like the *morro*. And the person who fed her and brought her up was a *negra*, a true *negra* with hard hair, that's who took care of her. Her mother is white and her father was *moreno*. But no, she doesn't like *pretos*.

I knew however, that the woman Jacinto referred to was a close friend of his mother, Dona Janete. They were so close, in fact, that when the woman and her husband succeeded in realizing their long-held ambition of moving into a middle-class apartment, they sold their *morro* home to Dona Janete and her family for a very low, nominal price.

As I have noted in the introduction, a number of researchers involved with the UNESCO studies of the 1950s suggested that while Brazilians engage in overtly racist discourses, such discourses have little bearing on, "social behavior" (Wagley, ed., 1963: 126). Such notions

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underestimate the multidimensional significance of discourse (itself erroneously defined as somehow distinct from "behavior") and ignore the innumerable scenarios in which racially motivated discrimination (as opposed to "mere prejudice") occurs in both formal and informal contexts in Brazil. Nevertheless, the general observation that those (of whatever color) who participate in racist discourses may have cordial and even intimate relationships with people of color remains ethnographically accurate.

To suggest, as the UNESCO researchers did, that discourse, or culturally patterned verbal behavior, is insignificant vis-a-vis more "genuine" and meaningful face-to-face cordiality, or that racist comments reveal "true" attitudes that belie more superficial behaviors is, I believe, to miss the point. While my informants were themselves naturally concerned with the notion of "the reality," what people "really" believe and who they are, "deep, deep down," there is, theoretically speaking, little in the way of secure grounds for claiming the static primacy of one tendency over the other within the flow of quotidian interactions such as those that occur in Morro do Sangue Bom. Both participation in racist discourses and cordiality are "genuine," meaningful and context -driven, and both remain open, as the above narratives suggest, to a variety of interpretations and responses. Jacinto is incensed by his neighbor's declarations of racism and his description of her cold-hearted betrayal is vivid. For him, she is an unredeemed racist, and this fact defines her character and offers irrefutable and painful testimony of the concreteness of racism (including black racism) in his community and in his country. Wary always of fomenting gossip and ill-feeling, I did not discuss the issue with Dona Janete, yet I do not doubt that she would have defended her friend, perhaps by suggesting that she made such racist comments in "*brincadeira*" or joking, or by saying, (in a way similar to Wagley's comments) that it was "just her way of talking." Overtly racist comments, moreover, may be in some contexts relatively easy to overlook for they are situated within a broader discursive tendency to devalue blackness. Everyday discourse, both on the *morro* and on the asphalt, is, as I have noted in Chapter Two, replete with such locutions as "He is very dark, but he's a nice guy," or "She is a *pretinha* but she is pretty," or, alternatively, "He is a *negro* but he is

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honest." The possibility of deeply divergent interpretations and the multiplicity of contexts in which both racism and cordiality are practiced reveal the complex and fundamentally ambivalent character of racial ideologies in Brazil. Such ideologies are articulated and become activated, as DaMatta proposes, through a "series of contradictory impulses."

My suggestion that both participation in racist discourses and face-to-face cordiality are context-driven will become clearer in the following section. While racist comments may, at times, be a "way of talking," a discursive reflex that refers more to abstract notions of "the *negro*" than to specific people, they may, in other contexts, reveal profound conflicts over the issues of race and color.

Race and Color in Courtship and Marriage

Joia's open acknowledgment that she consciously sought to marry a man lighter than herself may have been unusual yet the notion of "c*lareando a familia*," or lightening the family, is a thoroughly familiar one in Morro do Sangue Bom. While most of my informants professed themselves to be against such a notion, a number of people, particularly women, told me that they had been exhorted to seek lighter partners by their mothers or other relatives. What emerged in my interviews was a picture of contradictory yearnings, fears and assumptions about race and color as they relate to courtship, marriage and children. While much Brazilian scholarly and popular literature would lead one to believe that marriage between people of different colors is not only considered natural and without significant conflict, but is, in fact, celebrated, my informants suggested that the issue (and the experience) can be saturated with social and emotional difficulty and danger. Such difficulty may be described as occurring within the ostensibly "private" intimacy of a heterosexual relationship but more commonly, the objections of parents, of the community or of "society" are called to account for conflicts between women and men of different colors.

It is evident that in the area of courtship and marriage, color differences, and not merely the differences between the bipolar extremes of "black" and "white," do in fact, become

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significant, despite co-existing claims of equality between people of color as members of the "*raca negra,*" or black race. The hierarchy of color is brought into bold relief for not all "mixed marriages" are between whites and those who "don't pass for white." The phenotypical differences between Joia and Daniel, which I had at first failed to recognize as notable, were in fact significant enough for Daniel to become, in Joia's eyes, an especially attractive mate -- and significant enough in the eyes of Daniel's mother to make Joia an especially unattractive daughter-in-law. While informants tended to focus on relationships between whites and people of color, I heard enough stories like that of Joia and Daniel to convince me that color, and not merely notions of race, informed many of the difficulties within couples and between affines and potential affines.

To a certain extent, the issue of "mixed" marriage and courtship is influenced by stereotypical notions about sex, sexuality and race, yet my informants neither indulged in nor talked about such stereotypes as much as the literature on race and racism in Brazil would lead one to expect. None of my informants themselves introduced the issue in interviews and while this may have been the result of etiquette, I was left with the impression that such stereotypes were entertained neither as seriously nor as obsessively as many "publicists" and interpreters of Brazilian culture (including anthropologists) would suggest. Moreover, my informants interpreted my questions about "relationships between people of different colors" as referring more to personal experiences and observations than to the discourses of public culture, and they responded accordingly.

Dona Janete however, was well aware of such stereotypes and she believed they influenced heterosexual relations. Our interview was somewhat unusual in that I invited Dona Janete to comment on sexual stereotypes to a greater degree than I had with most of my other informants. Our conversation thus focused more on her general impressions of the role of race and color in relations between men and women than it did on her personal experience. I began by asking her however, if her parents or others had ever given her specific encouragement in seeking a white husband. She replied, "No, I never felt that they did. What was important was a

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good worker. I never sought wealth but thank God, I have never gone hungry." I asked her, "And this thing of marriage more generally, do you think there can be problems in a marriage between a person who is lighter and a person who is darker?" Dona Janete paused at this moment and began;

> Yes. For the most part, no. Well, I haven't had [problems]. Thank God, up to now, I haven't had [problems]. When [my husband] says something to me, it is in joking. But it exists. There are [problems] in the home. Sometimes the woman has a good job and the guy takes advantage of the *escurinha* (little dark woman). He doesn't work.

I asked Dona Janete if white men were more likely to engage in this sort of exploitation than black men and she answered in the affirmative. She had illustrated the notion that black women are viewed as workhorses (whose labor is exploited by whites) and I pursued the issue of such stereotypes by asking, "And what about the idea of the *mulata*?"

> The *mulata* is even pretty here. It is the *mulata* who is pretty, the *mulata* who sambas... And behind her there is always a guy who is more, who has more money. That's the *mulata*. The *mulata* has more space. The *mulata* can work in an office, she can be a secretary.

I said, "And how about the idea that the *mulata* is hotter?"

> The *mulata* is first in everything. The *mulata* here has rights. You don't see a *mulata* who is lost... She is always accompanied by a good gentleman... The white men, they look more for the *mulata*... Because they are pretty, they samba, they have more opportunity, more of everything. That thing, I don't know why the *mulata* is hotter. The *mulata* is hotter.

I asked Dona Janete if this might be a kind of sexual exploitation and she responded,

> It could be also, this could be the case. Because the heart of another is such that no one can enter it. Here they are with the *mulata* but out there in front, they're with a blonde. [Laughter.] He marries the blonde but in the place of samba, he is with the *mulata*. So the *mulata* must be exploited, right? Because these men [go out] with them [and] they naturally dump the *mulata* at the exit later.

I began to ask Dona Janete, "And this blonde, is she also courting with a --"

> -- No, none of that. It's very rare, very rare to encounter a blonde with a dark man (*escuro*). You encounter more often a *mulata* with a white man. In my going through life, I have seen the *mulata* with the white man much more than a white woman with a *mulato* man, right? I think the woman has more, she is more

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> exploited. She also wants it. Or rather, she doesn't want the *negro*, right? The *mulata* herself doesn't want the *negro*. It's very rare. When you see a blonde with a dark man, she must not be from here, from Rio or, she isn't Brazilian. I've seen a lot of this. They aren't Brazilians, they come from outside to be with a dark man. The dark men, they have shame. They're too timid to seek a white woman. They are restricted from seeking -- right? -- a white woman, I think.

In many senses Dona Janete had reproduced much of the familiar discourses on the white man's pursuit of the beautiful *mulata*, the *mulata*'s rejection of black men in her pursuit of a prestigious white partner, and the foreigner's pursuit of black Brazilian sexual partners. Like many stereotypes, such notions are in fact played out, to some extent, in observable behavior in Rio de Janeiro -- which is, arguably, the national epicenter of these particular stereotypes. An extremely important issue remains largely implicit in Dona Janete's comments: the fact that such stereotypical notions and the patterns of behavior associated with them, bring class, as well as color into play. The white man who marries the blonde while courting the *mulata* has "more money." The "dark man" she refers to is of a lower class than the blonde woman and his "shame" is related to class as well as to color. Yet cross-class courtship appears to be rare in the lives of people in Morro do Sangue Bom and such stereotypes have an almost mythical character. While I knew that some domestic servants had had sexual encounters (apparently both coercive and consensual) with their white middle-class *patroes*, such relationships were, with very rare exceptions, concealed by the men and never even emerged into what Dona Janete called "the place of samba." It is a public world, "out there," formed of an urban, in fact, *carioca*, or Rio-based sensibility that Dona Janete refers to, not the more intimate and concrete world of the *morro*.

The marital trajectories of people within Dona Janete's own network (as well as her own marriage) contradicted her comments, and many of these trajectories were informed by a far more complicated set of racial assumptions than her astute but brief summary of classic stereotypes allowed for. Her own son, Jacinto, for example, far from being too "ashamed" to approach a white woman, is married to Marlene, who was born and raised on the hill.

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Although of different colors, Jacinto and Marlene share the same class background. Their courtship, which occurred about eight years before the period of my fieldwork, had caused considerable discord within Marlene's family. Marlene is what many would be apt to call "*branca mesma*" or "really white," as is her entire family, which includes seven siblings. Like Jacinto's parents, her mother and father were born in the state of Minas Gerais and had come to live on the *morro* before Marlene was born. At the time of our interview, Marlene's father had been deceased for several years. It was said that her mother had gone crazy shortly thereafter and although some people on the hill gave a romantic spin to the story -- suggesting that she missed her husband so much that she had gone clear out of her mind -- she obviously suffered from Alzheimer's disease or a similar disorder. Neighbors, such as Joia, expressed considerable sympathy for her and when she appeared lost, they attempted to steer her home to Marlene's and Jacinto's house where she began living after she became unable to care for herself.

When I asked Marlene about racism, she told me about her own family;

> Yes, my parents. So, they were racist, you know? Prejudice against people. They said that the children, that their grandchildren would be completely black (*preto*). They said, "What *neguinhos* they will be!" They were racist, my father and my mother. They said I should get a white husband. So, when I began to go out with [Jacinto], they never liked him, right, because of [his]color. But I said, "I don't see it like that. I like him and his color doesn't make any difference." But they stayed against it, right? Because of color.

I asked Marlene if there had ever been an open dispute between Jacinto and her parents and she continued;

> No, [Jacinto and my parents] never fought, you know? I argued with them over color. But they never fought. They would always throw it in my face, "That guy is *preto*!" You know? But [Jacinto and my parents] never fought, they just said it to me. [They said to me,] "You have to look for a better person," right, "a white person, because the *preto*, when he doesn't shit on entering, he shits while leaving," right? But [color] has nothing to do with it. The same thing a *preto* can do, a white can also do, right? [Color] has nothing to do with it. They talked behind his back. They only spoke to me.

Marlene went on to tell me that she had been the first in her family to marry a *preto*. Later, five of her siblings married people of color, "*pretos*, but not really *preto*, more *moreno-*

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colored." When I asked Marlene if her parents had come to accept her marriage to Jacinto and their grandchildren, she answered equivocally; "Well, there was no way, there was nothing they could do about it."

In a separate interview, Jacinto also told me about the courtship;

> Her mother and father, well, her father died but he was racist. Oh, they didn't like me, no! And when we started to go out together, her mother said, "You're going to marry a *negro*! You're going to dirty the family! You're going to go hungry!" And now, I even feed her. She came here [after she got sick]and thank God, I never let there be a lack of food. Marlene told me that [her mother] said she would go hungry if she married me. Never in front of me no, only behind my back.

I asked Jacinto how his mother, Dona Janete, had handled the situation;

> My mother always liked [Marlene] but she was like, a little nervous because of that business. [She said], "If that one [Marlene's mother] doesn't like you, let it go, give it up." I said, "No, Mom, she doesn't like me but I am going to marry [Marlene], and later, the family will come to respect me." She thinks what I think now. She was never against Marlene. She was worried because of that business, that I would get married and they would mistreat me because they didn't like me. All mothers worry, right? Because of color, because of color.

When I asked Marlene why her attitude was so different from that of her parents, she had no explanation. She was somewhat aware of the larger context of racism, for she told me that Jacinto had been discriminated against in connection with a job. She had asked her *patrao* (for whom she worked as an *empregada*) if he could arrange employment for her husband but she prefaced her request by asking her employer if he was racist. The *patrao* replied that he was not and asked Marlene why she had asked. "Because there are many people who don't like *pretos*," Marlene told him. Employment was arranged for Jacinto but after three months, his boss, Valera, fired him. Marlene asked her patrao if Jacinto had done something wrong. "No, it is because Valera doesn't like *pretos*," her employer told her, "Every *negro* who has gone in there has been fired." Marlene could not recall any other incident in which her husband had encountered racism. Jacinto had apparently not told Marlene the many stories he had told me.

Marlene herself had been involved in other encounters that had disturbed her however;

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> When I am with [my two sons] down there, on the street, people say, "To whom do these *moleques* (black street urchins) belong?" And I say, "They are mine!" They are always shocked. They think, "What is this white woman doing with these *moreninhos*?" You know?

Jacinto also told me that his marriage to a white woman caused problems on the asphalt;

> Like, I went out once with her, to a bar. The waiter gave her preference. So, when the menu arrived, he gave it to her. Okay, fine, we ate lunch. When the time came to pay the bill, he put it in her hand. She said, "No, he is going to pay." I'm a *negro* and she's white, and there we are in Copacabana, right? ... They thought that she was -- that I was her employee, and she was the patroa... So, that was discrimination, because she is white and I am dark. Everything that [the waiter] did from the moment we arrived! Why did he think that? She is white, so she would want to pay, that business.

This experience was extremely galling for Jacinto. It also offended his notion of appropriate gender roles and insulted his masculinity, for as he said, "It is the man who has to pay. Even if he doesn't have the money, she should pass it to him so that he pays." Jacinto suggested that the waiter was so caught up with racial assumptions and prejudiced antagonism that he ignored this simple rule of etiquette.

These narratives suggest that some white parents in Morro do Sangue Bom are outraged when their children fail to choose mates from among the relatively few white families in the community. Nearly all the people I knew who were of my own generation had married within the community; the overlapping threads of kinship, long-standing friendship, and god parenthood within Joia's network, for example, were so complex that I never succeeded in thoroughly untangling them, even when I attempted to do so on paper. Marlene's trajectory (and that of most of her siblings) was typical; she had married a neighbor. Jacinto's parents -- themselves a "mixed" couple -- were steady full-time workers until Dona Janete's disabling stroke. As Dona Janete said herself, they were poor but they "never went hungry" and they were known for their generosity, amiability and humor. Despite the good reputation of Jacinto's family, Marlene's parents predicted doom and the racial "dirtying" of the family.

Susana, Joia's half-sister, also had a great deal to say about relationships between men and women of different colors. Our interview began with a story about a friend and neighbor of

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hers, whom she called a "*mulata.*" She was twenty-three and had been dating a twenty-four year-old man who was darker than herself.

> I have a friend and she likes a dark guy. And the mother doesn't. [My friend] is a *mulata*. And the mother [said], "Why did you choose a *negro* man?" She is *mulata*, and the mother also. He is super dark, quite dark. So, the mother, I think she has [racism]. So, she gave him the boot and it ended. It ended because the mother wanted it to.... [The daughter] was wanting to marry him, she liked him very much but the mother wouldn't permit it. She fought with [the daughter], "Leave him, leave him! Get out of my house then, stay with him!"

I asked Susana why the woman was, in her opinion, so disapproving of the courtship. She continued;

> I don't know. It could happen that later there would be children and the children would come out *preto*, you understand? So, I think she was thinking, "Oh, the grandchildren will be *preto* and I am not a *preta*," you understand?... [For example], my husband is white and I am *preta*.... He even said that our daughter leans toward her mother, she leans towards me, she is *negra*.... So, I think that's it, that she didn't want to have *preto* grandchildren... And she likes *pretos*, the daughter. But her mother has this thing in her head. She might converse with me because I am an acquaintance, right, but perhaps she doesn't like me very much because of my color. But she doesn't want [*pretos*] in the family!

As Susana mentioned, she is herself married to a white man. I asked Susana if she thought the kind of discord over "mixed" relationships that she had described was common and she responded, "No. If my mother-in-law didn't like me, she wouldn't have given me this house. I've never had problems with his family." It is no doubt true that many such relationships are permitted to develop without interference, yet in the midst of our interview, Susana recalled an experience from her own youth;

> Oh! I had a boyfriend whose mother didn't like me. His mother beat him so he would leave me! He was lighter, from the north. And his mother didn't like me. She liked me for friendship but as a daughter-in-law, no, no! She beat him! So I left him. He said to me, "Shit, my mother keeps fighting with me over my relationship with you." So, I left him. I was nineteen. So, it ended and they moved, they left [the *morro*]. Once in awhile I see her and him... If I was a friend [all right] but to court her son, she didn't want it, she got enraged.... I felt humiliated, humiliated, down low. I felt really, low. Shit, because of my color!? I am human, right? ... I told my mother. She said I should leave him. If [his mother] didn't want it, I should leave him, so I left him.... But he was so good!

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In our interview, Susana denounced racism in very strong terms. She said, "Fifty percent like the *preto*, fifty percent don't. So I think this is ridiculous! Shit!" She told me however, that she herself had never been romantically involved with a man of color;

> All of my husbands have been white. The other one was white, the father of [my oldest daughter] is white. I have never courted a *negro*. ... I don't know why this is. [Color] has nothing to do with it. Everyone is equal, right, [everyone] dies and goes to the same hole.

When I asked Susana if she had ever discussed racism with her friends, she told me the following with a mixture of invective and humor,

> I talk about it. There are many people here who say that I don't like *pretos*. That's right, that I myself don't like *pretos*! Now, why don't I like *pretos* when my own color is *preta*? So, they say I only seek out white men. So I say to them, "It is not I who seek them out, it is they who seek me!" Isn't it, isn't it? ... It's not me who goes out looking, it's them. So, they like my color, they like me, so they speak [to me]. There are thirty people more or less who say that I don't like *pretos*. I like them! How could I not like my color? I am *preta*! .... Oh, they say that. It's not I who like the white, it's the white who likes me, on the contrary. Because when I'm going to court, it's not me who says "I like you, I want to go out with you," it is they who say it to me.... I never, never courted a *negro*. I mean, not yet anyway! In Copacabana, where I used to work, there was a very dark *pretinho*. But he was very handsome, you know, he was very handsome but very *pretinho*. But he was ashamed. That one was ashamed of his color. He would stay silent. [I would say,] "Hey, Pedro, what's up?" Then he would raise his head but he, you know, his head was always lowered. He had that shame for his color, because he had skin like that, *preto*, really *preto*.... He didn't want to be with me, no. Now, most of the *pretos* who want to court me are already married. I'm going to get involved in that!? I'm going to get, I'm going to be that? Today I'm here and then in front of me "pa-papa-pa-pa" [imitates machine gun fire]-- the girlfriend or the wife?! "No!" I said, "No!" It's not worth the trouble, right? [Laughs.] So, I said, "No, no," and he thinks, "Oh, it's because you don't like *pretos*." How am I going to not like my color? I would never dislike my color! My father was *preto*, my mother was *mulata*, you know, but my father was *preto*, right, and I leaned toward his color. But I like *pretos*, of course I like *pretos*. But I don't like married *pretos* for courting, right? Because I'm married too, and I don't want a married man.

Whiie Susana herself, as well as other informants, suggested that being *preto* did not preclude a tendency towards color prejudice and/or "shame" over one's own color, it may well be that her involvement with white men was more a result of happenstance than of preference. Susana however, participates in the kind of ubiquitous phrasing that suggests that darkness and

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good looks do not tend to be found in the same person. The co-worker she describes is "very dark pretinho. *But* he was very handsome, you know, he was very handsome *but* very pretinho." Yet Susana spoke of her color with pride. She told me that people often assumed she was foreign because she carried herself with "*orgulho*," or pride, and she sometimes arranged her hair in African styles that were both unusual and quite contrary to the dominant fashion of chemically straightened hair. Unlike her half-sister Joia, she spoke well of her father, a very dark-skinned man, and except for her ambiguous quotation of her husband's comment that their daughter "leaned towards" her color rather than his, she expressed no preference for lighter-skinned children. What remains notable in Susana's narrative is the censure of others on the hill and her consequent defensiveness over what ought to be, according to public discourses, approved and happy unions that bespeak the lack of racial discord in Brazil.

Susana's two youngest daughters were slightly lighter than she was. "When they were born," Susana said, "they were lighter, right, and with the sun, they became more *morena*." Her daughters' lightness (like the darkness of Marlene's sons) gave rise to peculiar and disturbing encounters when they accompanied her on her errands on the asphalt. In the midst of discussing another topic, Susana suddenly recalled an occasion during which she rode with her two daughters, one of whom was an infant, on the metro. She had waited on the metro platform until the train arrived. She boarded and felt that a white man appeared to be following her. She took a seat and the man sat nearby and "kept staring." Her restless and hungry daughter began to cry and the man continued to cast what Susana interpreted as suspicious looks her way. "I think he was a federal policeman," Susana told me;

> So, she cried and I put my breast in her mouth and pronto! His manner changed. So, I thought that he was thinking that I was a kidnapper! You understand, because of [my] *negra* color and these little *mulatas*, these little light ones. He thought I was abducting the children.

Susana's comments may sound paranoid. Yet, they are hardly surprising given the rash of crimes and discourses about crime in present-day Rio de Janeiro. Ransom-motivated abductions are now rife in the city and its elite suburbs. Moreover, in the late 1980s and early

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1990s, cases in which foreigners had kidnapped poor (but light-skinned) Brazilian children for sale to adoption brokers in Europe had been documented. The speed with which stories about such kidnappings -- replete with undocumented, extremely macabre embellishment -- spread through poor communities such as Morro do Sangue Bom, was astounding. It was in this context that Susana believed the contrast between her own color and that of her daughters aroused suspicion -- despite the fact that such contrasts are fairly common in Brazil, especially among the lower classes. She had more to tell me;

> And until now, when I go out on the street with them and they [call out to me] "Mom!" people go like this [imitates a shocked facial expression]. [My daughters say], "Mom, mom, my mom," so, they keep staring... [They say], "Your daughter is very pretty," but they don't quite know really that I am the mother. Because of [my] color, right, *preta*, and [my] daughters are all light, right? [I say], "They are my daughters, yes." ... But I think that's it, "Shit," [they're thinking], "A *negra* like this with those light daughters?" And when they say, "Mom," they go like this [imitates shocked expression]. You know, staring, and I'm thinking that they're wondering if "this *preta* is the mother of these little light ones." So I give a smile and then we leave.

Susana also felt that having a white husband did not necessarily insulate her from encounters with racism on the asphalt but could, in fact, arouse suspicion. She told me that she and her husband had gone shopping one day and had stopped to have a beer before going back to the hill. While they were standing at the bar, a policeman (whom Susana characterized as a "*mulato*") approached her and said he wanted to do a "*geral*" or check of her bag. Enraged, Susana began unloading the contents of her bag, practically throwing them into the policeman's face and saying over and over, "And why did you choose me? Because I am a *negra*?"

> "No, no, sorry, sorry," [the police officer said], "It is because there are many couples who are robbing people." [And I said again], "But straight to me you come! Why did you choose me?" ... Because he thought that a black woman (*preta*) and a white man with a knapsack must have a revolver, right?

While public discourses repeatedly affirm the notion that "Brazilians are all mixed," that "interracial" relationships are common, approved, and even celebrated, and that the members of Brazilian families span the color spectrum, all of these narratives suggest a set of contrary assumptions that both inform discord within the community and skew everyday forms of

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interaction outside of the community. Conjugal relationships between men and women of different colors may not only "raise a few eyebrows" but may provoke censure and harrassment.

As she had for other topics, Analucia commented on the issue of "interracial" relationships in a particularly cogent and epigrammatic manner;

> There are problems because of prejudice. No one accepts it. The prejudice that the white has about marrying a *negro*, they think it's a mixing of races.... There is a lot of this, [whites say], "You don't marry a *preto* because you will mix your race." You know, *negro* parents and children also [are concerned that they might] multiply the black race in the same family. So this is prejudice between themselves....Beth, I'm going to tell you something. Most whites don't accept the *negro* because of prejudice. And there are many who like *negros* but they can't marry *negros* because of the society. Because it is the society that discriminates. Do you understand? When you marry a *negro*, [people say], "Oh, this fool is going to marry a *negro*!" So there comes a time when you are uncomfortable in sleeping with a *negro*. And it is society that makes you uncomfortable. And you can see that there are many couples in which a *preto* is married to a white. And [these whites] are discriminated against because they are married to *negros*. And they [themselves] accept them, they accepted the *negro*. But society doesn't accept the *negro*. So, and you see many *pretos* also who are married to whites. [And black people say], "Hell,, this *negao* married a white woman of that color?" And it's not even he who says this, it's the public out there that says it, that discriminates against him because he married a white woman. Do you understand? I mean, [they say], "Why is that white woman going to accept him?" .... There's a lot of this. You know, I myself have a friend who says she has never courted a *negro*, nor married a *negro*, because of the prejudice. Other people don't accept it. I myself, when I was courting my husband, [people said], "What is this, girl? That *negao*, you're going to marry that ugly *negao*?" I said, "I'm going to marry him, I'm not going to marry you, I'm going to marry him! What do mean by that? [Color] has nothing to do with it." This exists. Sometimes they accept the *negro* but they don't accept you marrying a *negro*.

The narratives I have quoted above suggest what might be called "Romeo and Juliet" scenarios in which impassioned couples see beyond color and attempt to weather the storms of familial and community censure, or the disapproval of "society." They may succeed, as did Marlene and Jacinto, or such relationships may collapse under the weight of a mother's pressure, as happened in Susana's youthful romance. In some cases however, it may not be outside pressures alone that impart a fragility to romantic relationships between men and women of different colors; more "private" conflicts can occur. In my interview with Rosa, I broached the

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topic of such relationships by asking, "Do you think that marriage between white and black --" Before I could finish, Rosa replied;

> --Doesn't go well. There are problems. My nephew courted and married a girl who is light like you. And he's like the color of [points to son, whose skin is a dark bronze color]. Oh, she fought with him. She threw right in his face [words like] "monkey," "*crioulo*," you know. My nephew. He married a blond girl. They stayed together for more or less a year, well married. After that, it was hell. Throwing things in his face, calling him a *crioulo*. She began to betray him with a boy of her own color and then she left him. Her family spoke against him and she herself spoke against him. She herself did. So, this experience is in my family. I think that *preto* and white doesn't work, you know, because of this. Not all of them, there some whites who marry *pretos* and it's fine. But most are going to throw it in your face, just like that girl. And my nephew was against everything and everybody, it didn't work. He almost killed her.... So, I think that to marry, you have to marry one of your own color. Because most black and white couples separate, they don't stay married for very long. Because there is always something to throw in the other's face. "Why did I marry you? You are *preto*!" You know, always some little thing. So, in my opinion, it doesn't go well.

In saying that "there is always something to throw in the other's face," Rosa suggests that "mixed" marriages tend to be fragile not because of racial differences that are somehow inherent or "natural" but because what may begin as a relatively ordinary marital dispute may come to be articulated within a vicious racial idiom. Because racist epithets and the familiar assumptions on which they draw their power resonate so deeply, one imagines (through Rosa's description of the "experience" in her own family) that neither love, nor passion, nor affection can long survive such an assault. While Rosa's close-up view of a marriage gone awry and her inclination to generalize may have led to her to an unusually pessimistic view of such relationships, all of the narratives I have quoted above suggest that underneath the public surface of romanticized visions of "interracial" love, there are stories of "interracial" wounding.

This does not mean of course, that all such relationships are doomed (despite Rosa's comments to the contrary) nor indeed, does it mean that Brazilians' visions of themselves as anti-racist is pure mythology. The celebration of miscegenation is culturally meaningful and it does allow a space -- which is supported by the rhetoric of *democracia racial* -- in which many people of different colors can achieve intimacy and form durable relationships. Yet they do so in a

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cultural context of mixed messages and, potentially, deeply personal danger. It is no wonder that Jacinto said, "All mothers worry, right?"

As I suggested in the introduction to this section, such mixed messages and conflicts are not limited to courtship and marriage between whites and people of color. As in Joia's case, there may be conflicts between people who are "*da raca*" or of the race, yet of different skin colors and hair types. Moreover, it is evident that others besides Joia have a desire to "lighten the family" or "improve the race." I asked Yvonne if she was familiar with this notion and she told me that her cousin, in fact, was consumed by it. I asked her to explain;

> [She said] that she doesn't court *negros* and if one day she had children who courted *pretos*, she would disapprove. But I also think that this can, you know, people pay [for such things] right, because, these days, she's going out with a *preto*! [Laughs.] She said it so much, so much, so much that now she's going to marry a *preto*! [I said to her], "Because you said so much, so much about *pretos*, you fell on a big *crioulo*, eh?" "Oh," she said, "this *crioulao* is different, he isn't like the others. He is flesh and blood... he is equal to anyone, there is nothing different, he's the same, there's nothing different. He could even be white."

Yvonne told me that her cousin began to say racist things, focusing especially on her refusal to become involved with a *negro*, when she was eleven or twelve years-old. I asked Yvonne if her cousin had been exhorted by her parents to consider only lighter men as potential boyfriends or mates. She replied,

> No, no [her mother] didn't say anything. Now, I also don't know if it was joking or not, but her mother also criticized anyone who was *preto*. [She would say, for example], "Oh that *crioulo*, that monkey! Oh, that's why I don't like *crioulos*," that sort of thing. Now, I don't know if it was a joke or if that was really in her head.... Because we never know what a person is [really] saying. [If it's] playing, or [if it is] the truth. It can be like [you're wondering], if the person really is racist, right? I don't think so, but who knows? And it reveals more... Because she isn't white herself, right?

I asked Yvonne what colors her cousin and her cousin's mother were. The language she used to describe color in this context is itself revealing;

> Look, [the mother] is like -- my mother calls her a *mulata*. Her own mother is *preta*. And her father was light, quite white. So, she's not like *preto*. Her hair is quite straight, really quite straight, she has a *crioulo* nose and her color, she's

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> lighter than I am. Now, my mother says she's *mulata*. Now race, she is *preto* with white right? *Mulata*, right?.. My cousin is the color of the mother also. She doesn't have straight hair, no. Nor is it hard. It is reasonable hair.

When Yvonne told me that her cousin had "fallen on a *crioulao*," I asked her, "So, did she really change her mind or was it just this specific man?" She replied,

> Well, that's it, that's why I'm doubtful. I don't know if she has really changed herself or if it's just for him. Right, because it could also just be him. Because soon she might not like him anymore, I think, even if he were not a *crioulo*. Now, I have doubt. I don't know. I would like [to know]. I already asked her various times, but she never answers directly. She also is doubtful. It's a confusion. But I believe, I don't know, I want to believe that she really has changed.

Yvonne was obviously troubled by her cousin's attitude; she herself is, unlike her "*mulata*" cousin, unambiguously *preta*, as are her own mother and her siblings. Yet it is unlikely that either Yvonne's cousin or her aunt intended to include Yvonne (and Yvonne's immediate family) in their racist generalizations. Yvonne wants to believe, after all, that her aunt's derogatory comments are "only *brincadeira*," or jokes. Although Yvonne suggests that there is little connection between her aunt's racist comments and her cousin's outspoken and repeated refusal to countenance a dark-skinned boyfriend, her brief recitation of the family's "color history" suggests a different reading. There is more than a slight echo here, of the notion of *branqueamento*, a successive lightening through generations. It is notable that Yvonne quotes her cousin as saying not only that she herself intended to avoid courting a *negro* but that she would also disapprove if her future children were to do so. This echo is heard as well in Susana's explanation of her friend's mother's disapproval of her daughter's involvement with a dark-skinned man: "So, I think she was thinking, 'Oh, the grandchildren will be *pretos* and I am not a *preta*,' you understand?" The same echo is implicit is Susana's description of her own rejection by her boyfriend's mother: "She liked me for friendship but as a daughter-in-law, no!"

Branqueamento, or progressive lightening, inevitably pits people of color against one another as well as against whites; such an ambition suggests a kind of game in which there are winners and losers. While Jose Verissimo, the turn-of-the-century literary critic, argued that "the

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white man, harboring no illusions and with some insignificant exceptions, welcomes, esteems, and joins with" people of color (quoted in Skidmore, 1993:73), it is evident that not only whites but also some who are of color have a tendency to reject potential partners who are dark-skinned. Just as those who are darker may cherish the notion of "lightening the family" through succeeding generations, so whites and lighter-skinned people of color hope to maintain their "white blood" or continue the lightening process. While many Brazilians say that "*negros* are attracted to whites and whites are attracted to *negros*," the hyper-valuation of whiteness tends to prevail, especially in relation to marriage and family.

Those who are darker may thus be vulnerable to the discourses that emphasize a hierarchy of color and encourage lightening, yet they may be rejected by the very people such discourses urge them to pursue. In describing examples of racism, several young men told me that "a *preto* cannot court the daughter of a white man." I believe they referred less to the convoluted psycho-sexual politics so familiarly described for the racist imagination of Americans, than to the notion of maintaining "whiteness" within the family. As Sandra suggested, friendship may be one thing, and courtship and marriage quite another.

Jacinto's comment that "all mothers worry" when their sons pursue relationships with lighter women reminded me of Tomas and his mother Marta, both of whom are very dark. One day friends of mine from Africa, Ricardo and his two young nieces, visited me on the *morro*. We passed Marta's house on the way up the hill to my house and I made introductions. Marta immediately noticed that Ricardo was darker than his nieces. She assumed that he was their father rather than their uncle and asked him if their mother was white. Ricardo explained that their mother (his aunt) was Mozambican and their father was English. "Oh, their father is English!" Marta responded, with what appeared to be enthusiastic approval. She added, "You know here in Brazil, we say that it is good to mix *preto* with white, to improve the race." Ricardo merely chuckled politely.

During my interview with Tomas, I asked him if his mother had ever encouraged him to court lighter women. While Marta's comment to Ricardo seemed to sanction the notion of

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branqueamento, she, like Dona Janete, evidently worried for her son. "No," Tomas told me, "because relationships with whites cause problems." When I asked him to explain, he continued;

> Problems from the father, from the mother, problems. The father would become very angry with a person of my dark color. Many fathers are like "No, I don't like him, no." Because there is a division here, right? The light one leans toward the white, right? So, it's bad. I have had light girlfriends, really light with hazel eyes, blue eyes, but -- I know light people who don't like [*pretos*], no. They live in Niteroi. The father is well, [the daughter] wants to go out with me but the father doesn't like it. The father even does evil things. This girl that I know, her father even wants her to have plastic surgery so she won't have the nose of a *preta*. And she doesn't want it. She doesn't want to have her nose narrowed. She says she was born with the nose that God gave her, right? But her father thinks it should be narrowed. Like Michael Jackson, right? [Chuckles sardonically.] Her father wants her to have the hair of a blonde and not of a *preta*. Her hair is very curly. And he doesn't let her go out with dark guys, no way! He would kill her! He fights over it, he really doesn't let her, he would kill her.... I know a lot about this, I've already been through it. I've already seen various scenes in my life that, without understanding anything, sometimes I don't understand but people -- It's difficult.

At nineteen then, Tomas had already seen "various scenes" in his life. He suggests that such prejudice, coming as it does, from people of color as well as whites, is incomprehensible. Yet his mother's comments to my friend Ricardo reveal that while the father's ambition to lighten the family may be violently obsessive, the discourses that inform it are not unusual. Moreover, in describing the meaning of racial and color terms, Tomas himself participated, as did most people on the hill, in an apparently unconscious hierarchical ordering of stereotypical racial traits. He described the eyes and lips of the *negro* as "very large," while those of the *moreno* were "of a normal size." Within Tomas's comment that he has been involved with women with "hazel eyes, with blue eyes," there is in addition, a hint of braggadocio -- the same sort of braggadocio I had heard in Joia's voice when she very pointedly told me that her eldest son Alberto had become involved with a white girl. The point I most want to emphasize however, is that while both Tomas and his mother Marta are vulnerable to the discourses and assumptions of *branqueamento* and the color hierarchy, these very assumptions place Tomas, as a dark-skinned person, in a potentially wounding situation.

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While far from universal, my informants suggested that the ambition of lightening the family is not uncommon, perhaps particularly (but not exclusively) among those who "are already *mulato*." In my interview with Paulinho he included the following description as one of many he used to illustrate the pervasiveness of racism;

> And another example was with a friend of mine, right, a *preta* woman. Her daughter was courting a white boy. And she said it like this: "Paulinho, thank god, my daughter is going to marry a white man to clean the color." [And I said,] "To clean the color, no my dear! Our color is clean! She is going to marry the guy because she really likes the guy! Do you understand? I don't think you have to clean the color. There is no such thing as 'cleaning the color.' The color of the white is clean and the color of the *preto* is also clean. Oh, I don't know, when a dirty person, understand, really dirty, they were born dirty. There's no *preto*, there's no white, there's no *moreno*, there's no *pardo*, there's no *mulato*, do you understand? Dirty is [just] dirty." This is what I said to her.

Paulinho is describing a context in which two distinct discourses, both of which are pervasive in everyday conversation, collide. He was, of course, familiar with the assumptions and ambitions that his friend articulated, and in telling me the story, it was clear that he knew that I was also familiar with the notion of racial lightening or cleaning. Paulinho's motivation in repeating the conversation was less to accuse his friend of racism than to refer to a familiar, and in many senses taken-for-granted kind of discourse that repeatedly constructs and reinforces the assumption of a "natural" racial hierarchy within which a family might achieve, through succeeding generations, a racial "improvement.". His response to his friend is also familiar, if somewhat "radical." It affirms, in the most extreme terms possible, the prescriptive tenets of *democracia racial*. He begins by saying that both the color of the white and the color of the *preto* are clean and suggests that the quality of being "*sujo*" or dirty is one of individual character and not of "color." Colors and/or races, he goes on to affirm, do not, in the end, exist at all. While the shadow of racial essentialism often penetrates the discourse of *democracia racial*, distinctly anti-essentialist statements such as Paulinho's are also heard in everyday discourse. Although the profound contradictions within and between racial ideologies often seem to go unchallenged in everyday discourse, Paulinho's narrative suggests that in some contexts, the

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fundamental meaning of race can be openly contested. Contestation does not tend to occur however, by challenging the "logic" of ideologies but rather, it occurs within the familiar vocabularies of everyday discourses which have both disparate and overlapping threads. What I want to emphasize here, is less the fact that Paulinho and his friend disagreed, and disagreed fundamentally, about the meaning of race, but that their argument proceeded according to discursive formulations that were very familiar and deeply resonant to both. Paulinho and his friend both occupy a discursive universe which offers ready-made vocabularies for a remarkably broad spectrum of racist and anti-racist ideologies.

"We Had Poverty, as God Wills it": Racism in the Family

One would like to assume that when women and men of different colors begin living together and have children, the censure of relatives, if it has been expressed, ceases and is replaced, if not by complete approval, then at least by acceptance. Marlene's mother's compromised mental state did not allow one to determine whether or not she had warmed to her grandchildren, who looked, as some people said, "*moreno*, like little Indians." For the most part, I believe that familial bonds and interdependence tend to supersede the more extreme forms of concern over color. As will be seen however, this is not always the case.

An often articulated acknowledgment of color differences within families definitely occurs nevertheless, and such color differences are the rule rather than the exception. Although parents tend to say, as Susana did, that their children "lean" or "pull" (*puxar*) toward the color of one or the other parent, color differences between a mother and father need not be dramatic in order to produce children of noticeably different colors, features and hair types.

Although perhaps not openly acknowledged, one senses a kind of anticipation and concern over color before the birth a child and without a doubt, friends and family make frequent remarks about a baby's color in the weeks and months after it is born. Visitors in the house of a small baby often pick up the child and color terms are often included in the affectionate crooning and baby talk of the adult. Words like "*moreninha*" (little brown one), "*pretinha* (little black

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one), and "*clarinha*" (little light-colored one) are often intoned, sometimes in spontaneously coined rhymes. When Guilherme's daughter was born, Varena, while not a relative, took an immediate shine to her and repeatedly called her "*moreninha*" and "*pretinha*," and when I met the baby, she said, "Isn't she a dark little one?" While Varena did not intend her comment to be pejorative, but in fact, very affectionate, the acknowledgment of darkness sometimes skirts the edge of negative implications. It is worth recalling here a comment that Joia made about her own son, Tiago, which I referred to in Chapter Two: Joia exclaimed over her surprise (and possible dismay) on observing Tiago's darkness just after he was born and Tiago, who was seated the couch during the conversation, squirmed and covered his face with his hands in what appeared to be embarrassment.

Neither color nor hair texture tends to be stable in babies of any color, and a number of informants made comments about the lightness of themselves or their children during infancy and early childhood. "When my daughter Tininha was born," Joia's aunt Natalia told me, "she had fine straight hair, just like yours, and the same color." Natalia excused herself for a moment and returned with a plastic bag filled with important family documents. Among them was a lock of Tininha's hair, cut when she was still a small child.

The darkest children in the family are often the butt of ribbing and "*brincadeira*" or joking, as Tiago was. While one is expected to take such ribbing in good humor, I had the impression that it is difficult to do so. Tiago never laughed at the jokes that were put to him but simmered with his eyes narrowed and his arms folded tightly across his chest. A woman in her thirties told me that as a child she had had to endure constant "*brincadeira*," on the part of her father and siblings about her darkness. "It was always in the form of joking," she told me, "but I never liked it. My own family! My own father!" She told me that her father was much lighter than she is.

Adults can also be subjected to such *brincadeira* by their children. Susana told me that while her daughters were always respectful towards her, many children called their mothers (if they were dark) "*mae preta*," or "*mae negra*" (black mother). While I was having lunch with

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Dona Janete's family, her son Efraim, called his mother "you *negra*." It was a kind of *brincadeira*, yet it was a *brincadeira* with unmistakable overtones of callous disrespect. (Recall that Jacinto, Efraim's brother accused him of racism and it is possible that he did so for other reasons besides his arrogant manner.) While I tried to pretend that I had not heard Efraim's "slip," I could not help noticing the dismayed and hurt expression on his mother's face. Although she did not provide details (and I did not request them) Dona Janete had suggested in the comments I quoted earlier in this chapter that her husband sometimes "says something" but that "it is in *brincadeira*." Dona Janete is, needless to say, the darkest in her family.

Those who are the lightest in the family, on the other hand, are often seen as the most attractive and perhaps even as the most intelligent, and while I have no truly solid data on which to base such a conjecture, I often had the impression that parents and other extended family members have higher expectations for their lighter children than they do for their darker children. The favoring of lighter family members, whatever forms it might take, extends backwards in fact, to the family genealogy, or perhaps more properly, to the ways in which people tend to describe their genealogies.

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On the *morro*, people of color who had white or Indian ancestors placed special emphasis on the fact. Daniel for example, must have told me a half dozen times at least, that his grandmother was an Indian woman. Although he had no photographs of his other grandparents, nor of his own parents, he kept a photograph of this Indian grandmother in his home and showed it to me on numerous occasions. Susana also had an Indian great grandparent as well as "African" great grandparents who were slaves. When I asked her if she had heard stories about slavery when she was a child, she told me, "No, my mother only told me about the Indians. [My great grandmother] did not like Brasil because she was really an Indian, an Indian of the forest. But my [great] grandmother who was a slave, she didn't tell anything."

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Even fleeting romantic encounters with whites may be recalled as special occasions that may cast a glow whose significance may grow with time. When I was interviewing a very old dark-skinned man who was considered a respected elder in the community, he excused himself, went to his house and returned several minutes later with a very worn photograph (probably taken in the late fifties) of his brother dancing with a white woman. "You see, my own brother has danced with a white woman," he said.

Recitations of family history that invoke "*mistura*" often seem less like a form of conventional rhetoric than dramatic narratives in which color and race may be figured as a defining motif through which deeply personal conceptions of family and self are construed. Some of my informants on the hill offered narratives of their family histories more readily than did others. The stories that I did hear proved to be among the most revealing and ethically problematic "data" that I encountered. These narratives, I discovered, were sometimes offered as explanations of one's success or failure in the world, and just as often, as burdensome secrets that could not, despite one's intentions, be forgotten. The role that color and/or race played in stories of one's ancestors and one's family was, usually, a deeply tragic one. It is both this tragic dimension and the factual details of some of these stories that makes them ethically problematic; they would require a greater degree of "garbling" and concealment than I have pursued in the dissertation as a whole. The story of Beatrice must serve as a single illustration of the larger ways in which race can play a pivotal role in family and personal history and how that role might be narratively represented. Beatrice was a woman in her sixties who many years before had immigrated to Rio from her home state of Bahia. I met her briefly very early in my fieldwork and over many intervening months, I reminded myself that I must return to pay her a more extended visit. When I finally did so, she welcomed me, put coffee to reheat on the stove and insisted I sit on the only chair in her tiny, cramped home. The chair startled me however, for when I sat down, the springs seemed to bounce of their own accord. Seeing my expression, Beatrice began to laugh and looking under the chair, I saw a tangle of kittens raucously playing with each other and the underside of the chair. When I looked to Beatrice, she had the mother

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cat on her lap. Our conversation began with an exchange of comments about the sad failure of most people on the hill to recognize -- as we both did -- the value of a cat's companionship.

Beatrice's unusual fondness for cats may have been partly due to the fact that for all intents and purposes, she was without family. I began our interview with my survey questions and when I asked her how she described her own color, she launched upon a wistful description of the world she had come from. Despite the tragedy of her story, nothing she told me was a secret, nor did she suggest that there might be others who could be wounded or unwillingly exposed by its telling. Her story in fact, revolved around the sense of anonymity that permeated her adult life. To be without family, she seemed to imply, was to be permantly adrift and somehow unknown. In the absence of the people she had lost, she told her story to me, a sympathetic stranger. "My color in my land," she began and paused for nearly a minute. Knowing she had my full attention, she continued,

> It's not *preta*, no, *preta* is like him [gestures towards her companion who was sitting outside the house]. My color is *fula*, it is *canela* (cinnamon). It is neither white, nor black, nor is it *mulata*, nor is it *sarara*. It is cinnamon. I am from the interior of Salvador (Bahia). A plantation called Calandro. My parents were *sarara*. I am the granddaughter of a captive, from *negros*, from the people of the time of captivity.

"From slavery?" I asked Beatrice. She continued;

> From slavery. I am the granddaughter of a slave. I am the granddaughter of a Portuguese woman. My grandmother, my great grandmother was white, white, with green eyes. Like yours. Because when the captivity ended and the *negro* had freedom, my [great] grandfather married a Portuguese woman. Now, my parents, well, I have two qualities. [My family has] whites with green eyes, with their hair flowing down their backs. The same as yours. And it has *negros* with kinky hair also. One part came from within the captivity of slavery and the other part comes from the Portuguese.

Beatrice's description of her familial origins sounded like a classic Brazilian narrative of "race mixture." Although she stressed the existence and whiteness of this single Portuguese woman within her family, I was, at the moment, more interested in hearing anything she might have to say about slavery. She told me truncated but very vivid stories that she had heard about gruesome tortures and exploitation. The slaves, she told me, were forced to carry the "*brancos*"

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about on their backs, as though they were beasts of burden. Those who collapsed in exhaustion or despair were beaten mercilessly.

Later in our conversation, I asked her tell me again about the Portuguese woman.

> Yes, I knew her, my grandmother and my great grandmother who was very old. I was a child and she was white, hair the same as yours.... After [her] there was my grandmother, who was a mother, and the daughter of my great grandmother on my father's side. [My family] had hard hair, [they were all] *preta*, because they leaned to the side of my mother. And [there were] other cousins, of a very fine family with green eyes and good hair. And why did my cousins lean that way? Because they leaned toward the side of their grandmother. Of their father. Who was the son of my grandmother, [who was the daughter] of my [white] great grandmother. So, there was a mixture. The Portuguese with *negro*, *negro*, *negro*, *negro*, *negro*.

I took a deep breath and asked Beatrice, "Do you think this side with the descendants of the Portuguese woman had more value in the opinions of people back then?"

> Yes, they did, because of color. Yes, they spoke like that. .... Because they had money, they were fine people with good hair and green eyes, blue eyes. There is like this -- a racist color complex (*complexo de racismo pela cor*). So, we lived on one side, in the middle of everyone, and we didn't run along behind them. Each was left to themselves, right? And we didn't bear any rancor towards them over this. And they had pride because they had good hair, they had green eyes, they had money. And that's how they lived. For our part, we had poverty, as God wills it.

Beatrice's recitation of her family's history is not only classic, but in the end, sadly predictable. Class and color followed typical trajectories such that the white side the family achieved economic success, while the dark side of the family, unable or proudly unwilling to "run behind" struggled in poverty. Beatrice's recitation of her own life history was also classic, uncannily reminiscent of Gilberto Freyre's literary scenarios, and like the story of her ancestors, it is also, in the end, both predictable and tragic.

As a child, Beatrice lived and worked with her parents and eight siblings on a traditional plantation so large, she told me, "that you didn't know where it ended." The property still bore the ruins of slave quarters and the stocks in which slaves had formerly been tortured. At the age of twelve, Beatrice continued, she "had lost her honor" to the plantation owner's asthmatic son,

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who was then in his late twenties or early thirties. I asked Beatrice if she had been afraid and she said, "No, later we lived together."

She described her relationship with the master's son, which continued for another six or seven years, as one of love and mutual concern. Beatrice bore three children in a small house the man built on his family's property. Her own mother evidently supported their relationship, while most of those in her companion's large family did not, because, she told me, "he mixed the *negro* family with their white family."

When her companion became extremely ill and was hospitalized for an extended period, some of the men in his family came to Beatrice's small house, threw her violently to the ground, and burned her home to the ground. Beatrice fled in great fear to her mother's house. When her companion returned from the hospital he "nearly died from crying," as Beatrice put it, and he sent her to work as a maid in a residence in a nearby town "until he could build another house." Things "did not work out" however, as Beatrice was sexually harassed by her new *patrao*. Her companion's relatives apparently continued to threaten her, and in the end, at her mother's urging, she fled to her sister's home in the distant city of Salvador. From thence she went to Rio, completely alone, leaving her three small children behind.

She arrived in Rio, alone and without social contacts, at the age of nineteen. "I didn't even know what a *morro* was, I didn't know anything," Beatrice said, describing her first days in the big city. "My suffering was so great that I slept in the woods and awoke to find rats biting my feet." Later she wrote a letter to her sister. It was returned with a stamp saying "address unknown." "I almost cried blood," she told me. She has not heard from her family nor have they heard any news of her in over forty years. "No one knows if I am even alive," she lamented.

Beatrice's story was so dramatic, so theatrical in fact, that I rolled it back and forth in my mind for months, wondering if her life had really imitated the tragic shadows of the Brazilian literary imagination. Perhaps the story was an embellishment of her life before she arrived in Rio, where she remained without family, unmarried and childless, liked and respected by many friends on the hill but in many ways, very alone as she approached old age. Perhaps, I reflected

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on the other hand, it had all happened just as she had told it. At any rate, Beatrice had certainly had a difficult life and her stories articulated and circled back upon scenarios in which she had been both embraced and loved by whites and left behind, cast out and rejected by them. They were her family. Her life, whether composed within the imagination or within the concreteness of lived history, was, in this sense, quintessentially Brazilian.

Many of of the stories that I heard about family articulate with the broader meanings attributed to race and color, and it is within racialized idioms that scenarios of hope and despair, pride and shame, success and failure are sometimes implicitly and sometimes explicitly construed. While many of the narratives I have quoted in this chapter concern family, people who share "blood," and who continue, unlike Beatrice's more fortunate cousins, to live in similarly disadvantageous circumstances, white domination remains an often invisible protagonist in intimate, home-bound stories. "The masters," whether figured literally as the owners of one's forbears or as the *patroes* of post-abolition stories, may be figured, as in Beatrice's story, as heartless or loving. They may be invested with yearning, described with awe, hated or forgiven but for the most part, they are, in the stories I heard, simply accepted as a force of history.

Another old woman told me of an evil slave mistress. This woman, my informant said, put the dark-skinned "*negro* babies" into the oven where they burned to death, while preserving the "*mulata* babies" -- those who gave witness to her own blood -- to serve her. Although the story was intended to illustrate the horror of domination, it was also a parable of sorts, for I was told that one of the light-skinned babies who was allowed to live was my informant's grandmother. To be infused with whiteness, whether through voiolence or love, it was implied, was to be granted a chance to survive in the shadow of power.

The distinction between "*negros*" and "*brancos*," and between "*negros*" and "*mulatos*" was forged in the context of slavery. These family narratives bespeak the existence of a racism far more complex than the "cultural survival" of archaic arrangements however, and they echo historical and present forms of divisiveness that are made more cruel -- and more resistant to the

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will to forget -- by their intimacy. Brazilians of all classes and colors speak in metaphors of mixture, blood, and union, and in some senses, their suggestion that they all belong, ultimately, to the same family is true. Like all families, theirs is full of secrets that remain for most part, unspoken, yet known through an undercurrent of ambivalence, yearning, betrayal and sometimes, violence.

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6

Whiteness: Middle-Class Discourses

In 1983, while an undergraduate, I conducted research on the reproduction of elite status among the affluent youth of Campinas, a provincial city in the State of Sao Paulo. Over a six-month period, I stayed, for brief periods of time, in the homes of several of the city's upper-middle class families. During those times, the only people of color I interacted with were the *empregadas* who worked in these homes. One of my hosts told me that her two *empregadas*, who lived in a tiny cubical underneath the main floor of the house, were "like family." They were not permitted to sit on the family's furniture and at meal times they were summoned by the ringing of a small bell that always remained on the dining room table. In describing her relationship with her *empregadas*, my host added that she envied American women such as myself, who had not grown up dependent on outside help.

When I began my research in Campinas, I was not particularly concerned with the issue of race. It continually emerged, however, as a persistent subtext in the discourse and behavior of elite Campineiros, the vast majority of whom were white. Sometimes references to color were more than a subtext. I overheard, for example, crude *piadas* or jokes about people of color. In the case of one family, my host, a wealthy landowner, had adopted a black child whom he punched, threatened and berated. He justified his behavior with constant claims about the inherent racial inferiority of his adopted son, saying for example, "What can you expect with a person of his color?"

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For the most part however, the issues of color and race remained at a subtextual level, just as people of color in many senses, remained hidden from view. They were not to be seen at the watering holes that were frequented by the city's well-to-do youth and they were barred, as everyone knew, from joining the elite clubs where my informants spent their weekends trading business and political information and riding horses. Racism, as a social or a political problem, was never explicitly discussed. Comments about color were occasional and sometimes they referred less to a preoccupation with blackness than with whiteness. When I attended a birthday party for a woman in her early twenties, for example, one of the guests asked me, as if in challenge, "People in your country think that all Brazilians are *negros*, right?" A hush in the laughter and conversation followed as half a dozen young women waited for my response. I told them that most Americans did not know or think anything about Brazil, and believed besides, that it was a Spanish-speaking country. This comment needless to say, did not boost my popularity.

During my fieldwork in Rio, my encounters with middle-class whites were far more infrequent. Several months after my arrival on the hill, a white American friend visited me during the week of *carnaval*. Avoiding the turistically-geared and prohibitively expensive shows held in the Sambodromo, we frequented the Avenida Rio Branco, where competitive *blocos*, or *carnaval* groups, many of them based in Rio's many morros, paraded, in what seemed a listless and disorganized fashion, throughout the night. The overwhelming silence surrounding the issue of racism was abruptly broken by a troop of men passing by who bore a banner reading, "There is no difference save for the color of our skin." Although *cariocas*, those from the morros anyway, like to claim that they never tire during *carnaval*, they were clearly exhausted. They passed quickly into the shadows at the end of the Avenida and, paralyzed by a simultaneous elation and raw sadness, I could not follow them.

Middle-class white *cariocas*, for their part tend to eschew the *carnaval* of their native city, saying that they deplore the noise, the disorder and the shameless promiscuity. Huge numbers of them flee the city, destined usually for mountain or seaside resorts. Some remain

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however, and their numbers are swelled by foreigners and Brazilians from other cities, who come seeking the very things that the *cariocas* disdain. It was on the Avenida Rio Branco that Varena introduced me and my American friend to Sergio, whom she called her "*namorado do carnaval*" or *carnaval* boyfriend. He was a white middle-class man from one of Brazil's southern-most states, who had stopped to "play" the Rio *carnaval* enroute to an overseas engineering job. He was accompanied by a younger man, Felipe, also white and middle-class, but a native of Rio.

Together, Varena and her *patrao* were operating a *barraca*, a consessionary stand on the Avenida, and they had set up several tables where their customers could rest and drink beer. Tomas and several of his musician friends brought their drums and guitars, taking advantage of one of the rare moments in which they might enjoy the respect, and feel the unreserved pleasure, of outsiders. I conversed with Sergio while Felipe attempted to flirt with my friend, who understood very little Portuguese. Sergio told me, in rather excited terms, that his wife and daughters had "exactly" my "coloring" -- very pale and freckled, with light brown hair. "They aren't like me," he told me at least three times, "They are very, very light, as white as can be. Just like you!" When Sergio referred to his own color, his tone seemed slightly disparaging, yet he was unambiguously white. Although he never gave Varena his address and telephone number, he insisted that I take them and that I call his wife, who would love to have me as a house guest. Given our coloring, he seemed to suggest, we had a great deal in common.

During a pause in our conversation, I overheard Felipe's tortured and increasingly aggressive attempts to engage my American friend. He seemed to hope that by speaking loudly, he could overcome her inability to understand Portuguese. "We whites have to stick together," he said, leaning towards her conspiratorially, and waving his arm toward the crowd of people on the Avenida, most of whom were of color. "What did you say?" I asked Felipe. "Be careful, she's an anthropologist!" Sergio immediately warned him. I insisted that I was merely curious, an obviously mendacious claim, for I had blurted the question in an abrupt and startled fashion and had utterly ruined Felipe's attempts to fabricate a sense of private intimacy between himself and my friend. Sergio said in barely audible tones, "Be careful. She understands Portuguese." I

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could not persuade Felipe to repeat the remark and he eyed me warily during the remainder of the conversation.

After *carnaval* had passed, Varena and I sat in her room telling stories about the odd and disjointed encounters that we had had during the festival. I told Varena that I had liked Sergio but that I was taken aback by his emphatic comments about my color. "It seemed a little racist or something," I said, "As if he was saying that light skin is better than dark skin." "On the contrary," Varena told me, "he adores *negros*." Sergio had told Varena that he had grown up surrounded by *negros* and that he had "*saudades*" or nostalgic yearning for their company as an adult. Varena had comforted him, had given him what he had stopped in Rio to find.

My description of these encounters helps to introduce some of the common themes whereby middle- and upper- class whites tend to articulate a sense of their own identity and their relationships with poor people of color. They serve, in addition, to illustrate some of the difficulties involved in what Nader (1974), arguing for the need for ethnographies of dominant groups, called "studying up." My attempts to contextualize my research on the *morro* by generating an understanding of the ways in which their white middle-class neighbors talked about color, race and racism, was the most difficult aspect of my research in Rio.

I had relatively few opportunities to interact in natural, non-interview settings with middle-class whites while in Rio. This was largely a result of my own research priorities, which demanded intensive participant-observation on the *morro*. Like middle and upper classes everywhere, in addition, those in Santa Teresa tend to socialize behind closed doors. Privacy, which seemed to have little meaning for people on the hill, appeared to be something of a strategic and conspicuous commodity among their middle-class neighbors. High walls, into which jagged bits of broken glass had been set in the cement, and heavy iron gates, often fortified their homes. Zealous doormen scrutinized visitors and prior communication by telephone was absolutely requisite. Protection against crime and a symbolically emphatic

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separation of the public world of the street and the private world of the home went hand in hand (see DaMatta, 1985).[1]

Om the *morro*, my dependent position and my pupillary role did not erase the fact that as a white middle-class foreigner, I came from a world of greater power and privilege. My presence offered novelty and, no doubt, a certain kind of prestige, especially given the fact that I clearly preferred to spend my leisure hours, and to entertain visiting American guests, on the hill rather than on the asphalt.[2] Many of Santa Teresa's middle-class residents on the other hand, are well-traveled and educated, and foreigners, whether researchers, tourists or expatriates, are hardly novel to them. The fact that two of the middle-class whites with whom I had contact were convinced that I was working on a masters degree -- despite my explicit and repeated assertions to the contrary -- is indicative of the assumptions that were made about my status and the significance of my research. As in the experience of all anthropologists, my positioning and the prestige that I was assumed or not assumed to represent, were interpreted in profoundly different ways by informants who occupied different locations within locally and transnationally constructed status hierarchies.[3]

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[1]Unlike my informants on the *morro*, my middle-class informants were at most, only vaguely acquainted with me. I contacted most of my potential informants by phone, briefly described my research, and requested an interview. To a certain extent, I worked by "snowballing" on contacts. Three of my informants were "patrons," or employers of friends on the *morro*, and these people, in turn, provided me with introductions to others. On the whole however, my informants did not share the same social networks and there were significant social and ideological differences between them.

[2] I had, in fact, rapidly adopted the perspective of most people on the *morro*: the asphalt was dangerous by night and the hill, by contrast, was completely safe. During the entire period that I lived in Rio, my only brush with crime occurred when I was simultaneously mugged and threatened with sexual violence by a white student on a university campus; I had gone there, at night, to attend a rare lecture on racism in Brazil. Needless to say, my friends on the hill, while extremely sympathetic and concerned, were not surprised by my recitation of the event, and they dismissed my halfhearted attempts to justify the risks I had taken.

[3] As was the case in Morro do Sangue Bom, there was, of course, a degree of internal differention among my middle-class informants in Santa Teresa. Three of my informants characterized their families of origin as "lower" or "lower-middle class," and two, a mother and her daughter, belonged to a family that had been historically prominent and very well-known among the national political elite. The majority characterized their families of origin as middle or upper-middle class. The current income levels of all of my informants were similar however, and to somewhat varying degrees, all felt economically threatened by the deepening recession

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When I did meet middle-class whites informally, whether in the neighborhood of Santa Teresa or outside of it, I often told them, in the course of what began as a friendly conversation, that I was an anthropologist studying issues related to race and racism. Sometimes those I met changed the topic of conversation rather abruptly. Often, they insisted that while there was some racism in Brazil, it was, as the entire world knew, far worse in the United States; I would do better, some said explicitly, to study the issue in my country. The fact that I lived in a "*favela*" and said nothing negative about my experience there probably did little to endear me to most of the middle-class people I met. When middle-class people referred in a facile and generalizing way to the people of Rio's many *morros* as "*marginais*" -- "people who made their living from crime" -- and asked me, implicitly or explicitly, to lament with them "the ignorance in which those people live," I flinched inwardly. The practical difficulties of studying Santa Teresa's middle-class then, were compounded by a personal reticence and my awareness of a certain kind of absurdity behind that reticence; I approached those potential informants with whom I shared so much -- whiteness, middle-class status, and a secure if unexamined position of privilege -- with reluctance, trepidation and an unshakable feeling of disorientation.

When I did succeed in recruiting middle-class informants for interviews, I was almost always disappointed in the results. I had become accustomed, in my interviews with people on the hill, to a narratively constructed sense of escalating exposure and drama. I was comfortable with my role as a rapt pupil, who needed to be informed about racism in Brazil because I was a foreigner and because I was white. My queries, people on the *morro* suggested, might be difficult, and even awkward at times, but they were directed towards something that was significant in their lives, something that they could, without a doubt, speak to with unassailable authority.

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and the austerity measures imposed by the Collar government (see O'Dougherty, 1997). Despite that fact, all employed domestic servants. Within the middle classes, the avoidance of domestic labor continues to be regarded not as an indulgence but as a necessity and it is, in fact, a significant and conspicuous marker of middle-class status.

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For the most part, my middle-class white informants were bored by my questions and I wondered if my apparent failure to elicit "interesting material" was a result of my fear -- of which I was always conscious -- of offending them. I was relieved by the fact that none of them expressed the slightest interest in my research in Morro do Sangue Bom. I was never called upon to express the opinions and impressions that I had formulated while living there, and although I occasionally played, as politely as possible, something of a "devil's" advocate in my interviews with them, this fact allowed me to avoid disruptive and confrontational conversations. Although I obviously sensed the condescension in the tone of several of my male informants especially, the significance of their complete lack of curiosity about what I had learned on the hill did not strike me until later. It was only after I left the field that I came to recognize the fact that it was the very flatness, awkwardness, boredom, evasion, and vagueness that characterized so many of my interviews with middle-class whites that constituted, if incompletely, the very ethnography that I had despaired of grasping and describing.

In one sense at least, those who told me to study my own world were right. I could not at first see whiteness as a territory partly because I had always lived within it. I had forgotten that in the restricted American world from which I had come, as well as the tightly bounded world of Santa Teresa that I entered so incompletely and ambivalently, racism is always someone else's problem and its pathos, whether constructed through rhetorical artifice, or lived as a part of everyday life, is rarely, if ever felt. I had encountered the articulation of a kind of indifference that should have been immediately and entirely familiar to me. My forgetfulness was an overdetermined one.

These comments are partly addressed to a growing concern within anthropology: the ways in which ethnographic encounters are negotiated and the insistence that these negotiations often spell out the very boundaries of power and identity that we attempt to investigate through more conventional ethnographic means. In a far more direct way, however, I intend them to illustrate the difficulties involved in studying whiteness, the subject with which this chapter is centrally concerned. These difficulties, whatever their personal, reflexive dimensions, are more

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constructively viewed as symptomatic of the peculiar forms of practice and self-representation that characterize the dominant: the assumption of cultural "normality" and racial neutrality, the location of the self within a symbolically elaborated but taken-for-granted "mainstream," and the largely unconscious construction of boundaries that insulate the exercise of privilege and power from a confrontation with their effects on the non-dominant.

In the section following this one, I locate the concerns of this chapter within several overlapping literatures. My examination of the discourses of middle-class whites is informed by a currently expanding literature on the interface between dominant discourses and racism. While this literature primarily refers to European discourses and polities, it suggests provocative parallels with Brazilian cultural patterns. Much of my analysis is also informed by, and is intended as a contribution to, the emergent literature on the social and cultural construction of whiteness.

The third section focuses on the ways in which my informants described the social geography of their lives, particularly as it related to the racial structuring of the environments of their youth. While significant enough in themselves, these descriptions allowed my informants to comment on race and racism at a safe remove. This section spells out many of the structural and discursive features of the insularity I refer to above.

The fourth section is very directly inspired by my informants themselves and it concerns the ways in which they highlighted and discussed their preoccupation with hypothetical scenarios of "interracial" sex, courtship and marriage. While nearly all of my informants invoked the tropes of mixture and miscegenation in defining and describing themselves and their nation, they implicitly, and at times, explicitly defined "interracial" relationships as culturally transgressive.

The fifth and final section focuses on the ways in which middle-class white informants defined, described, and in a number of ways, discursively erased the significance of racism in their country. Of special interest in this section is the illustration, through direct quotation, of the discursive strategies used in asserting the primacy of *discriminacao social*, or class-based discrimination vis-a-vis the insignificance of color-based discrimination. I conclude that while

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none of my informants denied the existence of racism altogether, their belabored qualifications index the durability, as well as the complexity, of Brazilian discourses of *democracia racial.*

Dominant Discourse and Whiteness

As in previous chapters, my presentation and analysis of the discourse of my middle-class informants is based less on explicit theoretical framing than it is upon what I take to be the central themes, preoccupations and rhetorical strategies that were introduced by informants. The chapter is nevertheless informed by several literatures and it engages, at a more or less implicit level, a number of theoretical and analytical concerns, chief among them the identification and definition of whiteness. The present section situates the chapter within the literatures that inform it and briefly introduces several of the central features that animate whiteness and, by extension, my informants' comments.

Narratives of racism produced by people of color, and analyses of such narratives, are, as I have noted in Chapter Four, relatively scarce. There are several literatures, spanning a variety of disciplines however, that are devoted to the issue of white racism. Some of this literature is implicitly, if not explicitly concerned with discourse. Particularly in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s social scientists within a variety of disciplines were preoccupied with prejudice, discrimination and intergroup conflict. Most of these works did not focus on racism within specific local arenas but rather, examined prejudice and/or discrimination in more abstract and often typological terms. Concern with these issues continues into the present decade, as is evidenced by recent books based on public opinion polls (e.g., Sniderman and Piazza, 1993); social-psychological analyses (e.g., Lott and Mauluso, 1995); socio-political analyses (Omi and Winant, 1994; Winant, 1994); philosophical analyses (Gordon, 1995) and interdisciplinary collections (e.g., Goldberg, 1990), to cite only a few.

Literatures that concern white racism in Brazil are also fairly extensive. The UNESCO-sponsored ethnographies, for example, were explicitly concerned with "race relations." As in the case of early discussions of racism in the United States, these and similar studies tended to

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focus on the sociological categories that were popular from the 1950s to the 1970s: white's "attitudes," "stereotypes," and "prejudices" regarding blacks. (See for example, Bastide and Fernandes, 1955; Cardoso, 1960; Wagley, 1971; for reviews of this complex and influential literature, see Pierre-Michel Fontaine, 1980; Saunders, 1972; and Winant, 1992.) Although these studies do not explore everyday discourse in a systematic fashion, they often include the quotation of colloquialisms and similar discursive evidence of derogatory stereotypes of blacks. Of particular interest in the attempt to systematize a sociological understanding of whites' attitudes is Bastide's and van den Berghe's (1957) analysis of a questionnaire distributed in Sao Paulo. Although the authors concluded that whites' derogatory stereotypes about, and social avoidance of, people of color were widespread, they noted that "the etiquette of racial 'good manners' results in the greater self-censorship on the verbal expression of stereotypes" (1957:171). Read from a presentist perspective, these dated studies of racism often invoke, at least implicitly, the problematic of discourse and silence and they provide historical evidence of a remarkable stability within Brazilian whites' discourses (subsumed within the analytical categories of "attitudes," "stereotypes," and "prejudices") about blackness.

More directly relevant for the purposes of my own analysis is the currently expanding area of discourse analysis and its application to the study of white racism (e.g., Billig, 1988; Goldberg, 1993; Smitherman-Donaldson and van Dijk, 1988; van Dijk, 1992, 1993; Wetherell and Potter, 1992). These works have grown out of a larger literature that concerns the intersection between discourse, ideology and power (e.g., Bakhtin, 1981; Bourdieu, 1991; Foucault, 1972, 1980; Fowler, et. al., 1979). Focusing primarily on "First-World" countries, studies on discourse and discrimination emphasize the fact that racist discourses and/or practices have become, during the last decade especially, increasingly covert. They have, in related terms, become more contradictory as well. In *Elite Discourse and Discrimination*, for example, van Dijk focuses on the "more subtle discursive dimensions of modern elite racism" within Europe (1993:x). He notes that practices and discourses which appear to be characterized by subtlety are

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accompanied by those which are overtly racist and furthermore, both covert and overt styles are articulated within a larger discursive arena within which contrary claims are made;

> ....more or less shared egalitarian and humanitarian norms and values in ethnic relations require a more subtle, indirect, and strategic way of speaking or writing about ethnic minority groups. Assertions expressing lofty ideals of hospitality, understanding, and tolerance, as well as emphatic denials of racism, may thus combine with more or less overt forms of derogation, marginalization, and problematization of immigrants, refugees, and other minority groups (Ibid: 283).

Racist discourses and practices in these countries it seems, have come to approximate what might be called "traditional patterns" in Brazil, where racism, when and if it is acknowledged, is described (by my informants in Morro do Sangue Bom at least, and by Brazil's black militants) as "*incubado*" (incubated or latent), "*sutil*" (subtle), "*mascarado*," (masked) "*abafado*," (hushed up), "*escondido*," (hidden) and, "*embaixo do pano*," (under the cloth). While my informants' comments, quoted in Chapter Four, suggest that they are frequently exposed and subjected to overt forms of racism, it is nevertheless apparent that covert, ambiguous and even "unconscious" discourses and practices constitute a constant, quotidian backdrop, before which more explicit, dramatic and describable events are staged. Although driven by very different histories, the Brazilian discourses of *democracia racial* bear striking similarities to the more recently elaborated discourses of "racial and ethnic tolerance" in areas such as the United States, Europe and New Zealand.

Especially relevant to my analysis is the recent concern, primarily located within the discipline of anthropology (Crapanzano, 1986; Frankenberg, 1993; Joseph, 1994; Sacks, 1992) but also history (Roediger, 1991; Ware, 1992), sociology (Alba, 1990; Wellman, 1977) and literary criticism (Morrison, 1992; Mullen, 1994), with the social and cultural construction of whiteness. The racism of dominant (white) groups is at least implicit in this concern, yet it incorporates the larger issues of identity, discourse, power, and social location.

The belatedness with which scholars have turned their attention to the cultural construction of whiteness, is, of course, no accident, but is directly related to extremely pervasive assumptions about the nature of ethnicity and the exercise of racialized power. With

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the exception of "ethnic whites" and elites, about whom there is a voluminous literature, whites who are members of modern middle-classes have been implicitly treated as a kind of "default" category. Whiteness is rarely problematized. Whites have been figured as a "norm," as representatives of the "mainstream," as a people devoid of the invented traditions, strategies, and self-conscious cultural embodiments that the term ethnicity has come to connote for a variety of disciplines. As such, contemporary middle-class whites (who are in many symbolic and structural senses "dominant" without necessarily constituting a political or economic elite) are an invisibly present yet rarely described group in much social science writing.

At the center of the emerging focus on the cultural construction of whiteness is Ruth Frankenberg's ethnography of white American women, *White Women, Race Matters*. Her cogent remarks on whiteness as an understudied issue are apt;

> ....in a a social context where white people have too often viewed themselves as nonracial or racially neutral, it is crucial to look at the "racialness" of white experience.... whiteness refers to a set of locations that are historically, socially, politically and culturally produced and moreover, are intrinsically linked to unfolding relations of domination. Naming "whiteness" displaces it from the unmarked, unnamed status that is itself an effect of dominance. Among the effects on white people both of race privilege and of the dominance of whiteness are their seeming normativity, their structured invisibility (1993:1, 6).

The notion of invisibility is central, of course, not only to whites' self-representation but to the failure of conventional assumptions and analytical categories to highlight the construction of whiteness. Frankenberg continues;

> If race shapes white women's lives, the cumulative name that I have given to that shape is "whiteness." Whiteness.... has a set of linked dimensions. First, whiteness is a location of structural advantage, of race privilege. Second, it is a "standpoint," a place from which white people look at ourselves, at others and at society. Third, "whiteness" refers to a set of cultural practices that are usually unmarked and unnamed (Ibid:1).

The novelist and literary critic, Toni Morrison is similarly concerned with unmasking whiteness and its largely implicit assumptions. In *Playing in the Dark*, her reference to "slaves" and "masters" is both metaphorical and literal when she writes,

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> It seems both poignant and striking how avoided and unanalyzed is the effect of racist inflection on the subject.... The scholarship that looks into the mind, imagination, and behavior of slaves is valuable. But equally valuable is a serious intellectual effort to see what racist ideology does to the mind, imagination, and behavior of masters (1992: 11-12).

As Morrison suggests, the absence of scholarship on whiteness mirrors a lack of critical self-reflection within middle-class white groups themselves. Unlike the members of non-dominant groups, whites do not measure themselves against others but are themselves a standard by which difference and otherness is calculated. Whiteness often seems, above all, to be defined by a peculiar insularity that is manifest in cultural practice as well as within the discourses through which whites define (or fail to define) and describe themselves.

The discursive conundrums and consequences of this insularity occupy the center of *Waiting*, Vincent Crapanzano's study of white South Africans. While unique in many obvious respects, white South Africans share with other national, primarily white, middle classes, insular, narcissistic and "self-indulgent" preoccupations that are strikingly devoid of critical, reflexive or ironic perspectives. The "self description" of South African whites, Crapanzano writes, "is repetitive, mythic, closed in on itself" (1986:27). While whiteness is logically defined through blackness and racialized forms of opposition in countries such as South Africa and Brazil (where whites are a statistical minority), as a contrastive, reflexive category of difference and privilege, it rarely appears in everyday discourses of self-representation. "Blacks, Coloureds, and Asians," Crapanzano notes for South Africa, "were not 'significant others' from whose standpoint the white could look reflectively at himself and discover so to speak, his identity" (Ibid: 39). Brazilians insist that they are all "racially mixed," and while a more dramatic contrast with white South African notions of the racial self can hardly be imagined, I would argue that white Brazilians' discourses of self-representation tend to be articulated from within a similarly insular vantage point.

Although I would suggest that many of the contours and functions of the discourses and silences that define whiteness are shared by the dominant groups of modern "multiethnic" and "multiracial" nations, their content obviously varies locally. White Brazilians' mythically

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elaborated and incantatory insistence on their "mixed heritage," while radically different from South African discourses, functions, like Afrikaner's repetitive tales of victimization and long-suffering, God-given heroism, to preclude an examination of whiteness as a culturally constructed, and thus profoundly un-"natural," source of power.

In somewhat paradoxical terms, Brazil and other Latin American nations may differ from other countries in the extent to which whiteness is consciously constructed, symbolically located, and maintained. Felipe's comment to my white American friend that "We whites have to stick together," far more than a pick-up line, is premised on a transnational, and hence deeply racialized notion of shared whiteness. His own and my American friend's whiteness, he intended to suggest, transcended national and ethnic boundaries. Felipe was certainly aware, moreover, that the Rio *carnaval* is stereotypically associated with eroticized "interracial" mingling and I believe he also meant to invoke the presumed necessity of carefully preserving whiteness as a highly exclusive, superior, and possibly threatened resource. The young Campineiro's question ("People in your country think that all Brazilians are *negros*, right?") clearly articulates a preoccupation with white Brazilians' membership in what might be called a transnational racial elite. She implicitly invoked the notion of a First World - Third World hierarchy in which national wealth and power are associated, sometimes in causal terms, with the "racial" composition of national populations. It was not this notion that she resented but rather, the possibility that Americans might lump her with her darker brethren, and thus repudiate her culturally elaborated claim to transnational whiteness.

Galen Joseph (1994) emphasizes this preoccupation with whiteness in her analysis of middle-class whites in Buenos Aires. Portenos, she argues, have "a diasporic consciousness" which highlights whiteness and asserts a privileged kinship with Europe and white Europeans. Such notions, I believe, may be common to dominant groups throughout Latin American countries that display ambivalent and contradictory preoccupations with unique and often "miscegenated" and "hybrid" national identities while preserving, for their white elite, an extra-local, yet highly exclusive sense of racial identity and belonging.

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The insularity of middle-class white Brazilians is thus not as totalizing as I have suggested. While they may fail, like white Americans and white South Africans, to see themselves through the eyes of their non-white compatriots, they envision their whiteness as existing within, and in some senses, as measured against, a transnational standard. This standard may be a largely imagined one (Anderson, 1983), yet it reflects and buttresses objective structures of racialized power that transcend national borders, even while maintaining First World/Third-World and North/South global hierarchies.

Returning to the notion of the invisibility of whiteness, I want to emphasize in closing this section that the exercise of racialized forms of power, whether understood locally or transnationally, often occurs (particularly in its most quotidian forms) in the absence of force, and the more "technical" practices that we tend to associate with domination. Whiteness, as the very tone of my informants' comments suggest, is constituted as much, if not more, by passivity than it is by easily identifiable practices of aggression, coercion and exclusion. van Dijk, who emphasizes the role of dominant discourse in maintaining racialized forms of oppression in Europe, makes a similar point;

> Many of both the subtly and the blatantly racist events that define the system of everyday racism are enacted, controlled, or condoned by white elites, that is, by leading politicians, professors, editors, judges, officials, bureaucrats, and managers. If whites are not themselves actively involved in these modern forms of segregation, exclusion, aggression, inferiorization, or marginalization, then their involvement in the problem of racism consists in their passivity, their acquiescence, their ignorance, and their indifference regarding ethnic or racial inequality (1993: 6).

The emerging focus on the social and cultural construction of whiteness then, re-envisions the nature of racialized power. Social and political passivity and indifference to the consequences of racism for the non-dominant are themselves privileges of whiteness. The focus on whiteness also de-centers and thus expands our understanding of both the cultural and the moral dimension of racialized oppression by shifting attention away from the notion that racism is "a problem of blacks" and directing it towards what Morrison calls the "mind, imagination and behavior of masters" (1992:12). The "urgent anthropology" suggested by Nader's call for an

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"understanding of the processes whereby power and responsibility are exercised," (1974: 308,284) is re-figured through the project of unmasking whiteness, which is concerned not only with the mechanics of structural domination but with the culture of dominance. Crapanzano introduces his ethnography of South African whites as a study about "the effects of domination on everyday life -- not the everyday life of people who suffer domination but of the people who dominate." He insists that his informants lived in an everyday world of "social entrapment." Apartheid, like the master-slave relation that Morrison invokes, has a deeply penetrating and meaningful metaphorical dimension, and as such, it is hardly limited to South Africa, nor is it limited to a hermetically imagined past. Similar forms of social entrapment, I would suggest, characterize the everyday lives of my informants in Santa Teresa.

Growing Up White

Merely asking middle-class whites about their opinions and views on issues related to race and racism is, as I immediately discovered, unlikely to produce the kinds of extended commentaries, personal observations, anecdotes and descriptions of experience that such direct questions tend to elicit on the *morro*. This difference is related to more than the obvious fact that whites are not directly subject to anti-black discrimination and prejudice. While none of my informants denied the existence of racism in their country, their descriptions of racism tended to be brief, and more often than not, they were tempered with a variety of qualifications.

The Brazilian news media -- to which all of my highly literate middle-class white informants were exposed -- frequently "covered" events and issues related to racism in countries such as the United States and South Africa. During the period of my fieldwork for example, the beating of Rodney King in Los Angeles and its explosive aftermath were repeatedly profiled in newspapers and nightly news shows. Coverage of events explicitly related to racism in Brazil was a rarity however, and as my quotation of informants' comments will attest, the dearth of such reports was taken as evidence that racialized forms of discrimination are themselves a rarity.

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Relatively speaking, Brazilians have no soundbites, news reports, editorials, courtroom dramas, docu-dramas, public policy debates, racialized and controversialized celebrities, or similar "hot on the spot" percolating representational media by which they might frame an evolving everyday public discourse (or set of discourses) about racism in their country. For reasons that are obvious and no doubt, highly justified, as well for less obvious and more politically dubious ones, most Brazilians consider this fact to be among the greatest blessings of their society. This fact, combined, obviously, with whites' lack of direct experience with the consequences of racialized oppression, contributes towards their lack of fluency on the topic.

Scratching beneath the surface of silence in Morro do Sangue Bom elicits subterranean discourses and private dialogues -- what I summarize with the term "narratives of racism" -- but among middle-class whites, I came to feel, there was usually little of similar substance and heft beneath the silence. The relative anemia of comments made in response to very direct questions about racism is itself revealing, yet equally revealing were the ways in which white middle-class informants described the social geography of their lives, as both children and adults.

As with the comments of people in Morro do Sangue Bom, I consider their responses as constitutive of more than representational schemata. White middle-class informants, while lacking much of the broader perspective on what is said to be "*incubado*" or "latent" in their society, present, however incompletely, a more or less accurate ethnography of their own world. Much of this world is defined, as will be seen, by their class position and by whiteness.

Virginia, a woman in her mid thirties, was my first middle-class white informant. A brief examination of the first moments of our interview helps to frame the discussion that follows. It took me a matter of minutes to walk from my house close to the top of the hill to her high-rise apartment building, which I will call Edificio Silvestre, situated on the asphalt just below the hill. It was Virginia's building, with its luxurious aqua-marine swimming pool, in fact, that Joia had broken into as a mischievous child. The building filled much of the foreground of the view seen by those living at the top of the hill, and many who had apartments in the building had, for their part, a clear and practically intimate view of the irregularly tilted, russet-colored

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homes that crowded the hillside. Virginia's apartment was very spacious and airy, full of plush couches and chairs and despite its proximity to Morro do Sangue Bom, I had entered a different and separate world. Virginia was dressed informally in jeans and high-top sneakers and she chose to be interviewed at a glass-topped table ringed by straight-back chairs.

Repeating what I had told Virginia on the phone, I explained that I was a doctoral student conducting research on race and racism. I began by telling her that as a foreigner, I was trying to grasp the local vocabulary of race and color and I asked her to list all of the words that she could think of that were used to refer to a person's race or color. She provided eight terms, the average that people on the *morro* had listed, but unlike those on the hill, who often forgot to mention "*branco*" or white, Virginia provided three terms that describe the varying hair types and skin tones of white people. I told her that I was under the impression that many people considered the term *negro* offensive and she agreed with this. I asked her if she thought the same was true of other terms, such as *preto*. She replied,

> I never refer to people this way, so I never thought about this. I think all of these words are racist. I have always been concerned about not categorizing, with not treating people in this way, do you understand?

Striking out in what I hoped might be a fairly general direction, I asked Virginia if she had any memory of her first awareness of differences in color. She paused and responded,

> No, I don't remember, no. I never concerned myself with this. It wasn't an important thing for me. I don't remember.

There was in Virginia's voice a hint of what sounded like defensiveness, a suggestion perhaps, that the question itself was somehow gauche, inappropriate. She brightened somewhat when I asked her if she recalled when she had first became aware of class differences;

> I think so. I think that this was more important for me, when I entered the department, the university... I had contact with the student movement, people, right, who were poorer. I think it was more or less then. Consciousness of class. I was eighteen years old.

To clarify, I asked, "It wasn't when you were a child?" She confirmed that it had not been. "And when you were a child, were there people of color in your school?" I asked. "No,"

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she answered, "This was in Sao Paulo. I came here when I was twelve but there weren't any here either. It was a Catholic school, of the upper middle-class." I asked Virginia if her family had had an *empregada* when she was growing up. A number of *empregadas* had worked for Virginia's family, she told me, including "whites, mulatas and *negras*." "We never noticed this either, no," she added. I asked her to describe the relationship between her family and the *empregada*(s) and her defensive tone returned;

> It was normal! It wasn't a relationship of slavery. She was always treated humanely... She took the weekends off. She was always well-paid, well-treated. There wasn't discrimination in terms of food.[4] It was just normal.

Other informants besides Virginia used the word "normal" to describe their relationships with *empregadas* and they seemed to suggest in their tone that my question was odd, one that perhaps they had rarely, if ever, given much thought to.[5] I asked Virginia if she had been particularly close with any of her family's *empregadas*. "No," she said, and did not elaborate. Virginia's terseness startled me, and for a brief and awkward moment I felt as though my fund of questions had run dry. It seemed that my attempt to negotiate a lively conversation in which Virginia did most of the navigating was about to run aground.

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[4] In this comment about food, Virginia signals her awareness of the fact that some middle-class families forbid their *empregadas* to eat the same (more expensive) food that they eat.

[5] While my informants did tend to view the *empregada*-employer relation as thoroughly "normal" and uncomplicated, Virginia later betrayed the fact that it could be one of intense antagonism. When I asked her to comment on her impressions of the social relations between the residents in her building and those in Morro do Sangue Bom, she said,

> I can speak for myself. I hardly know anyone [on the *morro*]. I don't want to know them. I am afraid, like -- I am afraid. And it's not a question of prejudice. Quite the contrary. It's because I have had some people from the *morro* working here in my house and it was very uncomfortable (*barra-pesada*). They steal. They dissimulate. Do you understand? They are dishonest in the relationship. It's a horrible thing of dispute, of not being friends, of gossiping when they leave here, speaking ill [of me]. The people there talk behind your back. They arrive one day, you think everything is fine and then they leave your house and they go saying horrible things about you. And for me, these people have very bad characters, very low-level, untrustworthy, so they are people that I don't want to involve myself with. And I even sense a great beauty in black people, in poor people, with the popular movement. Do you know what this popular thing is?

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Virginia, it appeared was not comfortable talking about race and racism. Her comments that she "never concerned" herself with issues such as racial/color terminology and her statement that "it wasn't an important thing," and further that her family "never noticed" the color of their *empregadas*, have a dual dimension. Relying on Winant's (1992) typology of modes of thinking and talking about race in the United States, Frankenberg notes, "For many white people in the United States... 'color-blindness' -- a mode of thinking about race organized around an effort to not 'see,' or at any rate not to acknowledge, race differences -- continues to be the 'polite' language of race" (1993: 143). Frankenberg adds that "color evasion actually involves a selective engagement with difference, rather than no engagement," and she suggests that it is associated with the "corollary of power evasion" -- a failure, that is, to recognize the racialized nature of white privilege and power.

These comments, it is clear, are an apt description of Virginia's way of talking about race as well. By contrast, she is more comfortable talking about class. The fact that she traces her first awareness of class difference to her experiences as an eighteen year-old university student, despite having had servants working in her home throughout her childhood, is striking, however. Her attendance at a private all-white "upper-middle class" secondary school, in addition, apparently did not lead her to an awareness of either color or class differences.

"Awareness" in this sense, must be qualified; Virginia must certainly have been aware of such differences in the sense of perception but the thoroughly naturalized arrangements within she lived remained unexamined. Her comments that she was "not concerned" with and "didn't notice" color thus have another dimension, in addition to that of "color evasion" as a "polite" mode of discourse: the issues of class and color differences were (and are) for her so naturalized that they seem to elicit no reflection. They require no narration, no stories, no description, no explication, no justification. In saying that she "never thought about this," Virginia may be speaking literally and factually, as well as (perhaps incidentally) politely. The insularity of her world and of her evasive discourse -- which she shares with others of her milieu -- seem to offer no vantage point from which she might articulate a fuller awareness of her positioning, the social

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and racial structuring of her "space" vis-a-vis that of others, who live in very different and distant worlds.

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Benedita, a woman in her fifties, lived in a large apartment complex very close to the *morro* that I will call the Plazaflor. She had been living in Rio for many years and was campaigning for a position in a local political office. In our interview, however, she emphasized her regional origin and identity as a Paraibana, or native of the northeastern state of Paraiba. Paraiba is one of Brazil's more impoverished states and migration from there to the southern cities of Rio and Sao Paulo has been fairly constant for decades. The stereotypical Paraibana is, unlike Benedita, however, poor and uneducated. She spoke at length about her irritation with such stereotypes, and during the first ten minutes of our interview, I despaired of turning her attention from her own victimization to that of poor people of color.

I asked Benedita to describe the area where she had spent her childhood and adolescence. She first told me that her town had a "mixed" population, yet as our conversation continued, she told me that there were only two black families in the immediate area. Descended from slaves, they remained very poor, in contrast to most of the townspeople, whom Benedita told me, were *fazendieros* or plantation owners. Benedita recalled however, that there was a small town nearby that contained a large number of black families. She knew very little about this town and had never been there herself. Sometimes, people from there or elsewhere passed through her town;

> When a *negro* appeared, he was remembered as someone who was "impudent" (*safado*), someone bad, you know? If someone passed through the region who was a *negro*, people didn't trust them.... If a *negro* appeared he must be bad. Right away, being *preto*, you were obliged to be bad, do you understand?...It was, how do you say this? There wasn't a defined consciousness about it. But when a person was there, in the presence of the *negro*, this consciousness appeared, you understand? There were very few *negros*.

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Benedita's family later moved to a more urban area within the state of Paraiba when she was a teenager and there, she had a black classmate. It was in this context, she told me, that she first became aware of her father's racism;

> Even in my house, the treatment towards a friend I had who was black, the difference was very great. I remember a [black] friend that I had....On Saturdays and Sundays, we would get together to study, in a group right? And I was behind in some material and I arranged for this [black] friend to come to my house..... And I would serve a soda then, right? So, when I went to serve my friend, who had arrived, right away, my father said, "What are you giving to that *negro*?" ... My father was a businessman. He didn't have a consciousness of this, you understand? He just repeated things without thinking. Later I had a discussion with him, after my friend left. I argued with him and he said things like, it's fine for him to be the friend of my brother, to go out with my brother. But to be my friend, to be my boyfriend, [that was different].... I couldn't court him, that wouldn't do. I was seventeen years-old.

When I asked Benedita what her mother's attitude had been, she responded,

> My mother didn't have an opinion in this case because I also wasn't interested [in courting him]. It was just a thought of my father's, you understand?.... I also wasn't in love, you understand? If I had been in love -- but I wasn't. So, it was this reaction of my father's. Such a horrible reaction. And this is common here.

In describing her father's racism, Bendita introduced two themes which were common to most of my interviews with white middle-class informants. Although most of my informants, like Benedita, described insular worlds in which they had extremely limited opportunities to interact with people of color (outside of the employer/servant relationship) the issue of sexual or romantic liaisons with them seemed to constitute a recurring, if extremely abstract preoccupation.

Benedita's comments also resembled those of others in the way she referred to her father's racism as a kind of knee-jerk reaction; "He just repeated things without thinking." As will become clear, many of my white middle-class informants referred to racism, particularly the racism of their own parents, as a kind of unconscious discursive reflex, something that should not finally, be taken too seriously. Still, Benedita was disturbed by her father's remarks, which she introduced by saying that "the treatment" that people of color of color received in her house was different from that received by white people. In this Benedita's comments were unusual; a

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number of my informants suggested that while their parents or other relatives might say racist things "without thinking," their way of "treating" people of color was an entirely different matter.

Gilberto, a man in his late forties made the most explicit, if ambiguous declarations about the difference between "discourse" and "treatment." He also lived in the Plazaflor, close to the *morro*. He had grown up in a more urban setting, in a small city in the interior of Rio de Janeiro. During much of our interview, Gilberto made a distinction between what he called "ideological" and "cultural" racism. The precise parameters of this distinction were never entirely clear to me, yet for the most part it seemed, he defined "ideological" racism as a conscious heart-felt conviction of the inferiority of people of color, whereas "cultural" racism was constituted by a traditional, knee-jerk "discourse" within which people of color were derogated.

When I asked Gilberto if he had interacted with people of color during his adolescence, or if he ever discussed the issue of racism with his friends, he described the street on which he had lived as a youngster;

> Just listen. I lived on a street that was middle- and upper-middle class even though my father was more lower-middle class. I studied in a middle-class private school. In school we perceived that some segments were discriminated against.... I was a political activist in school, right? But this, [racism specifically], there was nothing in school. So, about the street. Now, close to our street there was a tenement building. It was a residence of the last class before the *favela*. So, it was close to our house, this building, and it had a family of *negros* -- not really poor *negros*, they were educated. And they were well-received on our street. Now, this was between us children.... There were families of the middle class, of the upper-middle class [that had] this discourse of racist people [but it] wasn't ideological. They were well-received in most houses, I mean .... it was neither an ideology nor a disposition. On the contrary, it was joking around (*brincadeira*).....

In these comments, Gilberto describes an urban world quite different from the rural areas from which some of his neighbors in the Plazaflor had immigrated. His street, composed mostly of the residences of middle and upper-middle families, was close to a tenement housing "the last class before the *favela*." This type of residential segregation, in which boundaries are drawn in a

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street-by-street, or even building-by-building fashion, characterizes large sections of Brazil's urban geography, including that of Rio.

The proximity of the borders constituted by class and color does not coincide with an elasticity in social relations however. The few people of color who were "well-received" on Gilberto's street, were, unlike their co-residents in the tenement, "educated." Unlike its English-language equivalent, the adjective "*educado*" in Portuguese suggests far more than access to formal education. It implies a stereotypically middle-class style of behavior: polite, well-mannered, "cultured" and reserved.[6] After Gilberto told me that this single "family of *negros*" had been well-received, his comments became garbled by conversational repair work and incomplete sentences. Having introduced the distinction between "ideology" and "*brincadeira*," or joking, he continued:

> For example, there were three brothers from this building. The oldest was [called] "Midnight," the next was "Eleven-thirty," and the other was "Eleven O'clock." Those were their nicknames. There was an even stronger nickname; one of them was called "Monkey." But it was because he resisted this relation, right, the joking of the whites.... But back then, there was no black consciousness. I'm talking about things of thirty years ago. So, "Midnight" was even an affectionate way [of addressing him]. Now, the one who resisted this, who was offended, was called "Monkey." So he fought with us and we wanted to offend him by calling him "Monkey." But the others didn't complain. "Hey, Midnight!" [we would call out]. So, it was easy.

Although the brothers were "educated," Gilberto and his childhood friends, it seems, were unable to let their difference in color go unmarked. Although Gilberto attempts to assert a kind of innocence in the scenario he describes -- one unsullied by "black consciousness," "ideology," or "disposition" -- the "easy" joking of children serves to guard the borders of whiteness. The fact that one of the brothers "resisted" what appears to have been the constant marking of his "racial status" does not lead Gilberto to question, in a truly reflexive sense, the micropolitical implications of such forms of "*brincadeira*," nor does it lead him to wonder about

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[6] The expression, *mau educado*, on the other hand, connotes one is rude, loud, irresponsible, impetuous and generally ill-mannered. It is typically intended of course, as a reference to lower-class status.

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the extent to which it is either accurate or appropriate to suggest, twice in fact, that the family was "well-received." Although constructed from the hindsight of thirty years, Gilberto's figuring of this memory remains ambiguous and ambivalent. He suggests that he and his friends had been insensitive, yet his insistence that the nicknaming was a form of "*brincadeira*" that was unrelated to either "ideology" or "disposition," serves to dismiss the hurtful social, political and interpersonal significance of the "joking."

As was the case with several of my informants, Gilberto's youth, and his university education coincided with the military repression of the 1970s. He characterized himself as a political activist, involved in the student movement, and he supported the communist party. He discussed politics with his friends and although he did not address the issue in our interview, it is even possible that such discussions placed him in danger. Certainly, he could not have been unfamiliar with politically repressive forms of silence and the patterns of injustice they seek to conceal. Yet for Gilberto and his radical friends, racism did not represent a significant dimension of systemic injustice in Brazil;

> At that time, social discrimination was strong but racism was not discussed. The lack of liberty was so grave that we discussed the lack of liberty. Racism was secondary.

As my quotation of Gilberto's comments later in this chapter will demonstrate, he continues to feel that racism is neither a significant political issue, nor a particularly interesting topic of conversation.

Heloisa, a woman in her early forties, also lived in the Plazaflor apartment complex. Like Gilberto, she had grown up in an urban area. In two respects, her description of the social geography of her childhood differed from that of other informants. Heloisa told me that when she was a child, her family did not have an *empregada*. "We were between the middle and lower class," she explained. When I asked Heloisa if there had been any people of color living on her street or in her neighborhood, she told me that *pretos* lived in her own building. She apparently did not think of them as neighbors in any but the most technical sense however; her building was

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"enormous" with twenty apartments on every floor. Despite what might have been a somewhat insecure class position, Heloisa attended a private school, and this fact in itself, isolated her from her neighbors and from people of color generally;

> Well, racism. I stayed in a Catholic school for years and years, you know, and there weren't people -- people who were dark. Generally, they were in the kitchens but that was [in the homes of] the richer class..... I don't know how to tell you how it was on the street [where I lived] because I spent from [nineteen] fifty-eight to seventy-nine locked up. So, my adolescence was spent in this school.

When I asked Heloisa if she and her friends had ever discussed racism during the time of her adolescence, she referred again to the cloistered atmosphere of her school;

> No, because education in a Catholic school has a tendency to prevent you from seeing what is off to the side. You don't participate in anything. I remember the only thing through which I participated in [public] life in '68 or '69 was when they put a television in front of us and said, "Look, Man is on the moon!" So, it wasn't a thing that you would think about. On the contrary, in fact, you didn't think [at all]. And the [nuns] themselves were a little racist in the treatment that they showed to the people [of color] who worked in the school. They were a bit racist. We were never made aware, [we never had] debates about delicate things, right, politics, or social things -- nothing that would cause discussion.

Heloisa's mother evidently wanted her to remain within an exclusively white world. She told me that her mother was "racist in the extreme" and I asked her how her racism manifested itself;

> It was declared! Declared! [Laughs.] [She would use] expressions -- we have these expressions here in Brazil, [for example], "The *preto* when he doesn't shit on entering, shits while leaving." Have you heard this? [Laughs.] And the sort of thing, the sort of thing, if I was going out with a guy who was brown from being on the beach, she [would say], "*Crioulo*! You can not [date him], my daughter!"

Her mother, Heloisa continued, not only forbade Heloisa to date boys who were "*moreno*" from having spent time at the beach, but she insisted that Heloisa was not to become like them;

> She didn't like me to stay on the beach. She wanted me to stay very white, to characterize my Aryan race, right? To stay white. I didn't go to the beach so that I wouldn't get dark like other people.

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The term "Aryan race" would seem to be peculiarly out of place in Brazil, yet this was not the first time I had heard it spoken by a white informant. Other informants besides Heloisa, in addition, referred or alluded to a preoccupation with whiteness as a physical, and indeed, aesthetic attribute. They might feel, as one informant clearly did, that when they traveled in Europe, their tanned skin branded them; they were not white enough. Too much time on the beach could also lead to ribbing by their professional colleagues in Brazil, who might jokingly call them "*crioulos*."

Because Heloisa characterized herself as always having had anti-racist sentiments, I asked her if she and her mother had fought over this issue. I had intended my question to refer to racism generally but as Benedita had, Heloisa continued to focus on the issue of "interracial" courtship by emphasizing the fact that she herself had never considered becoming involved with a man of color. She told me that while she herself was "not racist" and had "no problems with people who are dark," she "would not have imagined courting a dark person." Although Heloisa's mother seems to have expressed considerable concern over the issue (as had Benedita's father), the notion remained abstract for Heloisa. "We didn't have fights, " Heloisa explained, "I simply didn't take that side of her seriously."

As an adult, Heloisa remained, like the most of her neighbors, within an exclusively white (and middle-class) social world. In describing racism very generally, she told me, "There is that classic thing, that you can't imagine that [a black person] could be the owner of a car." She continued,

> It's social [discrimination] also. For example, I have a dark *empregada* and I treat her as a person who is dear but you feel that it's not the same thing. You don't see people [of color] at parties, the parties that I go to, you don't see them, right? They aren't there.

Heloisa arrived at this conclusion only after I had asked her questions about the black friends that she told me she had. In response to my questions, she qualified her statement by saying that "in honesty," she had been thinking about a man who had once worked in her office.

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He was of color, although not "really *crioulo*." She had never discussed the issue of racism with her co-worker and thus had no sense, she told me, of his views on the matter.

Because Heloisa had expressly told me that she had always had an anti-racist sensibility, I asked her, towards the end of our conversation, if she had an opinion on Brazil's black movement. She knew almost nothing of it, and associated it with art and music, but she said that generally, it "would be great if someone... did something against racism." I asked her if she would attend an anti-racist demonstration and she responded,

> I wouldn't go, I wouldn't go. Because in the first place I think -- I don't know. I'm going to try to be honest, okay? [Laughs.] What a horror! [More laughter.] Because in the first place, there would be many *pretos* there -- Because look, do you want me to be sincere or what, Beth? The *preto*, he has a different smell. It is very strong, right? This makes me uncomfortable (*me incommoda*). Not the *pretos*, but their odor.

During my interview with Heloisa, she told me that her fifteen year-old daughter, Maura, was racist. She told me that her ex-husband, David was also, and said, "Perhaps she gets it from him." During the day of our interview, David was visiting Maura and Heloisa in their apartment in the Plazaflor (where he had previously resided with them) and Heloisa encouraged me to interview him as well.

A man in his forties, David, like Benedita, had grown up in a more rural area, what he called a "small city" in the state of Minas Gerais. When I asked David to describe his family's class background, he told me;

> They were upper-middle class, plantation owners and administrators. My grandfather was a bank representative... a banker right, and when poor people arrived wanting to build a house, to buy a small piece of land from a *fazendeiro*, they didn't manage it and they didn't understand things very well. [My grandfather] would not receive poor people in his home.

I asked David to describe the town in which he grew up and whether any of his neighbors were of color. He responded;

> It is a small city and today it is more mixed but before it had a town center with richer people, plantation owners, right, and on the periphery there were black (*negro*) neighborhoods. Really *negro*, including neighborhoods where only *negros* lived, the descendants of slaves. There were families [in which people

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> had actually been slaves], grandparents, great grandparents. They worked on the same plantations and they are still there today.

David added that there had been no students of color in the school he attended in the town. His description reminded me of Dona Janete's depiction of the world of her youth, where as a small child, she helped her parents in the *roca*, the cotton fields of Minas Gerais, close to the original site where her great grandparents had labored as slaves. Class and color it seemed, fit together with nearly perfect symmetry in the rural world from which both had come.

I asked David if his parents or other relatives ever made comments or conversed about either race or racism. "My family is a family that, like -- has something racist," David began hesitantly. I asked him to continue;

> I remember that when I was very young, there was a girl who was a *mulata* and someone said, right -- and I liked her a lot and wanted to play with her -- so someone said that I should be more careful because one day I would wind up having sex with a *negra*.

I asked David who had said this and he continued,

> Oh, it was an older cousin right, and there was another cousin who had dated a girl who was very *morena*. She wasn't a *negra*, nor was she a *mulata*, she was *morena*. Because in Brazil, there are many *morena* people, from the Indian right, who come from the Indian. And the parents of this older cousin said that. They criticized her, saying she was a "little *mulata*." She wasn't white, therefore, she was a "little *mulata*." [They said], "You must be very careful not to get involved with (*namorar*) a *mulatinha*. Things like that. There are things like that in my family.

Perhaps because David was a boy, he was teased, rather than reprimanded, as Benedita had been. In David's explanation, it is suggested that while differences in color were recognized, whites were set off not only from *negros* but from all who were not "truly white."

David had evidently grown up in a very insular world. During our conversation, he told me that he had changed, in many respects, as he grew older. When I asked him to explain, he told me that he had formally "imagined that the world was for me, as I wanted it." Later, however, he discovered "that there is a mixture of races, of customs, a great number of things." He became comfortable walking through rough neighborhoods in Rio. He could stroll through Lapa, for example, one of the streets of which is known as a red light area. "I can walk through

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the middle of the transvestites, of the prostitutes.... I can see how their life is," he said. He also told me that he had discovered that he had "the capacity to make love with a *negra.*" He described himself as less prejudiced and fearful, more able to move through the urban environment in Rio.

Still, David described these experiences, and other places he had apparently visited, such as "the neighborhoods of Jews, the neighborhoods of *negros*," as exotic, almost otherworldly. "Each place has it's own interest and if that weren't the case, I wouldn't go," he told me. He had conquered the geography of Rio, and its diversity was laid out before him, somewhat like a museum display. His description of the city and his ease of movement within it immediately struck me as remarkably unlike the descriptions of the asphalt given by men of color on the hill. David intended his comments as an illustration of his increasingly "open" stance toward the world, the continuation of a process of overcoming the narrow prejudices he had swallowed as a child. He seemed unaware of the possibility that his sense of freedom and invulnerability were related to his identity as a white middle-class male.

Celso, a man in his forties who lived in the Plazaflor, was one of only a few informants who seemed to have a sense of how his whiteness constructed his relationships with people of color. Unlike others, for example, he acknowledged that the employer-*empregada* relationship might be, in some sense, unnatural and could lead to a distortion, a perversion even, of what he called "humanistic relationships." As a filmmaker, Celso was somewhat involved in Candomble, an Afro-Brazilian religion. Like David, he grew up in a town in Minas Gerais, within what he called a "very rural culture." Without specific prompting, he said, "Look, in my town, I was born in the interior where the relation with the *negro* was almost a relation of slavery." He told me that children of color were adopted as "*criados*" by some families, but that they were treated like "adopted animals." When I asked if his own parents had ever made racist comments, he responded, "No, it was more subtle." He seemed to reverse himself, however, for he explained,

> There was an unreserved attitude.... This discrimination was part of the everyday world. It was part of the everyday world, even from the point of view of the

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> people who [made racist comments], but who had strongly humanistic relationships. But it's like the *negro* wasn't a person.

Celso told me that as a child and an adolescent, he was brought up with the notion that a *negra*, a black woman "could only be an *empregada* or a prostitute." He suggested that although he intellectually rejected such notions, they remained implanted within his psyche. He told me that he had an extremely vague memory of being very close to a black woman, as though "it was in a different life," and that he felt an emotional sense of identification with people of color. Several of my informants were given to New Age beliefs and discourses and I asked Celso if he was referring to reincarnation. He said he was not but he could not clarify further, although I had the impression that he would have liked to. It seems likely that Celso had a residual memory of being cared for by a black nursemaid or *ama* during his infancy.[7] Many of his comments had a distinctly psychoanalytic bent. The context of this all-encompassing intimacy was lost to him and had taken on a mystical character. "I blame myself," he told me, "There is a guilt, I criticize myself over it, for my discrimination."

Eliza, in her early forties, was not only a *carioca*, a native of the city of Rio, but had grown up in the house where we conducted the interview. She lived there with her mother, Dona Margareth, her second husband, and her children. Unlike the Plazaflor and Edificio Silvestre, Eliza's house was situated a short bus ride from Morro do Sangue Bom. It was, however, very near one of Santa Teresa's other large morros. Eliza had, moreover, a certain degree of familiarity with Morro do Sangue Bom, through her *empregada*, Marta, whom she had laid off shortly before our interview. Eliza and her mother were directly descended from an elite family of nationally-known statesmen.

Eliza opened her interview by telling me that her husband's great grandmother had been a *negra*. Her husband, however, was unambiguously white. "But this mixture," she gushed, "I think it's incredible, isn't it?" She began to talk about the private schools she had attended

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[7] David, who grew up in a world very similar to that described by Celso told me,

> It was a normal relationship. Eveyone had a black (*negra*) *ama*. It was a tradition... So, everyone had an *ama*.

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(which were among the very best in Rio) and I asked her if she had had any classmates of color. She explained,

> There were orphans there, who worked in the school and who studied with us. But I never felt that there was any discrimination in the school.... There was equality between everyone, [racism] didn't exist. Since I was little, I always played with the *empregada*, who had a child.

Eliza, it soon became clear, was concerned with demonstrating that she had grown up in an integrated world and had developed an anti-racist sensibility. Unlike Virginia however, she was an effusive interviewee and there was no hint of defensiveness in her voice. The fact that the students of color in her school were orphaned, and had to work for their keep and their education, articulates, in fairly obvious way, with the structural features of racism, yet Eliza insists that there was "equality between everyone." Because she had abruptly brought up the issue of the *empregada*, I asked her to continue;

> R: And tell me more about this. Your family had an *empregada*?
> E: Yes, we had many *empregadas*! And a nursemaid. My nursemaid is my mother's *empregada* even now. She has been with my mother for thirty-seven years. She is a *negra*. She was a second mother to me, a person whom I adore tremendously. But we had a nursemaid, a cook, an *empregada* who served at the table, a washerwoman, all that. This was when I was little. Later things were worsening, worsening, worsening in the economy, so it's no longer like that. My father was a medical doctor, a very good doctor.... Our *empregadas* were *negras*. We had a few whites and many people from the north worked here who were mixed, *mulatas*, right? But the good ones were *negras*, you know. They stayed longer and we always had a good relationship.

In transcription, Eliza's exclamation that her family had many servants appears callous, even tinged with the self-conscious nostalgia and braggadocio of the formerly wealthy. During our interview however, I was struck by what sounded to my ears like a kind of innocent, unabashed enthusiasm, propelled, it seemed, by fond memories of a previously bustling and lively household. Eliza was neither defensive nor terse in her responses, yet as she continued, it became clear that she, like Virginia, saw the relationship between her family and their servants as "normal" and was never struck by the juxtaposition of certain forms of intimacy with

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enactments of extreme inequality. Both were very much part of an insular and taken-for-granted world;

> R: And did they live close by?
> E: They lived here in the house! They would stay fifteen days working directly, and every fifteen days they would go home on the weekend and return on Monday.
> R: And they had families also, children?
> E: They did. This one, my *ama* who is still with my mother, she never married. But there were others who had married and they had grandchildren who would come here to play with us. They lived over on the *morro*, you know, and they always played with us.... So during our childhood, in my relationship with her, my mother always left us with her. In fact, I don't remember playing with my mother. But I remember playing with the *baba*, I remember this. We liked her a lot, I mean we learned a lot of the simple things with her, the things of humble people.... Like music. We liked what they liked, do you understand?[8]

I asked Eliza if she had a consciousness of race or class when she was a child. She replied,

> I think I had a consciousness of this later. Because we stayed here all the time. We didn't go out much, do you understand, and our friends came here more because it is a bigger house, you know? I know that where we would go we had many friends [who lived in other neighborhoods] and that was another thing. There we played with people of our own level, you understand, and here, we played with people from the *morro*, right? I played with girls, like we played volleyball, everyone. Now, I really only had this consciousness later. When I was little I didn't have this -- I never saw -- I had -- I didn't have this conception. I don't remember, I don't remember.

These comments obviously, were very much in fitting with the way she had described the environments of her childhood. My question had been somewhat jarring for Eliza, for in some sense it seemed, it had interrupted the flow of her nostalgia, the images of equality and togetherness that she had woven. Consciousness of race and class -- the mere mention of which inevitably introduces the spectre of inequality -- could only have come, Eliza suggests, from an awareness of the poverty beyond her own doorstep, to which she was not exposed. Her

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[8] As Freyre never tires of asserting in his voluminous writings, the hybrid nature of Brazilian culture is given, above all, by the fact that white children are fed the food, told the tales, exposed to the music and coddled with the sensuousness of black, African-descended *amas*. Eliza's narrative, while no doubt representing an accurate description of her childhood, is an exceptionally conventional one.

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playmates from the *morro*, it seems, brought neither their world nor their subjectivities with them but were recast within, even swallowed by, the insularity of the big house, an insularity that was echoed within Eliza's adult discourse.

Eliza put considerable emphasis on the fact that her husband had a black grandparent, yet she seemed somewhat startled when I asked her if she had ever had a black boyfriend. She replied, "No, no. There wasn't, there weren't any, I didn't interact with any, I didn't interact with any *negros*." Her comment represented an abrupt departure from her description of the world of her childhood. "And if there had been, what might your mother and father have said?" I asked. Eliza seemed slightly embarrassed when she responded after a pause,

> Perhaps they wouldn't like it. I don't think they would like it, no. But never during my adolescence, I never had a single contact. In my relationships, there was never a *negro*.

"So, when you were very young, a child, you played with --" I began. Eliza responded,

> -- Yes, then I played [with people of color.] No, later, no. They, well, each one went to a different -- each went their way and -- it wasn't, there weren't -- I never, never -- There were some whom I knew in the university... there was a black professor, you know. But to date [a black man], I never thought about it. Nor was I interested in it.

As Eliza's hesitant and startled response suggests, my question had been an absurd one, given the contexts in which Eliza had spent her adolescence and adulthood. Moving through a socially exclusive and all-white world, there were simply no men of color present. Her discomfort was due as well to implication of racism in her frank, if reluctant response that "perhaps" her parents "would not like it." Concluding her comments, Eliza said, "But if something had happened, I would have been fine with it, you know? I don't have any problem with it, you know?" It was, however, a ridiculously implausible scenario.

Her earlier description of an intimate life populated by people of color was abruptly qualified by the fact that "each went their way." After her nostalgically constructed childhood had passed, she entered more fully into the processes of elite socialization, which virtually guaranteed not only that she would not date a black man, but that she would never think about it,

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nor be "interested in it." Her childhood playmates remained on the *morro* and took jobs as *empregadas*, while she attended elite schools, completed a degree at the university and traveled in Europe and the United States.

Much later in our conversation, when Eliza told me more about her family's illustrious history, I asked her if her family had had slaves during the last century. I expected that her genealogical reckoning would be fairly extensive and that her family's history would be extremely well-known to her; official, public versions of this history are, after all, a matter of public record. She replied however; "Look, no, no, no. I don't think, so. I don't know." Eliza's evasiveness did not seem calculated and I asked in surprise, "But didn't anyone talk about it?" I asked. She responded;

> No, no one talked about it. You know why? At that time, in the books that I have, [my grandfather], he [was involved in] the first census in Brazil. Now, at that time, there were no more slaves. Right, after 1888. Perhaps before, but I don't believe so, because this part of the family was very, very liberal. I think that if they had slaves, they didn't treat them badly. I think, I believe -- well, I hope, right? [Laughs.]

While Eliza's response was awkward, I still perceived no trace of defensiveness in her voice. The question made her genuinely uncomfortable. She had spent her seventeenth year living with a reactionary and racist American family as an exchange student, and while the experience did not appear to sharpen her perception of racism in Brazil, it enhanced her "anti-racist sensibility," already present through her rhetorically constructed Brazilianness[9] and her family's public liberalism. Most of my informants had this sensibility and while it remained rather abstract, articulated within the pale rhetoric that characterizes so much of polite liberal discourse, it was not, in Eliza's case, devoid of emotional investment. The possibility that her family's moral history may have been tarnished by slave ownership was, to her, deeply disturbing.

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[9] I refer most particularly to the discourses, assumptions and dreams of *democracia racial*, of which Eliza's entire interview was an examplar.

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I later interviewed Eliza's mother, Dona Margareth. A woman in her seventies, Dona Margareth was far more laconic, and at the same time, frank, in her responses than her daughter had been. As the child of a French mother and a diplomat father, she had spent her childhood moving between Europe and Brazil. When I asked her whether her family had owned slaves, her response was also hesitant but far more matter-of-fact than her daughter's had been. "Well," she said, "the great grandparents, probably [had slaves], right?" "But you aren't certain?" I asked. She replied,

> I am certain. Because it was normal. It's just that my mother didn't talk about it also, because she was in [Europe]. But everyone, right, who was wealthy, had slaves.

Dona Margareth's grandparents (as well as her great grandparents) if not slave owners themselves, certainly lived in an era and an elite milieu in which the ownership of slaves was, as she suggested, "normal." Abolitionism was a hotly debated topic within the elite circles to which Margareth's grandfather prominently belonged, and the city of Rio was heavily populated by urban slaves. Yet memories of the era of slavery it seemed, were even dimmer for this family than they were for people on the hill, some of whom frankly acknowledged an inward sense of shame over their humiliated heritage. Eliza and Dona Margareth could not or would not recall this aspect of their family's history.

Dona Margareth's relationship with the servants who worked for her family during her childhood was far more circumscribed than the relationships that Eliza had described. Her own *baba* or nursemaid was evidently a European woman, although the family had had servants of color during the years they resided in Brazil. I asked Dona Margareth to describe her own relationship with the family's servants;

> R: And did they actually live here?
> M: Yes, they lived here, they always lived here.
> R: Did they have their own children living here with them?
> M: No. Only once, there was one time, there was one who was married, a washerwoman who had a child. Later she left. Her son ... was born here, but generally, no.
> R: And did this child play with you and your siblings?

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M: Oh, no! No! No way! [Chuckles.]
R: Because your parents would not allow it?
M: I remember until now, yes, yes. I remember this story..... There was a little child, a baby, and he was separated [from me and my siblings], right? And I thought he was beautiful, right, and one time I picked him up and put him in my lap. "Oh, what horror! Margareth! Margareth, what are you doing!"... Until now, I remember this.
R: Your mother said this?
M: Yes. She was a very open person, quite liberal, but in this, no.

Later in our conversation, when I asked Dona Margareth if she and her acquaintances had ever discussed "issues related to race" as a young adult, she told me, "No, no, because it was natural that we didn't have contact with them." Dona Margareth had spent her young adulthood in Rio during a particularly interesting moment in the city's history. Partly because she was a laconic interviewee and had very little to say about the issues of race and racism, I encouraged her to talk about Rio as it was in the 1930s and 1940s. I mentioned that *samba* was evolving into a mainstream musical genre during that period and she told me, "Oh yes, they even liked it in Europe." She explained that she preferred the vibrancy of Brazil to Europe. Unlike her siblings who married and remained in Europe, she had never dated Europeans and at age 21, she resolved to return to Brazil, her native country. "I liked everything that was Brazilian, the music, the young men, I liked it a lot." When I asked her if she remembered anything about *samba* in Rio, she told me "No, because I didn't have contact."

In the end, Dona Margareth said very little about her first years in Rio after an adolescence spent mostly in Europe, and her grasp of Brazilian history seemed very thin, particularly given her own family's salient and well-documented role within it. She was educated in France, she explained, and only knew the history of Brasil through a few books that she had read. I asked her very generally, "What kind of an impression did you have of Brazil, did you have the impression that it had a culture very different from that of Europe?" She replied, "No, because Rio was a very big city, the schools were very good, German and French schools, you know." Protected by the insular embrace of an elite family, it seems, Dona Margareth's passage from Europe to Brazil broadened neither her perspective nor her experience.

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While she proudly identified as Brazilian, she continued, like most of Brazil's traditional upper class, to identify with the elite cultures of Europe.

As the comments I have quoted above suggest, my white middle-class (and upper-class) informants grew up in environments that were highly segregated in terms of both class and color, and this was true whether they lived in urban or rural areas. As children and adolescents, none of them had interacted with people of color who shared their status, with the exception of Benedita, who invited a black classmate to her home. She had, from her father's perspective, clearly made a mistake. These informants thus lived and continue to live, like people in Morro do Sangue Bom, within highly racialized structures. For the most part, they describe these structures as part of a "normal," taken-for-granted world, constructed not through personalized forms of agency, but through history, culture and society -- abstract, and as it were, "natural" forces.

Virginia, my first middle-class white informant, told me that "Most people have prejudices." "But are they themselves aware of this?" I asked her. "I don't know," she responded, "How can I speak for others?" "But your own parents, for example," I persisted, "do you think they have prejudices?" Her response captured, in a succinct and ethnographic fashion, the discourse, the metadiscourse, and the social world that so many of my middle-class white informants both wittingly and unwittingly described;

> Oh no, in their discourse, no! If a black (*preta*) *empregada* appeared, they would treat her well. But if I, in some form, appeared with a *preto* guy and said, "This here is my boyfriend" -- [pause] --they would not accept it. Do you understand? Many people think that they don't have prejudices because they don't spit upon or beat [people of color]. The reality is that [people of color] are not incorporated into your life, with normality. [They are not] in your social circles.

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Two of my middle-class white informants, Silvia and Aninha, shared experiences, and articulated a sense of themselves that differed in fundamental ways from those of my other

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informants. It is precisely the fact that their stories were so a-typical that makes them helpful in illuminating the social geography of whiteness.

Silvia, a woman in her early forties, was comfortably ensconced in a middle-class apartment but the view from her verandah, as is so common in Santa Teresa, looked out upon one the district's larger morros. During our interview, I asked Silvia very few questions. Issues related to race and racism were central in her life and with considerable relief, I allowed her to determine the topics and direction of our conversation. I began by explaining the nature of my research and noted that "some people feel that racism does not exist in Brazil." Silva interjected, "You just have to open your mouth to say that racism doesn't exist and you are already being racist." Without pause, she continued,

> I was always a woman who followed the pattern of a rebellious woman, of a marginal woman, at the professional level, at the level of posture, of life, in terms of divisions in the world...I did theater for many years, I've experimented with all kinds of drugs, I lived my life through that. I don't have like -- I'm not a person with this family discourse. I think that families are -- there are many types of families -- the models are extremely varied. So, I think that in a certain sense, plural and marginal identities always exist. ...I have an identity of marginality. I was always a woman who liked the street. I was always a woman who liked the night. I always wanted to be where there was a lot of movement. And *negros* have a lot of movement!

From the first moments of our interview then, Silvia located herself outside of many of the conventions that characterized the constricting world of her youth. She constructed much of our interview in fact, as a series of stories that depicted her attempts to escape from that world. She continued;

> For example, I -- when I -- I have a very strong history with *negros*, really very strong, right? I have a *negro* son, my son is an African, right? [His father is Senegalese.] I was born in Bahia, right, where the majority of the population is *negro*, right? The woman who took care of me when I was a child, who was a black woman, she is very strong in my memory and she was very much loved, including by my father. She was taking care of my father since his childhood. She was an *ama*. She was a *negra*, so I have -- she was a very strong person in my life, even spiritually. Really, I mean, I was a child and when, after she died, I communicated with her. She appeared to me, as if alive again. So it is a very strong memory. Until now she is appearing. She had died but she appeared at night so that I could see her, to tuck me into bed, doing the same things she did

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> when she was alive. It was clear when I awoke [the next morning] that I hadn't been sleeping [when she appeared] but when I told my family, they would dismiss this so that I wouldn't be afraid. Because I had seen a lesson from the other world. But here, in reality, I was not troubled because it was always a very close relationship, right?

Silvia was unique among my middle-class white informants in describing, at such length, the emotional tenor of her relationship with the *empregada* of her childhood. As she suggested, this was but the first of many intimate relationships that she shared with people of color. Silvia had been married twice, and both of her ex-husbands were men of color. Her son, as she said, was a "*negro*." Where my other informants conveyed a combination of evasiveness, awkwardness and indifference, Silvia communicated both a hardened, and a cynical perspective on the personal and political wages of racism as well as a highly mystical, negrophiliac fascination with people of color.

While Silvia's responses were unusual (and her experiences even more so) she drew from a well-worn discursive repertoire in which people of color are figured as more attuned to the "spiritual side," than are whites. Silvia engaged in another type of racialized objectification yet it was clear, in the larger context of our interview, that she had spent too much time in the intimate company of people of color to be entirely comfortable with generalizations. Her romanticism, while persistent, did not blind her to the complexity within her husbands', friends' and son's experiences.

Later in our conversation, Silvia described her relationships with her ex-husband, a widely-traveled, politically-engaged Senegalese man.

> He was very aggressive in his relationship with me because everything that he went through outside [of our relationship], everything that he went through on the street, that he assimilated from racists, right -- he had a a tendency to throw these things at me. [He would say], "Oh, because you're white, you are blah, blah, blah." So he threw it all at me.... The society is so conflicted, it is a society so full of conflict that this one with whom you live is going to suffer the first punch, right, because it seems that [he or she] is barring you.... You're from the world of the oppressor, the completely prejudiced world... You have that image and you represent that world.... So, there are perceptions, because every person of any color perceives [racism], right, but to be close to all of this, in a strong relationship -- So, it's very different, you begin to see that racism really exists, that it is very strong, right, and that it has been functioning for a long time.

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Silvia's comments engaged a kind of shifting perspective. Throughout most of our interview, she remained anchored, like other informants, within her own vantage point and her own voice, and referred in a fairly abstract and generalizing manner to "the *negro*." When Silvia says however, "this one with whom you live is going to suffer the first punch, right, because it seems that [he or she] is barring you," her vantage point shifts, in a dramatic and obvious way, to that of her ex-husband. She imagines what he might have felt and thought during the progress of his relationship with her. It was precisely the experience of seeing her whiteness reflected in her husband's eyes, Silvia suggests, that taught her about racism as a profound and totalizing form of entrapment that poisoned even the intimate space of conjugal love. Among all of my white middle-class informants, only Silvia and Aninha (who had also married a black man) engaged in this empathetic shift of perspective and expressed a preoccupation with how they might be represented by people of color. They had a consciousness, in other words, of their whiteness.

Aninha lived in an apartment in Edificio Silverstre, the large building situated just below Morro do Sangue Bom. Several minutes after we had begun our interview, Aninha's mother, whom I had not even known was in the apartment, burst into the room, shouting, "Aninha! Aninha, that is not true!" This woman -- she never introduced herself but I will call her Dona Regina -- began a twenty-minute tirade in which she argued that blacks are far more racist than whites and that they were, by nature, "impudent," "lazy" and "belligerent" people. It was time they stopped bellyaching about slavery, she insisted, and get over their "*raiva*" or rage toward whites.

There was nothing covert or concealed in Dona Regina's impassioned outburst. She never lowered her voice to conversational tones but shouted from across the room. She never suggested that prejudice and discrimination were based on class but referred over and over again to the relationship between "*nossa raca*" (our race), and the "black race."

Black Brazilians were poor, she told me, because like their African foreparents, they were naturally "indolent." "Indolent! Indolent!" Aninha shouted, trying with very little success

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to make herself heard over her mother's shouting. "What a racist thing! Look at that racist discourse!" Whites had always dominated blacks, Dona Regina argued, pushing on, because blacks had allowed them to. What galled her most of all was the "impudence" with which they treated her;

> I've already heard it, the *negro* himself has prejudice! A lot of prejudice! They have rage... I myself, I have already gone around and they say to me, "You *brancazeda*! You *branquela*! *Brancazeda*!"[10] Do you understand? [They say to me], "If there is a revolution here, if we have one, you will be the first to catch fire!" They have said that to me! Because I am this type [I appear to be] a foreigner, a *gringa*, so they say, "You *gringa*, I'm going to throw you in the fire!"[11] So they have so much rancor, so much hate.... I think that people have to work in order to get ahead... Now, most of them are indolent, lazy... All I want is to make you see is that [racism] doesn't just exist on the part of the whites. It exists on their part also.

I was stunned. What was usually "*embaixo do pano*" or under the cloth had burst out, full-blown, and it seemed that what I had come to think of as a subterranean discourse (whose presence I sensed but might never hear) was finally exposed. As I anxiously watched the audio tape spinning, I became convinced that this was the most significant moment of my fieldwork, the moment in which I was in the right place and the right time, and had heard the truth that was so painstakingly concealed, hushed-up, and masked. "Something," I thought, "is finally happening."

The temptation to quote, at great length, Dona Regina's outburst and her daughter's frustrated attempts to interrupt and challenge her, is intense. It was not merely that Dona

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[10] When I asked the meaning of term *brancazeda* (or the masculine form, *brancoazedo*) on the morro, people typically told me that it described a person who was "very white, too white." "Like me?" I asked, holding my pale arm out for inspection. This always caused laughter, and I was reassured that I was not a *brancazeda*. It's literal meaning is "sour white," and it refers as much to a disposition as to color. *Branquelo* has the same meaning. Both are racialized epithets.

[11] Although it has been asserted that the term "*gringo*" simply means "foreigner" in Brazil, it sometimes has a pejoratative thrust, in that it is associated with wealthy, insensitive and ignorant people who fail to observe, or even recognize, the Brazilian etiquette of cordiality. In *brincadeira*, Varena would sometimes refer to me as a "*gringa favelada*" (slum-dwelling *gringa*), particularly when I told her of occasions in which outsiders had heard, in my Portuguese, the inflections and risque vocabulary of the hill. When I sometimes referred to myself, in a self-deprecating fashion, as a *gringa*, I was often told, "No, you are not a *gringa*, Beth, you are an *estrangeira* (foreigner)."

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Regina's racist discourse was entirely overt but that when Aninha did succeed in shouting over her, she reverted, for the space of a breath, to the discourse of *democracia racial.* "You think your culture is better!" Aninha shouted. Dona Regina insisted that she believed that "everyone is equal," and that "the only difference is the color." Illogically, she returned to her denunciations. "She has her opinion and I have another," Dona Regina said, "and I try to treat it more objectively."

To devote too much space to this exchange in this particular context would, however, distort, as much as it would reveal. I do not doubt that Dona Regina's beliefs -- that people of color are indolent, that they are impoverished because they do not want to work, that they bear a hatred and rage towards whites -- are held, and at least occasionally expressed, by other middle-class whites, including those I interviewed in Santa Teresa -- and even, to a lesser degree by people of color. In a very real sense, Dona Regina's words represent the a subterranean text upon which a palimpsest of ambiguous, often polite and "liberal" discourses are imposed. Nevertheless, the intensity of Dona Regina's outburst is unusual. Denial, dissimulation, ambivalence, indifference and silence remain the predominate modes through which middle-class whites communicated their beliefs about race and racism with me. For the most part, I believe, they are similarly restrained in one anothers company.

After her mother left the apartment, Aninha began to discuss various aspects of racism, using on occasion, her mother as an example. "When she says these things happen to her," Aninha said, referring to her mother's description of the hostility that was directed against her by people of color, "I think it's this posture that she has -- ' I am better, I am white, I am a queen' -- so people feel this and they attack her... It's a form of defense." Like Silvia, Aninha had been involved with the black movement and her marriage to a man of color and the fact that she had three children of color had sharpened her perception of racism, such that it appeared to have become one of the central preoccupations of her life.

Needless to say, Aninha felt that she had moved, ideologically speaking, to a position very different from that of the exclusively white world in which she had been raised. I asked her

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if she had any sense of why she was "different" in these terms. "I think that there are many people who have a consciousness right, that people are equal," she began;

> I've always had this. It's a thing that I've had since I was twelve years old. The other day my grandmother was saying that when I was twelve years old, I said to her at the table, "You are racist and I am going to give you completely *mulato* grandchildren!".... I always thought it was absurd.... My grandmother has this thing, like she doesn't want to give a kiss to an acquaintance of hers because, as she tells it, she "doesn't feel right because she is a *negra.*" I mean, I never understood this! For me it was never -- this, this has always bothered me, people making this segregation, right? I think there are some people who are like that, right? I think that I am equal, completely equal to a person who is a *negro*....

Having already heard her mother's views on the issues of race and racism, I surmised that Aninha had grown up in a household in which racist assumptions went unquestioned and racist discourse, if not constant, was no doubt viewed as "natural." For her part, Aninha viewed her own anti-racist position as natural. She told no stories of beloved black *empregadas*, nor did she suggest that she had become thoroughly alienated from the "materialism" of the middle class, nor did she suggest that she was drawn to the "spiritual side" of *negros*.

Like all Brazilians, Aninha had grown up surrounded by the discourses of *democracia racial*, and its prescriptive tenets would have offered a countervailing influence to the kinds of discourses that her mother had so dramatically and loudly articulated. Aninha, clearly, had taken *democracia racial* to heart, and had carried it, really, to its logical conclusion. It was, before her marriage, an the idiom through which she had rebelled in what would otherwise have been the typical and expectable fractiousness of a middle-class adolescent.

According to public discourses, Aninha should have remained a typical Brazilian, the predictable product of a world that not only permitted, but celebrated miscegenation. On the contrary, however, after her marriage to a black man, Aninha became alienated from her family. She began speaking of her mother;

> It's this kind of thing, I don't know, in her head, she would want me to marry another type of man, right, who would be a prince, an image right, of the successful white man, who fits into the pattern, right? She never adjusted -- and the whole family! So, I became isolated. Because they didn't accept it.... People don't say anything openly. She and some of my siblings... who don't accept it,

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> they give other excuses to camouflage their racism. They don't say that it's because he's a *negro*, they say other things: "Oh, it's because he doesn't earn a lot [of money], he doesn't push himself."... And I myself, after a certain period, I didn't connect to it, this thing of the big family. I didn't participate. I was imagining another nucleus, other people who had other codes... Because I'm not going to hang around with people who won't have anything to do with *negros*! So I got out, I got out.

In referring to "people who won't have anything to do with *negros*," Aninha, like Silvia, highlights the naturalized arrangements within which her family, and middle-class whites generally, construct their lives. She confirms my point that discourses of "camouflage" are the norm, rather than her mother's impassioned tirade. In the following section, I focus explicitly on the ways in which my middle-class white informants reveal, and at the same time, attempt to conceal, their discomfort with the transgressive scenarios that the adult biographies of Aninha and Silvia suggest.

Whiteness and Racial Transgression

As is clear, many of my middle-class white informants appeared to be somewhat preoccupied with the issue of "interracial" marriage and/or sex, although only a few (besides Aninha and Silvia) knew interracial couples or had themselves dated people of color. Heloisa's and Eliza's suggestions that they had never socialized with black men, were never "interested" and/or had "never thought about it," accurately reflects the racialized structure of the world in which they live. Despite the fact that sexual or romantic relationships remained an abstraction in the lives of most of my informants, a number of them spoke more volubly about this issue than any other.

When I asked Virginia if she felt there was "prejudice against color," her first example concerned "interracial" dating. "For example, if you have a *negro* boyfriend, no one is going to like it," she said. "Who wouldn't like it?" I asked. "The family!" she exclaimed, "Mixed relationships!"

In this comment and others like it, Virginia focused less on the person of color who might be wounded by rejection, than on the familial disapproval faced by a white woman who

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dates a black man. Heloisa's first example of racism also concerned "mixed relationships; "When you see a person, generally a *preto*, with a blonde woman, you stare."

During the first several moments of my interview with Gilberto he told me;

> Racism even exists in a strange form. For example, a couple of different races is a thing that obviously calls your attention, and that's natural, because it isn't very common. But besides calling attention, it causes commentary like, "Hell, how can that pretty woman be going with a *negro*," or "How can that good-looking guy be going with a *negra*." Right?

Gilberto's comments clearly contradict the frequently expressed notion that relationships between men and women of different colors (or "races") are very common in Brazil, and that they represent in fact, the greatest evidence of *democracia racial*. Gilberto's description of the "commentary" that surrounds such couples as they walk down the street is accurate. My informants on the *morro* not only mimicked such discourse for the purposes of my research but participated in it themselves.

Although Gilberto had intended his comments as a critique of racism, at a later moment in our interview, he made it clear that he himself did not entirely approve of such relationships. His comments also revealed that ubiquitous associations between darkness and ugliness exist alongside of an association between darkness and sexual allure. Gilberto argued that people of color were more racist than whites and this was manifest, he asserted, in the way *negros* and whites talked about each other in sexual terms;

> So, I feel that racism is more on the part of the *negros*. I mean, the white very frequently admits that he thinks the *negra* is pretty, attractive -- sexual. It's common to hear this. [And when you say this, others] normally respond, "Are you Portuguese?" .... Because the Portuguese mixes with *negras*.... So the white often declares this publicly. The *negro*, no. It is inverse of him thinking the white woman is pretty.

Gilberto went on to say that perhaps a black man might say, "What a delicious blonde," but he suggested that this was not equivalent to the white man finding the black woman attractive. The black man's notions of white beauty, he argued, were informed by his exposure to television and other media which only held up white women as models of beauty.

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The logic of Gilberto's argument remained somewhat opaque. His greater concern seemed to be with what he called the "perspective of the black woman." "You well know how *negras* relate to white men.... in an affective, sexual relationship," he began. He suggested that black women were manipulative and calculating, seeing in the white man "the possibility of socio-economic ascension." "This discourse is stronger among black women," he continued, "upward mobility through a relationship with a white man, right?" Because Gilberto's rather tangled comments were embedded within a larger argument concerning the "greater racism of the *negros*," I was left with the impression that he intended them not as a wry observation on the dehumanizing consequences of racism but as a criticism of what he saw as the dubious moral "perspective" and "discourse" of black women who dated white men.

Celso's comments about black women and the way in which white men related to them were very different. For him, the white man was inevitably the "sexual aggressor," and the black woman a passive object. It was this scenario that most troubled Celso, and the one for which he "blamed" himself. As I have noted, he told me that he grown up with the notion that "a *negra* could only be an *empregada* or a prostitute." Later I asked him if his parents had ever suggested that he ought to avoid courting black women. He responded;

> No, no. There was never discrimination in this, no. But if you really had a [black] girlfriend it was because "the *negra* is for sex." "The *negra* is for sex." For fooling around, not for marriage. I think until the present day, it's not just in my house but in the whole culture... It's really discrimination. Right?

In these comments, Celso seems to be aware of the contradiction he introduces by first saying that his parents did not "discriminate" in these terms, and then by saying the prevailing attitudes (among white men) towards women of color is itself discriminatory. At various points during our conversation, Celso made such reversals, seeming to begin a response with a denial of racism (and/or a highly qualified statement) and then, with his face clouding, he would describe, in fairly graphic terms, quotidian forms of racism. He continued;

> And the thing of sexual initiation itself was often with a *negra*, very often with a *negra*, with the *empregada*. When I was an adolescent, this initiation was in the red light area [with prostitutes] or with an *empregada*. The *empregada*, in most

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> cases, was a *negra*. These were the first sexual experiences, right? And you didn't have to, you didn't have to marry them. There wasn't such a strong association [of sex with marriage]. "Not me!" It was that kind of business. And wetnurses, in my infancy there were a lot of wetnurses, that whole slavery thing. "The *negra* is good in bed and good in the kitchen." "They have an odor, the *negro* has an odor called 'bumdum,' a strong odor." Right? I think that's all [I can remember]. [Pause] "Indecent *negro*." Because they dance, they express a lot of sexuality in a more open way. "Indecent *negro*" or "animal." These things.... I think it's not just in Minas [where I grew up]. There isn't a person in the whole society, principally the society, I don't know, I don't know..... This colonialist society, right, colonial, has a lot of this thing.... I don't remember anything else.

My assigning of quotation marks to Celso's comments is, of course, interpretative; it is difficult to determine the extent to which he is speaking in his own voice or is quoting the voices that compose a public repertoire -- which he seemed to summon as if from a psychoanalyst's couch. While sincere, his concern remains a fairly insular one however. At the very beginning of our interview, I had asked him to describe examples racism and he told me, "It is an internalized thing, culturally internalized... I even feel, I have a consciousness of this in my relationship with a *negra* and in a relationship that I have, I pay a lot of attention to this, but deep down I feel that I'm somewhat racist." Celso was far less fluent in describing the mutidimensional consequences of racism for his neighbors who lived on the *morro*.

As I have previously noted, David, also from Minas Gerais and a resident of Plazaflor, told me that as he grew older he "changed" and discovered, among other things, that he had "the capacity to make love with a *negra*." Later in our conversation, I asked him, "If your daughter were dating a *negro* or a person of color, what would you think?" His response was halting and awkward;

> Oh, who knows? [pause] My upbringing is like that. You have to marry a person who is your equal, right? That is what you seek. For example, if this guy was above her, if he was a guy who was cultured, if [it was a relationship] of affection, of love -- it's difficult right, these days, for someone to have this pure thing of love -- if this person had these things, then it's not important right -- their color. But he would have to be very good and this is something -- I think it would [depend] on her luck, for her to have a *negro* person, but one with ability..... In truth, for me now, if he was a totally obnoxious *crioulo*, then I would be appalled! I would become really appalled with the guy!

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David's use of the term *crioulo* was not intended as a joke, nor as a neutral substitute for the term "*negro*" or "*preto*"; it was equivalent to a slip of the tongue. David may have felt that my question was somewhat impertinent -- although it was a natural, even an expectable one in the context of a conversation that he himself controlled to certain degree -- but I had the sense that he was struggling towards candor. As was the case with all of my informants, David had far less difficulty discussing the racism of his relatives and others than he did in describing his own views and I asked him, "And your own parents, what would they say?"

> Obviously they wouldn't say anything; they are educated. But naturally they wouldn't like it. They would accept it but they would say, "What a shame that he is *preto*." That's what they would say. And it's true what they would say!

There was a long pause as I waited to see if David would continue. I began to ask another question when he burst out in a loud and agitated voice,

> Perhaps I would even say this! Perhaps I would say this, because this is a thing of my culture! It would be, "What a shame that he is *preto*, although he may be very intelligent, a guy who is super- cultured. But damn, he's a *negro*!" Perhaps I would forget about it, I don't know. Because I haven't dealt with this. But when I was younger, it was put like this. I've changed but --

As will be seen in the following section, middle-class whites like David explicitly argue that prejudice is based on class and not on color. What David's comments make strikingly clear is the fact that in considering this entirely hypothetical scenario, David reveals that even if his daughter's black boyfriend were "super-cultured" -- of the elite class, in other words -- he would still feel deeply disturbed.

Undoubtedly sex and gender play a role in the way my middle-class white informants articulated the issue of "interracial" sex and marriage, although only Gilberto came close to making this fact explicit. Celso, for example, never mentioned the issue of relationships between white women and black men but focused exclusively on white men's sexual exploitation of black women. Although men are at far greater liberty than are women to engage in any type of sexual or romantic relationship, women are not necessarily more likely to avoid romantic relationships with people of color than are men. Silvia and Aninha, for example, had married men of color

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and they, along with Maura, David and Heloisa's fifteen year-old daughter, felt that women tended to be less prejudiced in this respect than men and boys.

What may be most at issue however, is not the relative willingness of white women and men to become involved with people of color, but the differing contexts in which such relationships tend to occur, and white men's control, or attempts to control, both white women and black women. Celso's comments about the sexual availability of black women and the lack of an "association" between sex and marriage, is but a variation -- a discursive illustration really -- of an old Brazilian colloquialism: "White woman for marriage, *mulata* for sex, *negra* for work." There is, of course, no equivalent saw that states how white women might appropriately exploit men of different colors. Whether or not women are less prejudiced in these terms than men, they are, given the control of women's sexuality, less likely to view their relationships with black men as sexual dalliance and they are more likely to be subjected to the opprobrious comments of others.

For David, there is no contradiction between his comment that he has "the capacity to make love with a *negra*," and the horror with which he would view his daughter's relationship with a black man -- even one who is "super-cultured." Envisioning such a relationship for himself, he relies on notions of masculine prerogative and the certainty that such a relationship need not disturb the racial status quo. Envisioning a very different relationship for his daughter, he is confronted by the collapse of racial boundaries, the spectre, really, of equality between himself and his daughter's hypothetical boyfriend. Lurking within this, of course, is the additional spectre of racial "pollution," the inverse of the whitening ideal to which my informants on the *morro* were subject. As my two informants who had married black men informed me, the birth of their children (whom they both referred to as "*negros*") was initially greeted with consternation on the part of their families,[12] and it led to an escalation of their sense

[12] Aninha complained for example, about an occasion on which her mother had surrepticiously taken her daughter -- who was only a small child -- to have her hair chemically straightened. She and her husband were "wounded" and upset by the "ideas that were put" into their daughter's "head."

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of alienation from parents and siblings. Whiteness, I would suggest, is viewed as a genetic resource as well as a racialized form of symbolic capital.

Needless to say, I was curious about fifteen year-old Maura's views on the matter of "interracial" courtship. As had other informants, she herself raised the issue of "mixed" relationships when I asked her to describe examples or incidents of racism with which she was familiar;

> When a person says, "Oh, here is my boyfriend," and they present a *preto* guy, and you're white, and you have a *preto* boyfriend, [they say], "Oh, you're going out with this guy, how disgusting!" A friend of mine went out with a *preto* guy and everyone gave her hell for it, saying that he was ugly and all that.

Maura was describing relationships within a group of adolescents that she socialized with in the Plazaflor. She qualified her comment by noting that her friend (whose black boyfriend was from another neighborhood) had been subjected to insults by boys and not by girls;

> Because the girls, there are four girls here. One was with a *preto*, the other also -- she thinks *pretos* are cute, [she says], "That cute one." And the other thinks -- she doesn't say anything -- and then there's me. But the boys are always saying, "What an ugly *preto*!"

Her friend's relationship, Maura told me, had been very brief. I asked her, "And you, I know it depends a great deal on the person, but would you date a *preto*?" Her voice was very barely audible when she replied,

> I don't know, because I think I wouldn't date -- but to become friends -- I already have friends like that.... Friendship I would do... But I think to date, I wouldn't date [a *preto*]. [Perhaps] if he was a very cool person, if I really liked him a lot.

"And why wouldn't you date [a *preto*]?" I asked. She responded, "Oh, because of the discrimination.... Against me and him there would be heavy discrimination." In reflecting on this hypothetical scenario, Maura seemed more concerned about the possible reaction of the boys in the Plazaflor than about her parents, who would, she thought, "accept it."

Aside from the disapproval of her friends and family, Maura's dating a boy or man of color during her adolescence was made more improbable by the fact that within the Plazaflor,

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there was only one family whose members were what Maura called "*mesticos*, not really *preto*." She went to an private elite school (which her own parents told me, was "snooty') where all of the students were white.

Dona Margareth also brought up the issue of relationships between men and women of different colors. Before I had even turned my tape recorder on, she confessed to me -- in barely audible tones -- that she disapproved of, and was uncomfortable with, the notion of "relations between blacks and whites." I immediately gathered what she meant by "relations." Speaking once again, more directly than her daughter Eliza had, she told me that if one of her daughters had had a black boyfriend, she would have been deeply disturbed. I was taken aback by her abrupt and forthright remarks, for most of my informants, including Eliza, seemed at pains to demonstrate their own lack of racism during the first moments of the interview.

I briefly acknowledged Dona Margareth's comment, set up my tape recorder, and asked her to describe her family and her childhood, for I did not want to begin our interview with probing questions that, more likely than not, would dampen her generous inclination to respond candidly. Later in our interview, I returned to her remark. "And more general things now, you said that if your daughter showed up with a black boyfriend, you wouldn't like it?" Lowering her voice to a whisper, Dona Margareth responded, "Oh, no, no, I wouldn't like it, no! This is so deep in me and even I think that it isn't...." Although I had leaned forward, the better to hear Dona Margareth's breathy whispering, her voice faded to an inaudible murmur. I pursued the issue;

> R: Did it ever happen?
> M: No, no, no! Never! Thank God! What a problem that would be! My lord! I think that -- no, no, thank God!
> R: And did you say anything to them --
> M: -- No--
> R: -- at any time?
> M: No, never.
> R: Do you think they know that you feel this way?
> M: I think that it was a normal thing, right? I never thought of saying anything about this, no.

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Once again, Dona Margareth characterized the racialized structures within which her family lives -- and the distance between whites and people of color -- as "normal." Her own deep disturbance in contemplating this evidently almost unspeakable scenario was "normal," so natural in fact, that none of her children needed to be directly informed of her feelings -- which we can assume are typical for her generation and class. At the same time, however, Dona Margareth's confession is itself an ambivalent product of the tenets of *democracia racial* , which insist that her disturbance, while perhaps "normal," is not entirely defensible. Our conversation continued:

> R: And would it be the same thing with your grandchildren? I know they are too young now, but --
> M: -- They're still children. I have older grandchildren also but they wouldn't do that. I don't know. Because I think they're younger. Perhaps they're more open, right?
> R: But can you tell me more about why you don't like the idea of marriage between whites and blacks?
> M: I think that since my birth it's so much in me. And it's in my friends too.[13]
> R: This is sort of an awkward question, but do you just think it's very bad to marry [a person of color] or is dating bad also? Is it one or the other, or both?
> M: No!
> R: Because some people feel, "Look, it's all right to have sex with a person of color but you can't marry them."
> M: Oh, no! I think having sex also. I wouldn't want that, you know?

During several previous moments of our interview I had asked Dona Margareth if her parents or others in her environment had ever said anything about the issues of race and racism. Although my questions presented her with opportunities to "explain" or "justify" her confession of having prejudiced feelings "deep inside," she insisted that she could not recall any specific occasions during which the issue of race was discussed. As our conversation continued, it became evident that she had interpreted my question as one requesting information about things that were spoken directly to her.

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[13] In another moment of our conversation, Dona Margareth had told me that one of her friends refused to hire black empregadas. When I asked her why, she said, "Because she does not want a *negra* in her house." When I explained to Dona Margareth that I was interested in the "cultural ideas" behind her friend's prejudice, she refused to elaborate.

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R: The thing that I would like to understand is how did these ideas emerge for you, were they things that you parents said, or --
M: -- No. I heard their conversations.
R: For example -- do you remember anything?
M: I remember. My mother, for example, she had a great friend, who was my grandfather's secretary... And he was a *mulato*. He was the best secretary that [my grandfather] ever had. And he had a great fondness for my mother because my mother was very pretty. So my mother said that he was -- [she said], "I will not speak anymore with him," right, "because he is a *NEGRO*!" [emphasizes the word with rising intonation and volume]. So, like that, I heard these things. My siblings also, except this one who lives in Uruguay and is more open.
R: And do you remember other conversations?
M: Well, as a child -- children did not converse with adults. I always heard everything people said, sitting at the table. But one couldn't speak, children had to stay quiet, you know? But we heard.
R: Do you remember anything else that you heard?
M: No. No, no. I don't remember anything.

Through various discursive means (including her suggestion that her grandchildren and one of her siblings might be more "open," and her tendency to whisper), Dona Margareth implied that she had a certain self-conscious perspective on her own racism. She never tried to convince me that her horror of "interracial" sex and marriage was either logical or justified. As had Celso and David, she presented her attitude as one that had simply been internalized, or perhaps even inherited, ("since my birth it's so much in me"). Unlike Celso however, her awareness that she held views that might be publicly, if not privately, frowned upon did not lead her to question or examine the basis -- logical or otherwise -- of her assumptions. She would not even describe the content of her assumptions but only alluded to their existence. She seemed to be aware on some level that she was entrapped by the things that were "deep in her" but she sought no escape. Nothing had ever stirred the close and confining air in which she lived.

Racism: Narratives and Erasures

Generally speaking, all of my middle-class white informants acknowledged that racism exists in Brazil. In describing examples of racism, most tended, perhaps naturally, to speak not

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from the perspectives of people of color but from their own perspectives. Most of my middle class white informants in addition, offered various types of qualifications when they discussed racism in their country. Many of their comments, generally speaking, seemed to turn upon an ambiguous or contradictory logic.

Many of my informants, as I have already noted, were more comfortable talking about class than they were about race and/or racism. They tended to follow a very public script that emphasizes what is generally called "*discriminacao social.*" In Brazil, the term *social* is a gloss for class and the structures, behaviors and beliefs associated with class. Both middle-class Brazilians and many scholars, as I have noted, believe that discriminatory behavior and prejudicial attitudes are far less motivated by color differences than they are by social, or class divisions -- which all Brazilians acknowledge to be rigid. The correlation between class and color rarely figures in a logic which posits, at least implicitly, that color and notions of race are not obstacles to upward mobility among people of color. While the consequences of class, or more specifically, of poverty, are often figured as inexorable in Brazilian society, the role of race and/or color is typically underplayed. Most of my informants also qualified their descriptions of racism by stating their belief that the behaviors and attitudes associated with racism were progressively decreasing.

I asked David if he believed that racism exists in Brazil and he said, "Yes, I think so." When I asked him if he could describe some examples of racism, he began;

> There are people who, depending upon their origin, there are some who have better conditions than those who have different origins, such as *favelados*. [*Favelados*] can be discriminated against. When you hear, "He is a *favelado*," it is [said] in a very pejorative way.

Because I had specifically requested information about racism, I asked, "And the *favelado* is generally associated with color?" He continued;

> No, no, people with condemned social conditions. It's not the color of the skin, right? The person is discriminated against socially, right? There are whites in the *favela* also. And they are *favelados* like the *negros*.

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By the time I conducted this interview, David's response was extremely familiar to me. Living so close to Morro do Sangue Bom, David no doubt noticed that a clear majority of people on the *morro* were of color whereas nearly all of the families living in the Plazaflor were unambiguously white. Yet the existence of poor whites is often summoned as evidence that "it's not the color of the skin," that is associated with discrimination against people of color but what David calls one's "origin," by which he means, in this particular context, class.

Up to this point, David had sidestepped my question. I persisted by asking him, "But do you think that there is racial discrimination here, besides--" David continued,

> -- There is, there is, yes. Brazilian society is from Europeans. This puts a division in society. Because the Europeans are racist. We have here Portuguese and the Portuguese is racist. The Spaniard is racist and the Germans in the south. So I think, yes, there is a discrimination of race, of color really.

It is hard to be certain what David means by "the Portuguese." His reference is an abstract one, similar to the hypothetical Portuguese who figures in *piadas* or jokes as racist and stupid. (Perhaps paradoxically, the Portuguese male is also thought to have a weakness for dark-skinned women, as my earlier quotation of Gilberto suggests.) As in such jokes, the Portuguese David refers to seems to be implicitly contrasted with the Brazilian, who while stereotypically of Portuguese descent, is thought to be less given to racism. "Spaniards" and "Germans in the South," are likewise abstracted figures and historically speaking, neither has had a major influence on Brazilian national culture. Although David begins by saying that "Brazilian society is from Europeans," he does not seem to suggest that Brazilians have learned racism from their dominant European ancestors but rather that racism is primarily practiced by foreigners and immigrants. David had still not responded to my initial request that he describe examples of racism in Brazil. I reiterated the question and he responded,

> There exist families in which if your son or your daughter is having a relationship with someone -- until now, they keep observing their origins, the color of the skin. They observe this, right, and when the person is a *mulato*, or a *mestico*, or a *negro*, it is really commented on. "My kids are going around with *negros*, with *crioulos*," and this [is said] in a very pejorative way. I notice this a lot. There are other aspects too. There is preference for more attractive people,

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> right? And here, people choose in a way that conforms to this, those who have a better look. I, for example, like to say that the *negro*, we consider him a race apart. I even say to my daughter that they are as noble as are whites. The *negro*, the *negro* is a pure race so to discriminate against something so pure, so -- they aren't mixed, they're like the white. So there are many cases but we don't remember. I don't remember. But I notice these things, I notice.

David's comments obviously do not refer, in any direct way, to the consequences of racism for people of color but articulate a scenario in which a white father is troubled by his children's (hypothetical) relationships with people of color. (These comments were made, in fact, prior to his previously quoted confession that he himself would object to his daughter's involvement with a black man.) The "preference for more attractive people" that he refers to suggests a rather facile acceptance of the notion that whites have a more attractive and "refined" appearance. His framing implies that this is a "natural" aesthetic rather than constructed product of racism. He intends to distance himself from such prejudiced attitudes however, by rather abruptly pointing out that he himself believes and teaches his daughter, that *negros*, because they are a "pure race" are as "noble" as whites. I later asked David to elaborate on this comment and he continued to imply that his preoccupation with the "racial purity" of *negros* constituted a liberal, anti-racist stance.

His comment that "we don't remember" (other "cases" of racism) was a particularly odd one. I could only attribute it to a kind of slip-of-the-tongue, through which he unintentionally aligned himself with those "families" and "people" who had racist tendencies. It also possible that his comment was more literal in its meaning: middle-class whites like himself, can not, or choose not to remember specific cases and examples of racism.

David's description of racism, such as it was, required considerable prompting on my part, and weary of pulling teeth, I decided to change the direction of my questions. Do you believe there are many who believe that racism doesn't exist?" I asked. He responded,

> I think so, yes. Because it's a country in which everyone lives together, and tranquilly, with regard to problems, right? I can go to the *morro*, they come here, without any problem, right? And there's this mixture really, there's a mixture.... The problems are problems of class, of struggle. So people go along without perceiving racism. It exists, it's there, but people don't perceive it.

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> Those who really perceive it are from another, higher class, people of color principally, *mulatos*. And in the upper class, or in work, right? If you have a white and a *preto* going for the same positions, the *preto* isn't going to get the position... [However], people think that there is no racism. Because they don't see what is happening. But it exists, without a doubt. Even though the upper class is smaller, right, it is in this class that it happens. ... If you interview upper class people, you will see.

David's roseate description of social relations, while itself dubious, seems to become the basis on which he again suggests that "the problems are problems of class"; he initially dismisses the role of color in constructing, for example, relations between people on the *morro* and those in the Plazaflor. Only certain groups of people, he asserts, are able to perceive racism, such as upwardly mobile people of color. It is only at this point in our conversation that David mentions, almost as if in passing, one of the more obvious and significant consequences of racism for people of color: job discrimination. He quickly moves on however, and asserts that racism is primarily practiced by the upper class. When David suggested that I would learn more about racism by interviewing those who were truly upper class, I expressed skepticism about the extent to which such people would speak "openly" to me. "They can lie to you," David said, "but you would have ways of knowing... Whether their response is a lie or not, you can know their philosophy." Even though the upper class is guilty of racism, David went on to suggest, they remain unaware of it;

> They don't perceive it because they don't, they don't have time to think about it... [The upper class man] is educated and it's unlikely that someone would come up to him and ask him if he's racist or not. He doesn't have information, most of them don't. [It's just] a minority that studies this... a minority that knows the problem and the rest, no.

While seeming to encapsulate a contradiction, David's observation was, ethnographically speaking, a perceptive one. As this chapter makes clear however, it applies to members of the middle-class as well, who also "don't have time to think about it," and are rarely challenged to reflect upon racism as a social or political issue. Our interview it seemed, allowed David to reflect on racism (and to describe, both wittingly and unwittingly some of its contradictions)

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while continually imposing distance between himself, his own class, and the practices through which racism is constituted.

David's accusatory comments on the upper class, however, were motivated by more than a desire to rhetorically distance himself from racism. At several moments during our interview, he interjected comments about the struggle, of people such as himself, to maintain a footing within the increasingly unstable middle-class. Many of my middle-class white informants, in fact, expressed frustration over the fact that their incomes and their buying power were being progressively chipped away by a faltering economy and governmental mismanagement, to which corrupt politicians and the stable, truly wealthy class turned a blind eye. Such comments were pitched in such a way to implicitly suggest that members of the middle-class, like poor people of color, were vulnerable to, even victims of, the increasingly unequal distribution of money and power in Brazil (see O'Dougherty, 1997).

David was able to incorporate his lament about downward mobility into an argument concerning the progressive decrease of racism in Brazil;

> No one is informed about this and most people are down here below. Racism is going to exist less and less because the class that has power is diminishing in Brazil. The middle class itself is becoming more impoverished. Two generations ago, it was much worse. There a tendency [of racism] to improve.

At this juncture in our conversation, I asked David if he ever discussed the issue of racism with his friends. He replied,

> No, no. I don't talk about it, no. I don't know. There isn't space for us to comment on this. When we have an opportunity to discuss things in a group, we talk about other situations, right, more important things that are happening, right, our impoverishment, our difficulties. So we talk about these things. We don't remember this racial difference that exists between us. Because here, it's very mixed, there is mixture.

I asked David if he knew anything about Brazil's black movement. He told me that he knew that it existed. He was more aware of labor movements and demonstrations by *favelados*. In general, he suggested, such militant movements were positive, in that they were aimed at

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securing rights that would "benefit everyone, *negros*, *mulatos*, Indians, whites." When I asked him if he would attend an anti-racist demonstration he replied,

> No. I don't think anyone would go. Because here in Brazil, no one would go, [only] a few people would go. It's very rare. I don't know.... we don't go. It's isn't racism that's so widespread. You have seen racism... Over in the nightclubs, *pretos* can't go in, *mulatos* can't go in, I know that. But this is a thing that is a class problem, right?.... So when you're poor and [you say], "Let's have a demonstration against racism," the problem is poverty, right, hunger, right? We unite for different things.

David's comments, it seemed to me, were based upon an increasingly procrustean logic. The disbarment of people of color (including *mulatos*, as David notes) from nightclubs, hotels and expensive restaurants is frequently offered by those who acknowledge the existence of racism as a classic, even stereotypical example of *discriminacao racial*. If patrons of color can pay, if they have the pecuniary passport to purchase what such places offer, why are they being held up at the door? Yet even this example, which David mentions as a proleptical aside, is glossed as "a class problem." While David may be right in his suggestion that a demonstration against racism would be motivated by, and at least implicitly, if not explicitly, directed towards, the issue of poverty, he seems determined, even at the expense of logic, to deny the role of racism in constructing the poverty of people of color. The impulse to offer rhetorical qualifications to the acknowledgment of the existence of racism it seems, is constant and irresistible.

When I asked Gilberto if he thought there was racism in Brazil, he said, "There is, clearly there is." Unlike many of my other informants, he did not require additional prompting before adding,

> But racism exists, I think it exists almost in the entire world, right? ... Your work is about racism. What is more graphic than racism is social discrimination, right? This is stronger than racism.

Gilberto then proceeded to describe the familiar scenario in which doormen required people of color to take service rather than social elevators, even when they were people "of distinction." Throughout our interview, as I have noted, Gilberto suggested that Brazilian racism

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was "cultural" rather than "ideological" and like David, he continued to acknowledge the existence of racism while denying its significance. "Social discrimination, economic and social discrimination," he said, "leaves this [racial] question nebulous." "Do you know anyone," I asked Gilberto, "who denies the existence of racism, [who says], 'Oh no, there's no racism in Brazil'?" He responded,

> No, no, this business -- most racists in the country are even -- because the majority, it's more the *negros* [who are racist]. Because whites as much as *negros* don't touch upon the subject. They don't touch much on the subject."

"They certainly don't!" I exclaimed. Gilberto continued;

> This is data that could even prove right, it would prove -- It's good information, right? It could prove that racism really isn't important, that the racial question is not important. Because discussing this discourse, the *negro* as much as the white -- I think the *negros* are much more racist than the whites. I see a greater racism among the *negros* than among the whites.

"In what terms, for example?" I asked. He continued;

> At the ideological level, not at the cultural level. You know, the ideological discourse about racism, right? In what terms? "Because Brazil is a *negro* country." Okay, you know, the question of affirming that Brazil is a *negro* country, you know. When the truth is that it is neither *negro*, nor is it white. The majority is *negro*, without a doubt. But a *negro* [country] it also isn't, because there is that significant portion of whites! And there is a significant portion of Indians who mixed themselves with whites and with *negros*. So Brazil is a country of miscegenation. It is not a country of *negros*!

Gilberto's comments left me rather confused. I suspected he referred to the discourse of the black movement, or to stereotypical notions he had about such discourse. In my interviews with black movement militants, I certainly noticed that they often emphasized the fact that the majority of Brazil's population is of color, yet none denied of course, the diversity of the country's people. What they emphasized, rather, was what they saw as the failure of many people of color to identify as *negros*. The preoccupation Gilberto described seemed to be his own. "Tell me more about this issue of the racism of *negros*," I said. He continued,

> For example, I had a colleague at work and one time we had a discussion about whatever, and when another defends his opinion, it interests me right? Well, it happened that the response of this *negro*, who was part of the black movement,

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> was, "I have already cleaned your latrine. I have already cleaned your bathrooms. I have already been your servant and today I am a journalist."

According to Gilberto, his colleague's racialized interpretation of history was inappropriate, not only because it was rudely aggressive but because the man had had "economic luck." Both personal and national histories, in other words, must be represented and interpreted through the prism of economics -- even it seems, when a black man requires "luck" to get anywhere. Race and/or color, Gilberto suggested, were irrelevant.

Gilberto continued to assert that *negros* were more given to racism against whites than vice versa and he argued, as I previously noted, that black women pursued white men as a calculated strategy of upward mobility. Up to this moment in our conversation, he had said very little about white racism. My transcription of Gilberto's comments may make it appear that he had assumed a defensive posture in our interview, yet this was not the case. His dialogical stance was very self confident and didactic. While he knew that I had been living on the *morro*, he never seemed to consider the possibility that people on the hill had already begun to instruct me -- in terms certainly, that were no less legitimate than his own -- about racism. Shifting the direction of our conversation, I began, "Many people have told me, for example, that there are *revistas* on the bus and --" "They go after *negros*," Gilberto said, finishing my sentence;

> It's not just the *negros*. It is totally social discrimination. If there was a badly dressed Paraiban, a badly dressed person -- if there was a well-dressed *negro* [it wouldn't happen]. It isn't the color, it's social. I have already seen this various times.

I asked to him to describe what he saw. He replied,

> They frisk the badly dressed people, not those with good appearance. Now, I have worn jeans, tennis shoes and a shirt but I was never frisked. Because of this thing of good appearance, not because I'm white. My jeans weren't ripped, I wasn't dirty, I was all nice-smelling, right? Now, they [the police], they [focus on] the way the person looks at them, on their posture, right, it's that way. Now, I have seen violence, not severe violence, but I have seen violence in small ways, right, like they open the bag, look through everything, you understand? But I continue believing that it really and surely is socio-economic. It isn't racist. Because even, the police don't -- the black policeman calls others

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> "impudent *negro*" and he calls the white "impudent white."[14] Meaning, they take the *moleques*, the bandits and put them out the front door.... I don't see racism. It's not racist.

Men on the *morro* had also suggested that those who were well-dressed and neatly groomed were less likely to be harassed by the police. They knew that by manipulating their appearance, they could appear more proper, less threatening to the police and other passengers, yet they did not interpret this fact as evidence that it was "totally social discrimination" and not racism that was at work in the *revistas* they endured. In describing those who were subjected to *revistas*, Gilberto had used the word "*moleque*," a term often used for Rio's homeless (or apparently homeless) street children and which connotes additionally, a child of color; it is similar to the racialized English term "pickaninny." In a way very unlike my informants on the *morro*, Gilberto seemed to suggest that the police were only doing their job.

Somewhat later in our conversation, I returned to Gilberto's comment that the subject of racism was rarely touched upon. "So you feel that this is because racism is not an important thing?" I asked. He responded,

> Yes, that's it really. I think that racism is not so important.... Even among the *negros*. The black movement is what? What are they mobilizing? Nothing, nothing, right? The militants have not mobilized the *negro* masses. Why is that, right? It's because it is not important, not even for *negros*. The *negros* do not defend their rights as *negros*, because the *negro* doesn't feel so discriminated against for being a *negro*. Deep in his subconscious perhaps, he perceives that he is discriminated against because he is poor, not because he is *negro*, right? And, I -- I think that people don't discuss racism for this reason.

I asked Gilberto if he thought it was possible that many Brazilians were offended by discussions of racism. He responded,

> For Brazilians, right? It could even be that it is. Because [the Brazilian] has friends of other colors. Because he has mixture in his family. He is not racist. He only has this in the discourse, I mean [like he says], "Damn, what a black thing!" right, "The *negro* when he doesn't shit on entering, shits on leaving," right? But he says this many times only in joking, right? I mean, this [thing of] entering and leaving, he says it in joking, he doesn't say it consciously, right?.....

---

[14] While this may be true, I have never heard the expression "*branco safado*." Gilberto's comment obviously, directly contradicts those in which my informants on the hill complained that such racialized epithets were *only* directed at men of color.

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> I don't -- I think it very difficult for us to affirm, but I, I think [the Brazilian] doesn't like [discussions of racism] because he is offended, because he thinks that his practice is really non-racist..... Racism is a crime now, racism is a crime but how many people go to the police station to register a complaint of racism? When this happens, it becomes news.... When it happens that someone seeks out the police because of racism, it becomes news. This is the impression that I have. It becomes a report on the television, on the radio, in the newspaper. It becomes news because it is rare!

I told Gilberto that I had spoken to people who had gone to the police station to report incidents of racism. "I was told that the police do nothing," I said. Gilberto suddenly became very animated and said, "Oh, no! No, because they are so ignorant!" He explained that the police, like other "public functionaries" were poorly paid and pursued a strategy of "don't think, don't do anything." Only the truly rich or the famous could hope to arouse the police to action. 'If I arrive to complain that my car has been stolen, an old car, now [they think], 'It wasn't an imported car that was stolen.'"

In logical terms, Gilberto had ceded my point that police reports were hardly an adequate measure of incidents of racially-motivated discrimination (or the awareness, among people of color, that they were subjected to racism). Nevertheless, the point he wanted to emphasize above all was that it was, once again, economic and class biases, and not racism that dictated the professional negligence of the police. I could not press the logic of my point without appearing argumentative and shortly thereafter, I brought the interview to a close.

The rhetorical strategies that both David and Gilberto used to qualify and, ultimately, undermine and even erase, their acknowledgment of the existence of racism are, perhaps, unusually clear and persistently articulated, yet I have chosen to quote them at length precisely because so much of what they said (and implied) was echoed by other informants as well. What they did not say, would not say and/or simply did not know, was also reflected in my interviews with other middle-class white informants. All of my informants for example, were able to describe a limited number of examples of racism, but their descriptions, like David's and Gilberto's tended to be very brief and often required specific and persistent prompting.

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Eliza told me about her *empregada* occasionally expressed anger about racism and this disturbed Eliza who believed it was better to not "ligar" or connect with the issue. "And can you describe other general examples of racism here in Brazil?" I asked her. "Others?" She began, "Let me see. No." "Do you think, for example that the job market is more restricted for *negros*?" I asked. "Yes, there is this," Eliza said, "When they see that it is a *negro*, they don't employ them, you know?" It was only at this moment that Eliza recalled that an acquaintance of hers who was a *negra*, had had great difficulty in getting a job despite her intelligence and competence. She recalled also that this same acquaintance had told her that she had knocked on a neighbor's door in the middle-class building where she lived and received the response, "Don't even knock on my door because you are a *negra*!"

"Have you heard other things that happen to people of color here?" I asked Eliza. She responded, "No, me? I don't remember, no. I think it's better, isn't it? -- than it was in the past." She began to talk about progressive changes in South Africa and Europe. I steered her back to a discussion of Brazil;

> Here, too. I think it has changed a lot. Depending on the clothes that the *negro* is wearing, he goes in [to restaurants]. In fact, not letting a *negro* enter is prohibited.... I haven't seen [racism]. I haven't seen it. They speak of it every now and again in the newspapers. I read something like that, right, but I haven't seen it close up, no.

I told Eliza that I had the impression that many Brazilians did not like to talk about racism. She responded;

> I have never -- it's really a subject that we don't converse about. I am conversing like this with you today, but it isn't a subject that one converses about. I, when I am with my friends, we don't talk like this about racism. Did you know that? We don't talk about it, you know? It isn't a subject that we focus on -- everything about racism. I don't know. I think that this could even be on the part of the *negro* himself. I think he doesn't like to talk about it, you know? I have this impression that he himself doesn't like to talk about it.

Eliza told me however, that she had discussed the issue with her children. Evidently, there was one black student in her children's school, and Eliza knew that her children, along with the other white students, said things such as, "Look at that *neguinha*." "If I heard that you said

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this," Eliza told her children, "I would be very unhappy with you." She explained to them that the black student was "the only one and she will become sad and do you want her to be sad?" "They are developing their personalities," Eliza told me, "and they don't have that strength to go against the majority." Eliza did not present this situation as a an example of racism; her comments only emerged in the context of my remarks about silence. "This is a common thing with children, isn't it?" I said conversationally. She continued;

> It is. With children and with most [people], certainly. It is inside of one's head.... [My children] say, "Oh no, I don't say that, I don't say that." But sometimes I think they say things like that because when I begin to speak -- They must say things [like that], clearly, because it's a majority thing.... I say to them, "Your great grandmother on your father's side, your own great grandmother was a *negra*. So, you have blood, you have *negro* blood inside of you." But it's a thing that they don't connect to. They don't give it importance. I tell them that everyone is equal, you know?

With the exception of Silvia and Aninha, all of my middle-class white informants told me that racism was rarely, if ever discussed in their social circles. Like Gilberto, several suggested, at least implicitly, that racism in Brazil was not significant enough to merit discussion. When I asked Raquel, a woman in her thirties for example, if she and her friends ever talked about the issue of racism, she responded,

> There isn't so much. [There is] talk yes. People comment but it isn't like in terms of -- it seems that it is -- I think that here the *preto* has to put himself in his own place. It is he who has to find his place.

Racism, Raquel suggested, was a problem of black people, one that they must solve. Earlier in our interview, she had acknowledged the existence of racism and at my request, she offered as an example, the common expression, "A *preto* running is a thief; a white running is an athlete." She suggested in addition, that blacks encountered discrimination in the educational arena and that very few attained managerial positions. "But," she added, "the *preto* is very tranquil, the *preto* doesn't know, he is not disposed, he doesn't want to struggle a lot." Because Raquel initially suggested that there was "talk" or "comment" about I racism, and because she had acknowledged the existence of educational and occupational discrimination against people

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of color, I redirected my question. "If you were at a party, for example," I asked Raquel, "and you said something against racism, do you think others would agree or would they say 'No, no, there is no racism here?" She responded,

> These days there is less racism. I believe it is lessening bit by bit. This new generation is very good, their heads are on straight. My children, they have already overcome much. They are already seeing another reality.

"But do you believe that there are many people who believe that racism isn't a problem?" I asked. She continued,

> It isn't a problem! I also believe this! There are people who don't connect with the problem. People are not accustomed to see this, the situation, and they think that time itself will resolve it.

As had many others, Raquel seemed to shimmy back and forth between references to herself and her own views, and more generalized references to "people." Such shifts often confused me for Raquel says in a single breath that "it isn't a problem," that there is a "situation" which evidently exists, but "people" are not "accustomed to see this." Does a "problem" or a "situation" exist, or does it not? Does Raquel intend to suggest that she herself believes that "time itself will resolve it" or is this something that "people who are not accustomed to see this, the situation" only "think?" What Raquel seemed to describe, above all, was indifference -- as well as a kind of facile optimism that she shared with other informants.

Dona Margareth suggested however, that there might be a somewhat different way of explaining the infrequency with which the issue of racism is discussed in middle-class circles. At the midpoint of our conversation, I asked her, "Have you heard other examples of racism? Of any sort, people talking, in the newspapers?" She paused and said, "No, I don't see much in the newspapers. You know, for me, it's a thing that shouldn't exist." At this point, Dona Margareth had once again lowered her voice to a near whisper and I leaned forward and asked her to repeat what she had said. Still speaking in hushed tones, she said,

> It shouldn't exist. So I don't -- it isn't a subject that I talk about much. If I told about something like that, it would call more attention to it, right?

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Dona Margareth's remark about calling attention to racism confirmed my impression that she resisted my attempts to elicit "information" not because she lacked such information, nor because she was a mendacious interviewee but because she obeyed the dictates of what Frazier called an "unexpressed understanding" not to discuss racism (Hellwig, 1992:131). In this succinct comment, I believe, Dona Margareth articulated something fundamental about the ways in which many middle-class whites approach the issue of racism and discourse about racism.

Dona Margareth did not have an intimate, fully conscious knowledge of either racism or its painful consequences for people of color, yet in accounting for her own silence, she seemed to echo my informants on the *morro*. Talking about racism, she suggested, magnifies it. In a certain sense, her comment represents an extreme form of what Frankenberg, following Winant, calls a "color evasive discourse," one that attempts to erase the significance of racial constructions in the service of a somewhat spurious liberalism. In the context of *democracia racial* however, it is far more than that.

Clearly, there are important differences in the ways in which middle-class whites and poor people of color account for the silence surrounding racism. The most evident of these differences, I believe, resides in the fact that people on the *morro* articulate a profound sense of hopelessness, if not complete resignation, when they account for their silence. It is best to simply "let it go" (*deixa pra la*). Middle-class whites, on the other hand, tend to assert that the issue of racism has little or no importance in their lives and it is, besides, rapidly fading into the shadows of a history that is best forgotten. Nevertheless, I would speculate, the examination of racism among middle-class whites might evoke a kind of pain that overlaps with, without being penetrated by, the pain expressed by people on the *morro*. Although I have asserted that Aninha and Silvia took the tenets of *democracia racial* to heart in a way that is uncharacteristic of many middle-class whites, Dona Margareth, and probably a majority of my informants, did believe that racism "shouldn't exist." Many who critique *democracia racial* as a very simple (if obviously persuasive) mystifying ideology, would argue that in the mouths of people like Dona Margareth,

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such comments are "mere rhetoric." There is, however, a perceptible if unexamined degree of passion under this rhetoric.

Although Benedita did not describe racism in contemporary Rio in much greater detail than did my other informants, some of her responses to my questions, while terse and even deceptively simple, helped me to understand the significance of Dona Margareth's comment. Regarding the relative silence surrounding racism in Brazil, Benedita told me,

> It's like they want to obfuscate it, right? To obfuscate the history of the country, the history of slavery, of the Indian. Because it causes suffering. It causes suffering. When you have a consciousness of it, it causes suffering, it requires work.... People know this, that it requires work to become aware, you know?

We had been talking very specifically about levels of awareness of, and discourses about, racism in present-day Rio de Janeiro. It is notable that Benedita locates illusion, lack of "consciousness" -- that which is "obfuscated" -- in the ways in which Brazilians conceptualize and talk about (or do not talk about) history, rather than in the ways in which they construct the present. Ironically, her critique of false or incomplete consciousness and the will towards obfuscation is spoken at a safe remove from contested understandings of contemporary social relations.

Benedita's remarks can be read as metaphor or evocation, and they reminded me of the ways in which people on the *morro* invoke slavery to explain and describe the present. The fact that Benedita falls short in her critique suggests not only that she herself may be reluctant to do the "work" it requires to "become aware" of racism in the present but suggests also that silence itself robs discourses on present-day racism of a potentially rich and highly specific vocabulary. Echoing my informants on the *morro*, she fell back upon *escravidao* or slavery in order to gloss very immediate (if contested) realities, the full awareness of which causes so much "suffering" that they remain virtually unspeakable -- even it seems, for Benedita.

The "suffering" that Benedita refers to is more, I would argue, than a sense of personal or private guilt. If guilt does play a significant role in this "suffering" it must be noted that it is not limited to middle-class whites but is no doubt shared by poor people of color who also

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engage in racist discourses. While the notion of guilt captures something of the fundamentally moral nature of Brazilian discourses on race and racism, it elides the articulation of this "suffering" with the collective orchestration of more complex, culturally elaborated sentiments. The discourses of *democracia racial* embody a utopianism that goes to the heart of Brazilians' historically entrenched visions of themselves and their nation. In saying that racism "shouldn't exist" and in explaining that she avoids talking about it because it "calls more attention to it," Dona Margareth implicitly acknowledges the fragility of these visions and her own and others' investment in them.

The "suffering" of middle-class whites, as their comments suggest, does not truly incorporate an awareness of the very different forms of suffering endured by the their neighbors in Morro do Sangue Bom, nor does it challenge, in any way, the structural and discursive bases of their indifference. Dona Margareth's comments suggest nevertheless, that there is a subterranean level at which there is another kind of indifference; it is a studied, even contractual, and morally freighted one, and it is based less on the mechanics of insularity than it is on a terror of looking at what is *embaixo do pano*, under the concealing fabric of *democracia racial*. It is the *pano*, the gently, graciously concealing cloth itself, that defines everything that is most deeply Brazilian, in one's own spirit and in the nation. To look at what lies underneath it, to comment on it, to engage with it, to allow it to be real by calling attention to it -- these things are undisciplined, un-Brazilian crudities and they are a betrayal. Not even *negros*, so many of my middle-class white informants clearly believed, want to have their wounds pointed out to them.

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7

Blackness: Militant Discourses

> I am told that two years ago, a *Negro* who had got his freedom took to preaching in the Victoria Parks of this place, in black slums and other places where black men most do congregate; that he mounted his barrel, and spoke with the greatest of fervour and eloquence, repeating chapters of the Bible to the people (who of course are ignorant of it) and expounding it with great wisdom, -- a real Negro Luther, unmerciful to sins, hypocrisies, and frauds, and telling the black man that he was his own slave, as well as the white man's. He was followed by great crowds, and began to be called the "Divine Master." At length the government information laid against him, as for fomenting political sedition -- which everybody knew was false -- so he got condemned to three years' imprisonment, or banishment, or -- nobody knows what and has not been heard of since.

The above passage was written by the British traveler, C.B. Mansfield in 1856, thirty-two years before the abolition of slavery in Brazil. Although his story comes from the northeastern state of Pernambuco, it could have been told virtually anywhere in Brazil, and the events it describes could have occurred as easily in the post-abolition era. Yet Mansfield reveals the naiveté of a foreign visitor in his suggestion, however sympathetically motivated, that this "Negro Luther" was not fomenting political sedition. Like others before and after him, he sought to arouse people of color -- slaves and non-slaves alike -- to a consciousness of self, the moral power of justice, and the possibility of struggle.

"Telling the black man that he was his own slave, as well as white man's," was and remains, more than one hundred years after abolition, a culturally seditious act in Brazil. Contemporary militants, who refer to themselves as "*negros*" or "*Afro-Brasileiros,*" like the preacher described by Mansfield, are still confronted by the puzzles of "*consciencia negra,*" or black consciousness, and their "*luta,*" or struggle, remains one in which angry words are pitted

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against what appears to be an overwhelming passivity, complacency and silence. They intend for their words to be heard not only by dominant whites who both deny the significance of racism and cloak themselves within a protective insularity, but by poor people of color, whom they often view as victims of the insidious wages of false consciousness. Also like the preacher, who manipulated the rhetoric of the master's religion, contemporary militants are attempting to manipulate dominant discourses, even while struggling to break free of them. To a far greater extent than is the case in countries like the United States, I would argue, black militancy in Brazil requires, paradoxically perhaps, that many of the battles of political activism be fought in the metadiscursive arena. Many of the forms of entrapment that I have described in previous pages become clearer through an examination of the discourses and metadiscourses of the activists who so generously served as my informants, and in some cases, as my field advisors, during the months I spent in Rio.

My intention, while in the field, was not to delve very deeply into the complicated histories and politics of Brazil's black movement, which is often called, for good reason, a "consciousness" movement. Undoubtedly, the movement represents an extremely fertile field for anthropological research and scholars in other disciplines, for example George Reid Andrews (1991; 1992); Pierre Michel-Fontaine (1981); George Michael Hanchard (1993); and Eliza Larkin Nascimento (1981) -- to name only the major English-language sources -- have written well-informed and provocative accounts of various aspects of the movement. My concern rather, was to get a sense of how people who defined themselves as "*miltantes*" described and discussed what so many called the "*questao de racismo*," or the question of racism in their country, and how they might account for, in more personal terms, their involvement in the movement.

The former question was motivated by my desire to situate the discourses (and silences) I had observed in Morro do Sangue Bom within a larger discursive arena. Because so few of my informants on the *morro* were aware that a black movement exists in Brazil, it seemed fruitless to investigate the relationship between militants and people on the *morro* within a more explicitly interactive and political arena. Although many militants speak ceaselessly of the need

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to "approach the masses," my research in Morro do Sangue Bom (which I would note, is a large and well-established community) suggests that they have been largely unsuccessful. The latter question was suggested by my conversations with people on the *morro*. Their well-grounded assertion that they were simply too busy with the grueling day-to-day work of survival to be concerned with politics, and what seemed to be a willful and emotionally and socially-driven desire among them to sweep the issue of racism under the carpet, made the *militantes'* biographical leap toward personal and professional activism seem anything but obvious and straightforward.

To a large extent, I would suggest, the fact that most of my activist informants were brought up in families that would best be characterized as lower-middle class or stable working class[1] and were thus less subject, in relative terms, to the processes of economic, social and educational marginalization than were people on the *morro*, goes some way toward "explaining" the tremendous gap in their political biographies. Activists and "*favelados*" are divided ultimately by the same processes of class division and differentiation that characterize Brazilian social arrangements as a whole. Although Burdick's (1993) analysis of the tangled politics surrounding Catholic Base Communities in the Baixada Fluminense implicitly suggests the possibility that political movements that involve concepts of "*consciencia negra*" may be dominated by light-skinned people who are viewed by potential constituencies as out of touch with "true *negros*," a majority of the activists I interviewed were in fact, dark-skinned. None of my informants on the *morro*, moreover, broached this issue of color in their discussions -- whether relatively informed or entirely hypothetical -- of the movement. Beyond these facts, I can not "explain" the extremely different forms and levels of political engagement among activists and my informants on the *morro*, but I can describe, largely through quotation, how

[1] By "stable working class," I mean those families in which breadwinners earn considerably more than one minimum salary, are typically skilled, or as one of my activists informants referred to his father, "specialized" workers and, who in relative terms at least, are insulated from the cycles of periodic unemployment that tend to characterize the working lives of many of my informants in Morro do Sangue Bom. The informant that I refer to as "Joao" however, was brought up on one of Rio's larger *morros* and his parents died while he was still relatively young.

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some activists account for what they regard as the achievement of "*consciencia negra.*" Their stories help to further illuminate the tangled meanings of blackness in Brazil.

Because my research goals were very limited, I approached *militantes* who were directly affiliated with the most visible and accessible organizations in the city of Rio or in the North Zone. The members of some of these organizations figured themselves as being on one or another side of what appears to the most significant political divide within the movement, which involves directly political versus culturalist approaches to the "question of racism." While I gained a sense of the discourse within which such divisions were cast, there were many other forms of activism and types of organization that I investigated only very superficially, or not at all. Rio has a number of small, and apparently ephemeral culturalist organizations for example, that are called "*blocos afros.*" These groups perform Afro-Brazilian forms of music and dance that are associated with, without being limited to, carnaval celebrations. The Pastoral Negro, a religious organization associated with the catholic church that is described by Burdick (1993), appears to be much stronger in the North Zone and the Baixada Fluminense than in Rio and none of my informants appeared to have personal or professional connections to it.

I must note in addition, that individuals who are concerned, in their personal and professional lives, with exposing the issue of racism, need not be affiliated with organizations directly tied to the black movement; they may be found in what would appear the least likely of places. This fact was brought home to me after my research was (superficially) described in television and newspaper reports. I learned that an extremely high-ranking officer in the Military Police of the State of Rio de Janeiro was attempting to contact me. I had explicitly criticized police brutality against people of color on national television and for obvious reasons, I telephoned this officer with great trepidation and against the advice of Dona Janete. I came to regret that trepidation and my consequent delay, for he told me, "I myself am a *negro.* One of the problems we have here in Brazil is that no one wants to talk about racism and people only listen when a foreign researcher such as yourself puts the issue forward." He was organizing a seminar on racism for officers in the military police and he asked me to be present.

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For the most part however, my informants were not only members of organizations that explicitly defined themselves as part of the *movimento negro* but they served, in fact, in positions of leadership within these organizations. A very clear majority were men. This fact both hampers any grounded investigation of gender differences in how activists construct *consciencia negra* and points to the continuing dominance of men in the highest positions of leadership. Although a number of my informants were public figures, I have chosen, just as I do for my informants in Morro do Sangue Bom, to refer to them, and their organizations, with pseudonyms. Although no one, it seems, seriously entertains the possibility that Brazil might someday return to the repressive regimes of the past, I see no justification for applying the principle of informant anonymity inconsistently. Although a few of my activist informants presented themselves somewhat impersonally, as spokesmen for their organizations (and for the larger "*luta*" or struggle) I was far less concerned with their public personae than with their conversational reflections on their own experience. In this sense, my approach to my interviews with them did not differ greatly from my approach in Morro do Sangue Bom.

Nearly all of the people I spoke with who were involved in the black movement were very accessible, warm and loquacious interviewees. I note this fact because several of my activist informants were explicitly critical of scholars, particularly anthropologists; I believe it is important to distinguish their willingness to critique their interlocutors -- what might appear to be rhetorically antagonistic forms of engagement, that is -- from their interpersonal generosity, which was constantly indexed through a variety of conversational means.[2] Joao, whom I will describe in more detail later in this chapter said for example,

And another question. We have this "object of study" and this is another

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[2] I also make these comments because the relative rarity of distinctly oppositional rhetorics in Brazil can lead to their being publicly interpreted as the articulation of an unwillingness to engage in intellectual exchange, political negotiation and constructive, rather than confrontational forms of communication. Militants' repeated and outspoken emphasis on black-white opposition, jarring enough for the Brazilian ear, combined with contentious styles of speaking can lead to misunderstandings: their interlocutors may believe that militant discourses is motivated by directly personal forms of antagonism rather than by consciously rhetorical, and in some senses "nonpersonal" strategies of engagement.

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> question. Because my concern is, why study "the *negro*"? Why is there this reference to "the *negro*" and the "Brazilian *negro*"? What type of perspective does this study have? This is another question. And in a general way, the anthropologist, the ethnologist -- if I were to construct an image of the anthropologist or the ethnologist studying the *negro*, if I had to form an image, I would feel as if I were in a zoo, inside of a cage. And the ethnologist or anthropologist is walking through that zoo. Are you understanding? And looking at the species, trying to discover what its behavior is, why it does this, why it speaks in this way. I mean, being an object of study is a thing that I sometimes wonder about.... From the scientific point of view, [the *negro*] does not have feelings, he does not have love, he does not feel arousal, he does not make love, he does not kiss.[3] He is only an object of study.

Joao's comments appear to represent a grave challenge to anthropology, and indeed they do, yet in his characteristic fashion, he smiled and chuckled as he delivered them, and invited me to "wonder" with him. I did not react defensively, nor, I think, did he intend for me to. We had this conversation during our fourth meeting. Joao was sincerely interested in my research and although he was critical of my discipline, his comments were motivated not by condescension but by a desire to engage in provocative intellectual exchange. I had already come to rely on him, in fact, as an advisor and a confidante, a role he assumed with unfailing generosity and good humor. I told him that the very things he was talking about had become, belatedly, a "great polemic" within anthropology, that we had begun to examine how we represented "the other." Joao was aware of this fact as well; he knew that I would locate his comments within a discourse and a set of preoccupations that we shared. Still, I suggested, his was a question, that no matter

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[3] Joao's focus on love and erotics here, was not, as might appear, directed at me as a feminized interlocuter and researcher. He intended to invoke a very broad set of unexamined assumptions and stereotypes which, without a doubt, inform the more "traditional" forms of anthropological inquiry and writing, as well as everyday discourses. As the African-American poet, Maya Angelou has publicly observed, "White folks think that black folks don't make love, they fuck." She could easily have been quoting a Brazilian colloquialism. Vincent Crapanzano (personal communication) has commented on the the unexamined assumptions embedded within anthropology's traditional analyses of, and discourses about, marriage and kinship. They are overwhelmingly figured as structural-functional "systems," within which what Joao calls "feelings" and "love" play no role whatever. Although Joao appropriately refers to the "scientific view" -- with which he clearly has more than a glancing familiarity -- I might add that such assumptions characterize other discourses as well. Love and feelings may be figured as the ideological products of the structural requirements (including the nuclear family) of capitalism, or variously, as a set of strictly bourgeoise indulgences which the poor cannot afford. Regardless of the framing, the effect of such discourses, as Joao observes, is one of dehumanization.

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how much I, or other anthropologists, might worry around it, remained unresolved. What I want to highlight here is that despite his well-founded questions about the moral and political bases of my discipline, Joao and the other activists I met responded to my requests for interviews with what was sometimes a practiced, but nevertheless a genuine and serious desire to assist me in my research.

The first section of this chapter presents a brief overview of the history of black movements in Brazil. Black movement discourse, as I have noted, remains largely peripheral to the discursive arenas to which people such as those in Morro do Sangue Bom are exposed and in order to highlight this critical fact, the second section opens with a review of some of the conversations about the black movement that I had with people on the hill. I also briefly refer to comments that were made about the movement by my white middle-class informants. This section also describes, very briefly, the divisions and unifying perspectives within Rio's contemporary black movement organizations.

The third section begins with a quotation in which one of my informants discourses at length on historical, structural and ideological analyses of racism in Brazil. This quotation serves to introduce many of the common themes articulated in black movement discourse, particularly those that relate to the interpenetration of race and class in the structuring of oppression. The remainder of the section is largely concerned with this issue.

The fourth section concerns the ways in which black militants account for silence, and, by extension, how they define and describe the intersection between silence, discourses on color, race and class, and consciousness. The overlap between my own and my activist informants' efforts towards effectively describing, analyzing and representing the ways in which poor people of color engage, or do not engage, the meanings associated with race and color are especially evident in this section. Their comments are, of course, explicitly theoretical and I briefly compare their analyses with my own.

The fifth section concerns the ways in which activist informants described the personal trajectories that propelled them into activism. While their biographies are clearly unique, I

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highlight the extent to which the attainment of certain kinds of discursive fluency is figured as central to the achievement of *consciencia negra* or black consciousness. While it might well be argued that the processes my informants describe are entirely obvious and universal, I suggest that their self-conscious engagement with both discourse and metadiscourse is especially prominent and it is conditioned by silence and the discourses of denial. To engage in metadiscourse, especially, is not merely to articulate an analytical framework but to perform a political act.

In the final section, I present some of the ways in which my activist informants engaged in self-critique. Once again, metadiscourse figures strongly here, for they emphasize the gaps between their own discourses and those of their constituencies. I suggest, in addition that black militants are at least partly aware of the dangers and blind alleys that may be inherent in the essentializing tendencies of their own discourse. Far from simply parroting transnational discourses -- one of the most ubiquitous accusations leveled against them -- black militants self-consciously seek an exit from discursive forms of entrapment in ways that I argue are peculiarly Brazilian.

A Brief History of Resistance and Movement

"You know what I think is the best part of Brazilian history?" Joia said one evening as she, Daniel and I stood drinking beer at Joaozinho's, the little hole-in-the-wall bar near their house. "When Princesa Isabel freed the slaves, that's the best part." Joia repeated the simple story that all Brazilian school children hear: that in one, abrupt shining moment in May, 1988, the slaves were liberated by a signature from the hand of Dom Emperor Pedro's generous daughter, Isabel. What Joia and other Brazilians were not taught in school is that by mid-century, the slavocratic society of the sugar-producing region was quickly expiring and in the southeastern region, of which Rio de Janeiro is a part, slave insurrections and escape were so frequent that planters had begun not only to despair of maintaining a sufficient labor force, but in many cases, to fear for their lives. Princesa Isabel had merely recognized the inevitable. People

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on the *morro*, like most Brazilians, seemed unaware of the myriad forms of resistance practiced by slaves throughout the era of slavery. However, Daniel, expanding on Joia's story, told a bit of subversive gossip. "It was because of this guy named Jose do Patrocinio," Daniel said. "He was a *preto* and Princesa Isabel was in love with him." "So he put her up to it?" I asked. "Yes, he made her do it," Daniel said, with a chuckle.

Whether Daniel's story is true, I do not know. Jose do Patrocinio was a mulato journalist and vociferous abolitionist who no doubt did mingle with the elite movers and shakers who attended balls in the imperial palace. What the story illustrates, however, is the abiding tension between the hegemonic reading of slave history and what might be called the muffled impulse, on the part of people like Daniel and Joia, to subvert that reading. In telling a tale about the secret passion between Patrocinio and Isabel, Daniel gave voice to the notion that interracial *paixao*, or passion, is always a more powerful force in Brazil than interracial conflict. While Patrocinio may figure as a certain kind of trickster, who sexually charms the white princess for the benefit of the *raca negra*, his script fits neatly within the confines of a larger national mythology. More frequently than not, it seems, contradictory dominant mythologies remain one step ahead of subversive tales in Brazil. Crafting a discourse which outsteps familiar mythologies and which succeeds in being both persuasive and capable of being transformed into a colloquial idiom, remains the greatest challenge of Brazil's black movement.

In refiguring the history of African-Brazilian resistance, black movement militants of the 1970s turned to Zumbi, the legendary leader of Palmares, a seventeenth century *quilombo*, or maroon society. Located in what is now the northeastern state of Alagoas, Palmares (actually a federation of villages) sheltered between 20 and 30 thousand people, most of whom were escaped slaves and their descendants. The warriors of Palmares successfully resisted the military incursions of the Dutch and Portuguese for 70 years. According to legend, Zumbi was killed by the Portuguese in the final battle to protect Palmares, and the *quilombo* collapsed and was disbanded in 1694.

While Zumbi and Palmares represent the symbolic origin of African-Brazilian

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resistance, black movements of the modern era have not fulfilled the promise that such a beginning would seem to suggest. Although numerous small, loosely-knit organizations emerged in the first half of the twentieth century, none endured more than a few years and only a few achieved any prominence. The most notable of these early movements were the Frente Negra Brasileira and the Teatro Experimental do Negro.

The Frente Negra Brasileira (Black Brazilian Front) was founded in 1931, one year after the collapse of the Republic, which had operated as a one-party system. Beginning in Sao Paulo, the movement spread rapidly to other states. While dedicated to black empowerment and the denunciation of racism, the Frente Negra quickly aligned itself with Integralism and the burgeoning fascist ideologies then current in Brazil, as elsewhere. To a certain extent, the logic of such an alliance was located in the position of African-Brazilians vis-a vis Brazil's growing immigrant and immigrant-descended population. The anti-foreign nationalism of Integralism and Brazilian fascism (while itself a European import) were seized by Frente Negra members as an ideological strike against the dominance of European immigrant labor. Within a few years of its founding, many of the Frente Negra's moderate and left-leaning members left the movement. Although the Frente Negra registered itself as a political party in 1936 and engaged in vigorous campaigning before that time, it never succeeded in electing a candidate to office. While a strong supporter of the Vargas regime, the Frente Negra party was dissolved in 1937, along with all other parties. The Estado Novo, or New State of Vargas's dictatorship, had effectively silenced all black political activism.

The Vargas Regime, while stifling political opposition, instituted labor legislation which benefited people of color, many of whom were, of course, members of the working classes. Their incorporation into populist parties, combined with the articulation of discourses of *democracia racial*, further undermined the development of explicitly political forms of black activism. As Andrews notes, "the result was that the black organizations of the 1946-64 period were almost exclusively cultural in their orientation, focusing on literacy and other educational projects, the fostering of black literary, theatrical and artistic activities" (1992:162). The Teatro

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Experimental do Negro, founded in 1944, was just such an organization. Initially formed to provide opportunities for actors of color who were denied work in white-dominated theater productions, TEN also attracted a wider group of intellectuals and artists, both black and white. TEN was founded by Abdias do Nascimento, still one of Brazil's best-known black political activists, who wrote of the organization, "The Black Experimental Theatre is not, in spite of its name, only an entity with artistic objectives .... It was inspired by the need of a social organization for people of color, with the elevation of their cultural level and individual values in mind" (quoted in Hanchard, 1994:107). However, TEN was even less successful than The Frente Negra in attracting large numbers of African-Brazilians; this was due not only to the prevailing cultural forces which continue to operate against racialized political mobilization, but also to the essentially elitist character of the organization. As Hanchard argues moreover, the Teatro Experimental tended to encourage racist negrophilia -- the romanticization of supposedly "primitive" African sensibilities -- rather than to challenge it (Ibid).

The military coup of 1964 initiated what was to become the most repressive and dangerous period for black activists. Political activism was legally defined as a threat to state security. Black militants were tortured and jailed. Even those not directly involved in activism, such as the social scientists, Florestan Fernandez, Octavio Ianni and Brazil's current president, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, were forced out of their university positions, at least partly as a result of their critical research and writing on "race relations." During this period, what had before been a cultural and ideological form of censorship was now officially and strictly enforced; newspapers, television programming, and cultural activities were all closely monitored by a state determined to silence all discourse on racism.

As government restrictions on political and cultural activities began to loosen their grip in the late 1970s, new forms of black activism emerged, especially in the states of Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. Inspired by the civil rights movement of the U.S. and the anti-colonial movements of Africa, black militants began to craft a more directly political critique of Brazilian racism. Distancing themselves from the accomodationist stance of organizations such as the

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Frente Negra Brasileira, they attempted to formulate a discourse that while heavily influenced by foreign movements, responded directly to "*racismo ala Brasil*," i.e., those forms of racism (many of them constituted in the discursive arena) that are peculiar to Brazil. Discourses on the systemic relationship between race and class for example, took center stage. Unable to organize their strategies around the issue of legal segregation as American activists had, they denounced *racismo mascarado*, or masked racism, and the de facto segregation of African-Brazilians in the urban periphery and the morros. To a much greater degree than they had past, black militants of this period aligned themselves with leftist political concepts and discourses, and in many cases, with specific leftist political parties.

The Movimento Negro Unificado (Unified Black Movement) was the most visible black movement organization of this period. As several scholars have argued, the MNU and other organizations that began in the late 1970s and early 1980s received their impetus not only from the *abertura*, or democratization of political process in Brazil, but also from the frustration and disillusionment of university educated African-Brazilians who were unable to secure the jobs, income and status promised them by *democracia racial* (Turner, 1985)

The Movimento Negro Unificado was founded in 1978, with the ambitious aim of unifying black militants throughout the country under one ideological and organization banner. The MNU was, and continues to be, explicitly Marxist in orientation. Its members however, certainly refute the notion, common among Brazilian leftists, that race and racism are largely irrelevant epiphenomena of class, and define them rather as functional products of the transnational, historically situated operations of capitalism.

Despite its ambitions, the MNU has been unable to significantly effect electoral politics. While 54 African-Brazilian candidates were nominated for municipal, state and national offices in Sao Paulo in 1982, the MNU was unable to mobilize support for them; only two succeeded in gaining office (Andrews, 1991:195). Focusing on black movement activism in Sao Paulo, Andrews points out however that the Partido do Movimento Democratico Brasileiro (PMDB), the winning party in 1982 and 1986, created a new state agency, the Conselho de Participacao e

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Desenvolvimento da Comunidade Negra, which was devoted to "carrying out studies of the conditions of the black community and proposing measures aimed at defending its rights and eliminating the discrimination which effects it" (1992:166). In addition, anti-discrimination offices were formed in the secretariats of Labor and Education.

Although black militants themselves viewed these offices as "purely cosmetic entities with no real political influence or significance" (Ibid: 167) Andrews correctly argues that their creation perhaps represented the first time that "a state or national government in Brazil ever officially contradicted the country's image of itself as a racial democracy (Ibid). The MNU and other, smaller organizations of the black movement had thus achieved a limited degree of political visibility, and within a small, educated and politicized black middle class, a certain degree of social visibility as well. Nevertheless, the MNU never did achieve its ambition of becoming a truly coalition-based national movement. While chapters exist in a number of states, it is, as one black militant in Rio said, "just one organization among many."

Many explanations can be, and have been, put forward for the failure of Brazil's black movement to "mobilize the masses." As will become clear, a number of my activist informants spoke directly about, or circled around the hiatus between movement discourse, which is heavily influenced by transnational rhetorics and what one informant called an "academic" style, and everyday discourses about color, race, and racism in Brazil. It has been suggested certainly (by my informants as well as by some scholars) that the "masses" have been duped by the myth of *democracia racial* and see no justification, ultimately, for organizing under a racial banner. "Racial identity" and "racial solidarity," it is implied, do not "make sense" within Brazil's fluid and anti-essentialist culture. It is not my purpose to resolve this question, for surely, there is not one explanation, but many overlapping ones and this chapter and the others of the dissertation point to many possibilities. At a very practical level however, it must be noted in concluding this section that organizational factionalism within the movement itself prevents coalition-building and the pursuit of clearly defined strategies. In 1992 many of the nation's organizations participated in the Primeiro Encontro Nacional das Entidades do Movimento Negro (First

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National Encounter of Black Movement Entities) in Sao Paulo. I attended this meeting but learned more when I discussed it with my informants after they had returned to Rio. Most appeared to be frustrated, even depressed after the event. They told me that the movement lacked a center and remained almost hopelessly bogged down in repeated and failed attempts to build consensus. The ambition of creating a national "*projeto*" -- part shared ideological vision and part practical strategy -- never got off the ground. "We have a very long way to go," one veteran activist sighed heavily.

Black Activism in Rio

As I have noted, most of my informants in Morro do Sangue Bom had, if anything, only the most glancing awareness of the existence of a black movement in Rio or elsewhere in Brazil. My attempts to understand their "position" on such explicitly political issues then, tended to involve entirely hypothetical scenarios. I often asked people for example, if they would go to a "*manifestacao*" or political demonstration intended to protest racialized discrimination and prejudice. Many people expressed trepidation at such a notion. Tomas for example, told me that if a street march were held in the city, people would throw things at the protesters. "It would be better to have it as a party," Tomas said, "then everyone would go. As a street march, it wouldn't do, no way."

Dona Janete had never heard anything about the black movement. Her response to my question about a attending a protest demonstration was extremely ambivalent:

> Here, marches never end the way they begin. You fall on the ground, another tramples you, another kicks you, the police give you a beating. It never ends the way it began. Now, if it were a thing of defense, I would go. Because I have to defend my side. I am dark! Right? ..... People take a long time to do anything but when they do it, it is a rebellion.... There needs to be some kind of protest march, that says that everything is wrong... We don't have any rights, not even to our salaries. We don't have anything. Children are going hungry, there is this hunger in general. We almost don't have anything to eat. With all that, you have to protest! But one goes to protest, and the other doesn't go. They are afraid! They are afraid!

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When I asked Guilherme if he would go to a demonstration, he shook his head dismissively and said he would not. "It's not worth the trouble," he said. He paused for a moment and said with a smile, "But I would go to a riot." I had difficulty imagining Guilherme, an extremely mild-mannered young man, participating in a riot. I thought he was probably joking, making a point about how ineffectual a street demonstration would be in the face of such deep prejudices and the structures that reflect and create them, but I was never certain.

I asked Angela, who had a vague glimmering of the existence of a movement why, in her opinion, it was so weak. "Oh, it must be because people are afraid, you know, people are afraid." "Afraid of what?" I asked. "I don't know," she said, "I don't how to explain this well." I told Angela that I knew that during the years of military rule, it was very dangerous to engage in protest. She simply said, "I know" in a noncommittal way, as though this fact, for her, was of no special relevance to the fear she had referred to but could not explain. Later in our conversation, she referred to "bombs" and "police activity," things she immediately associated with protest demonstrations.

A few people, like Analucia told that she would certainly go to a demonstration protesting racialized discrimination. "Racism is not going to end," she explained, "and it is a thing that my children should understand." Analucia, it should be recalled, was so light-skinned that people thought of her as *branca*, or white. When I asked Rosa (who had earlier insisted that even light-skinned people who had "hard hair" were *negros*) if she would take her children to such a demonstration, she said without hesitation, "Of course! All my children are *negros*." Her thirteen year-old son, who wondered into the kitchen during our interview said from across the room, "No, I am *moreno*!" His mother seemed to ignore the comment.

Rosa's son's response reminded me of a conversation I had with Tiago on November 20, the anniversary of the death of Zumbi. Tiago, like his parents and aunts and uncles knew something of Zumbi through *samba* lyrics. I commented to both Tiago and his mother that no one on the *morro* seemed to aware that it was a special day. Tiago said that it was a special day for him because Zumbi was a "leader of the *negros*." "And I myself am a *negro*," he said. I

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rarely heard such comments on the *morro* and the note of pride in his voice surprised and cheered me. Elena, who had was visiting, corrected him, however. "You are not a *negro*, Tiago," she told him, "You are a *mestico*. Isn't that right, Joia?" Joia nodded. Elena intended her statement as an extremely polite one obviously, but Tiago appeared to be crestfallen.

There were a few people who had some knowledge of the movement. Marluce, a dark woman in her thirties, was one of the few people on the *morro* who constantly engaged me in political discussion. Although a supporter of Fidel Castro, Marluce, like many Brazilians, was extremely cynical about homegrown politicians and activists in her own city. Hearing that I had interviewed a particular black movement activist, she burst out angrily, "Oh, he talks about the people this, the people that, but he is only in this for his own gain, for money, do you understand? All these *movimento negro* people are a bunch of opportunists!" While I was surprised by Marline's invective and her facile dismissal of the movement and its personnel, I shouldn't have been. Like all Brazilians of her class, Marluce was schooled in political betrayal; like others she had listened to rhetoric and promises, been briefly uplifted in hope, and inevitably, it seemed, bitterly disappointed. With a degree of justification no doubt, Marluce believed that activists, like government politicians, used politics as a ladder for their own upward mobility.

Two others who who knew something of the movement were involved, at least to a limited degree in local politics. My discussions with both Neusa and Helio suggested that their political involvement, unusual in Morro do Sangue Bom, was more than coincidentally related to their dismissive, even contemptuous comments on the movement.

Although Neusa was not an official member of the directorate of the resident's association, she had volunatarily and rather aggressively taken over many of its functions, particularly those that involved mediation between the community and "outsiders." On Wednesday mornings she served as a receptionist to the homeopathic doctor who donated his services to the community once a week. She made occasional trips to an organization concerned with AIDS prevention to pick up free condoms to distribute on the *morro*. She also acted as self-

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appointed liaison between the community and the occasional journalist who came looking for a "*favela* story." She was very "*ambicioso*" or ambitious, people said, and she "*mexe em tudo*," or "messed around in everything." The note of censure in the English expressions were evident in the Portuguese as well, for people on the *morro* suggested that her ceaseless politicking -- which they took to be self-promotion, rather than community service -- might someday get her or the community into trouble. At any rate, because Neusa had many connections outside of the community and a special penchant for the social and intellectual activities peculiar to both the "up-front" and "behind-the-scenes" engagement with local politics, she was far more aware of the existence of the *movimento negro* than were most people on the *morro*. Neusa was one of very few people I spoke with who felt that racism was not a significant political issue in Brazil. She told me that were the movement to become successful, it would create a situation in which, "whites and *negros* would be completely separated as they are in the United States." "What about *mulatos*?" she said, "What about *morenos*?" As I have noted in Chapter Two, Neusa also participated in the discourse on race and argued that "one is white or one is black"; she was able to manipulate a variety of discursive registers in order to make apparently contradictory points.

Neusa's invocation of "*mulatos* and *morenos*" as thoroughly reified categories of racial identity that mediate, displace and soften potential conflicts between blacks and whites is an extremely conventional one in Brazil. Both her language and her argument, in fact, were highly characteristic of the political circles -- local, leftist, and grassroots though they may have been -- that she sought to penetrate. Helio, a very dark-skinned man who was associated with the resident's association was the only other person on the *morro* who argued in very explicit and dismissive terms that there is no racism in Brazil. Like Neusa, he asserted that it is not racism but the problem of "hunger" that demanded one's attention in political terms. Helio, like Neusa, was said to be very "ambitious" and one of my informants cited him as a classic example of a "racist" who was only seen in the company of whites.

Both Helio and Neusa had learned, I would suggest, that racial politics spelled a dead end -- personally as well as politically. They had adopted the politically dominant discourses

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that told them both that their own color was no obstacle to their own political ambitions and that their deep and no doubt sincere commitment to an exclusively class-based understanding of inequality was correct. Still, their denial of the significance of racism was complicated. In prescriptive terms, this denial was intended to suggest, I believe, that race in general, and one's own race in particular, ought not to matter, ought not even to exist. "I have many white friends," Neusa told me.

The comments that my white middle-class informants made about the movement tended to be dismissive. Like Helio, many suggested that racism is a false problem, for it class alone and not color or race that oppresses. Like Neusa, others suggested that any black movement would be, in principle, racist and anti-Brazilian. Other middle-class whites, particularly the women I interviewed, expressed sympathy for the movement but they believed it to be a purely "cultural" movement, directed towards the artistic development of African- and reggae-style music and dance forms. The braids, the Bob Marley tee shirts, the kinte cloth, the beads, all the obvious, fashionable accessories and accouterments that they associated with the movement were thought to be "very cool." The penetration of transnational fashion was all they saw or registered of the black movement.

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Joao, the activist informant with whom I spent the most time, was one of the most visible of Rio's self-styled black activist's, and he habitually wore a large beret with the African national colors, as much to conceal a receding hairline, I thought, as to announce his political disposition. During the time of my fieldwork, he served as the director of one of the nation's oldest surviving black movement organizations, which was founded under deliberately false public pretenses in the tortured years of the seventies. As a veteran activist, Joao had clearly paid his dues and he continued to pay them. After we had met and pursued wide-ranging conversations on a number of occasions, he alluded to having been tortured as a political prisoner during the repression. In more recent years, he had received hate mail and harassing telephone calls in which he was told

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that his enemies knew where his children attended school.

Joao made a successful living as an artist, but most of his energy, it seemed, was devoted to the movement. He was practiced in the arts of oratory and his comments were almost always embroidered with rhetorical flourishes, illustrative asides in which he mimicked everyday discourses, and bursts of ironic laughter in which he invited his interlocutor to wonder at the myriad forms of dissimulation that animated *democracia racial*. Joao was known as something of a provocateur and he often offended delicate sensibilities -- never a difficult task when discussing the issue of racism in Brazil. He was well-traveled and offered to conduct what I called "interviews" and he called "*bate papo*" or informal conversation, in English. I explained that I wanted to hear his thoughts in his own language.

As Hanchard notes, the black movement in Brazil is now, as it always has been, "a movement of groups with little political coherence or relation to one another" (1994:99). This is certainly true of the groups in Rio and Joao, of course, was well aware of the fact. He described the *disconcordancias*, or disagreements within the movement, while emphasizing its very general and shared direction;

> In reality [disagreements] exist, yes. We define the project in a general way; if you go to any entity of the black movement, you will see that there is only one project: that of the struggle to combat racism, the struggle to change the [social] structure, the struggle for society, the construction of *our* society. Now, what we haven't yet defined are the methods. So, each one thinks he has a viable way of doing this. Some think that it is through culture, that culture is sufficient. Others like [this organization, here] think that besides bringing culture in, it is necessary to have [political] participation, training, [work on] self-esteem, and so on. So, there are divergences within this process. Now, what you don't find in the black movement, not openly anyway, are people on the right, conservatives -- they hide themselves, because normally, the black movement is more on the left, more leftist.

As Joao notes, the historical division between primarily culturalist organizations and those that are principally political organizations remains within the black movement of the 1990s. Whereas in previous periods, these orientations have shifted from one historical period to another, both orientations currently coexist in Rio and in Brazil generally. Those organizations

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which define themselves as political tend to focus on human and civil rights, legislation, and to a certain extent, electoral politics. Culturalist organizations tend to concern themselves with the redefinition and politicization of what they call "*cultura Afro-Brasileira*," or African-Brazilian culture. In essence, theirs is a movement of cultural re-appropriation and reinvention; *carnaval* performance groups, dances and music are re-crafted to "*valorizar*," or valorize, Africa and African-Brazilian history.

While the political organizations accuse the culturalist groups of "folklorizing" and reifying culture, the culturalists charge the political organizations with ineffectual elitism, a failure to "speak to the masses in their own language." While some organizations do in fact, fit this dichotomous model, my own research suggests that others are attempting to straddle both orientations. Moreover, as Joao implies, black movement militants, whatever their organizational affiliation, share common understandings of "*racismo ala Brasil*," or Brazilian racism. Although they might appear to "have little political coherence or relation to one another," they are all, in fact, engaged in the common project of developing a discourse about the causes and consequences of racism in Brazil.

The Discourse on Racism: Otavio's Introduction

I met Otavio at a primarily political organization associated with the black movement in the Centro section of Rio de Janeiro. Located on a dusty, deeply pitted side street, the organization is housed on one or two floors of a nondescript building; no sign or banner announces its existence to the passerby. More formal, in fact, than other organizations I visited, this one did not seem to invite impromptu visits. A man in his thirties, Otavio's manner was friendly, yet business-like. He was the director of one the organization's permanent programs, and as such he responded to requests from outside organizations and individuals for information on everything from the torture and murder of Rio's homeless children to the sterilization of women of color -- which many in the movement argued, had been forced on them by coercive doctors and privately-funded programs. Throughout most of our interview, Otavio spoke in a

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manner which seemed simultaneously pressured and rehearsed. When I asked him to comment, in a general, open fashion on racism in Brazil, he provided the following, almost, it seemed, without pausing for breath:

> To understand racism in Brazil, you have to understand the Brazilian historical process. In truth, when we speak against racism, we are speaking of an ideological system which began with the conquest of the New World. The New World was "discovered" by the European who arrived here with motives that were principally economic. And what did he do? He simply destroyed, massacred, the people who were different, and put them in subaltern positions relative to the European. In this way he created the idea of Eurocentrism, right, that Europe is the center of the world. The European in his art, and in his theories, principally in anthropology, [asserted that] the others were savages, and that the Europeans were above everybody, as the "civilized ones" -- that business of different stages of development, that the *negro* was less evolved. And this ideology was created to give support to economic exploitation.
>
> So, on arriving here, the European attempted to enslave the Indians but the Indians did not accept slavery. So the Europeans went to Africa to do the same thing, and the *negro* became a prisoner of war. This *negro*, denied the right to practice his religion, denied the right to speak his language, denied the right to maintain a stable family, and denied his liberty... This European in the name of a civilizing ideology enslaved the *negro* in Brazil. The Indians were killed and put on reservations and the *negro* was enslaved. From that moment, the *negro* was seen as simply a slave, he wasn't seen as human, he was an object, like a commodity, an exchange commodity.
>
> So the *negro* became what? He was put in the most subaltern positions and was viewed as an evil element. The *negro* was always associated with the bad, with the devil. And when England forced Brazil to abolish slavery, what happened? The *negros* were expelled from the countryside and the Brazilian government recruited European immigrants to take their places, even paying their passage and giving them land. So the immigrants became the specialized workers in Brazil. And the *negro*, what happened? He cannot own his own land, he is expelled from the countryside, and those that remain in the countryside return to the conditions of slavery, or worse, they go to the urban centers and live where? In the peripheral areas of the urban centers, in the most destitute areas, in the areas with infrastructural problems, in the areas that don't have water, that don't have sewerage systems, that are without access to education -- in other words, the *favelas*. So this *negro* was segregated within the process of discrimination and he continues in this situation today.
>
> And he is discriminated against through other means, through the ideology of *democracia racial*, the denial of racism. And [through] the theory that the *negro* is incapable of occupying a position, of taking advantage of opportunities in the labor market. So, what happens? Racism in Brazil is the fruit of this entire historical process of colonization. It is connected to the international capitalist system. The *negro* segment of the population still suffers from the repercussions of this historical process; he has been excluded since the

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> beginning and today he remains excluded. ...he remains marginalized. As he is marginalized, he is still concentrated in great numbers in the *favelas*, in great numbers in the prisons, and in great numbers in subaltern jobs, earning a quarter or a half or up to only one or two minimum salaries. He is excluded from education, without direct access to health care.
>
> But today, racism is confounded with and mixed up with poverty. Racial discrimination today is mixed with social discrimination, although they are different. The white, primarily the white from the northeast, and the Indian have also been discriminated against and marginalized. So you note that in Brazil today, there is a minority social elite, which is the minority color, that lives a quality of life equal to that of the European elite, or the north American elite, while a large part of the population lives in poverty, absolute misery even. And in an intermediate position, there is the middle class who are neither rich nor poor, and they also struggle to survive to remain what we call the Brazilian middle class.
>
> But what happened ideologically? The *negro* himself, because of the way the ideology works, is ashamed to assume a *negro* identity. The ideology is so deep, it works so well, it is in everything, education and in the concept of beauty. The concept of beauty and everything is associated with the white stereotype. So you have for example, the Xuxa program on television, and in the *favelas*, they're all wanting to be blonde. Which will never happen! The mass communication media, principally television today, are fundamental instruments of this racial ideology, this ideology of racial discrimination. Because you can see very well that all the concepts which work, all the images which are put forth, are all stereotypical white images. And the *negro*, where is he is in this question? When they show *negros*, they are always *favelados*, they show them doing domestic service, clearly implying that the *negro* is incapable of anything else. And this ideology also makes the *negro* judge himself as incapable. It is the function of the ideology to convince him of that. So, many *negros* don't like the movement, or they don't know it exists, or they don't understand it. The movement itself hasn't managed to attract a large portion of the black population.

I quote Otavio at such length because his comments serve as a kind of introduction to black movement discourse. Otavio in fact, touches on nearly all of the major concerns of that discourse. The majority of the black movement militants I spoke with defined racism as a historical issue, and while the concepts, words, indeed the general discourse that Otavio uses to describe history may be familiar to most readers, they represent, in the Brazilian context especially, a radical re-envisioning of the history of race relations in Brazil. Spoken during the 500th anniversary of Columbus' voyage to the "New World," Otavio intends his words not only as an analysis of Brazilian racism, but as a rejection of cultural censorship and a repudiation of the dominant celebratory discourses of the quintencennial in Brazil and abroad.

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As I often heard other militants do, Otavio slips almost imperceptibly from the past to the present tense. History, in Otavio's analysis, is used not only to explain the present but to project the exploitation of African-Brazilians as a continuous, seamless process. Those evidentiary claims Otavio uses -- Eurocentrism, the cultural as well as physical enslavement of Africans, the codification of negrophobia and its justificatory function, the recruitment of European labor, the continuing inequity of land distribution, the *favelizacao*, or ghettoing of poor African-Brazilians, the false claims of *democracia racial*, the political economy of international capitalism, the exploitation of other minority groups, the racism of the mass media, and the ideological entanglement and sense of shame among poor people of color and their failure to join forces with the movement -- are all intoned again and again by black militants in a variety of organizations. Although other militants beside Joao are often critical of scholars (particularly of anthropologists, whom they see as "treating the *negro* like a curious object") many are well read in the history, ethnography, and critical theory of race and racism in Brazil. While they have been accused of importing, in a wholesale fashion, the discourses of foreign movements which have limited applicability in Brazil, militants of the 1990s appear to rely just as heavily on the work of those scholars who are critical of *democracia racial*. Notably, their reliance on the analyses of the academic arena may be based less on the need to generate or borrow concepts and theory than it is on the perceived need to participate in a dominant, international lexicon and mode of argumentation.

Although Otavio's comments seem to suggest that militants might inevitably gravitate towards socialism, Joao suggested that this is not necessarily the case. Although he championed land reform and argued (less from a position of naive optimism, than for more strictly rhetorical purposes) that the government should make reparations for the forced contributions slaves had made to Brazil, he professed himself to be a fence-sitter in political terms. When I asked him what type of political-economic system would, in his view, be the most equipped to eradicate racism, he responded,

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> Look, I don't know what type of system. I think that we must change the structure of society so that we will have a more just society, a more fraternal society. Now, whether this would be democracy or socialism, I don't know. I do know that I struggle for a society in which I can be judged on the basis of my competence, of my abilities, and not on the basis of my color. I struggle for this society because I want my children and my grandchildren to learn in school about the true history of the participation and contribution of the *negro* in the cultural formation of Brazilian society. I want a society which has a just distribution of wealth. Now, if this is democracy, I don't know. If this is socialism, I don't know. If it is communism, I also don't know.

As both Otavio's and Joao's comments imply, the assertion that race and class are systemically entwined is central to current black movement discourse. This assertion is addressed to a variety of interlocutors. In the public realm, politicians and political parties, the organs of the mass media, and cultural productions all assert, usually implicitly, at times explicitly, that the discrimination endured by poor people of color is a result of social, or class-based discrimination alone. As I have noted, this assertion is repeated, often in explicit form, in the everyday discourses of Brazilians of all classes and colors. Following the logic of all circular arguments, the evasion of the connection between racism and political economy is buttressed in the realm of everyday discourse by a series of tautologies: "poor people of color are poor because they can't get good jobs"; "they can't get good jobs because they are uneducated"; "they are uneducated because they are poor."

Jose directed a project in the same organization in which Otavio is employed. After a number of years working on the cultural front of the black movement, Jose's comments, while similar to Otavio's in many ways, were closer to the ground, more illustrative. A large man in his forties, Jose's manner was extremely warm. He responded to my more personal questions with both ease and interest. To an even greater degree than Joao, he frequently broke off his discourse to laugh, loud and long, at the ironies and paradoxes of Brazil. His comments were unfailingly incisive. He emphasized the connection between poverty and racism in this way:

> The majority of *negros* on the street... wind up saying that they have never suffered from racial humiliation. Yet each day, every one of them is suffering racial humiliation, suffering racism.... In Brazil, the majority [of them] live where *negros* live.... He lives on the periphery of the periphery and works in the center of the city. He has to leave his home at three or four in the morning to get

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> to work at eight o'clock. He has to get three or four different buses... [The place where he lives] doesn't even have the minimum in basic sanitation. This is a form of racism. The larger part of the population who [live in these conditions] in Brazil are *negros*. This is all a reflection of social exploitation. Even though he says this is an economic issue, as many people do, it isn't. It's all a result of the process of a false liberation of slaves.

Jose begins with what he sees as the failure of the "*negro* on the street" to understand the structural evidence of racism, to connect the daily "humiliation" of poverty with racism. Although most people of color in Morro do Sangue Bom seem to be well aware of the humiliation of racism, Jose's suggestion that poor people of color tend to interpret their poverty as a class issue rather than as a racialized one is partly true. As I have noted, people on the *morro* are extremely fluent in discourses that emphasize class-based forms of injustice and they may evoke slavery when discussing poverty, yet they rarely elaborate on its racialized character.

The organization of which Joao was the director is also located in the Centro section of the city, on a street graced by some of Rio's oldest and most dilapidated buildings. Busy by day, the area empties out and appears somewhat forbidding during the evening hours when many of the important events in Joao's organization are staged. It encompasses both political and culturalist orientations and it often sponsors public seminars, *launcementos*, or book-launching parties, and lectures. Just inside the front door of the organization there is a bulletin board, which displays announcements of up-coming events in a variety of black movement organizations; a few rare newspaper clippings detailing police brutality against people of color; copies of threatening and obscene letters sent by an individual or group claiming to represent the "KKK Brasil"; and public messages written by members, which refer to what appear to be disputes over authority within the organization itself. In one of our long conversations there, in which Joao and I smoked endless cigarettes and guzzled Coca Cola, he referred not only to the generalized dominant discourse which claims a disarticulation between race and poverty, but specifically to the participation of poor people of color in that discourse. Familiar with my work in Morro do Sangue Bom, he said,

> In a general sense, the population privileges this class issue in Brazilian society, and the issue of race is simply put on a second plane. If you go up to Morro do

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> Sangue Bom and ask a *negro* or a *negra*, why she is living in that place, why she is living in those conditions, she will respond to you that she lives there because she is poor. She will never tell you that she lives there because she is a *negra*.... It isn't the fact that she was poor that turned her into a *negra*. It was the fact of being a *negra* that made her poor.... Today there exists a fundamental issue in Brazil and that is the issue of racism at the structural level. The structure of Brazilian society, [sets aside] some spaces for the *negro*, namely the *favelas*, the slum buildings, the [urban] periphery and the slave quarters..... Because the *negro* is -- we are -- second class citizens. So our [restricted] spaces are a function of the politics of the developed countries, a function of the external debt, and of the compromises that the Brazilian government normally makes in submitting itself to the World Bank and the American banks. What has happened is that this conjuncture has made whites poor also and they are living in the same spaces that were always reserved for *negros*.... So people then use this conjunctural issue to argue that the issue in Brazil is not one of racism, but that it's a social [class] issue -- in order to obfuscate the issue of racism.... But what they forget is that the white is there because of this conjuncture.

In these comments, Joao suggests, accurately, I think, that the primary ideological battle of Brazil's black movement is one of demystification. As does Jose, he laments the fact that poor people of color themselves frequently fail to see or consistently draw a connection between poverty, class discrimination and racialized discrimination. In bridging this connection, Joao focuses not on racist culture(s) but on racist social structures. Correctly or not, he brings dependency theory in to account for the presence of whites in *favelas*, a fact frequently brought to bear in the arguments, both popular and academic, that in Brazil, it is only a person's poverty and not their color that provokes discrimination. It is just such facts -- that some whites are poor also, that some *negros* make it financially, that the middle class also must struggle to maintain a toe-hold on the Brazilian dream -- that activists must constantly address in order to make a very simple point.

The "False Discourse": *Democracia Racial*, Racism and Consciousness

When I told my activist informants that I had been surprised to find a lack of everyday discourse on racism in the *morro* where I was living, they affirmed my observations largely through comments relating to what they saw as the problematic *consciencia*, or consciousness of poor people of color. Otavio saw this consciousness as primarily molded by the forces of

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"conformity" and "accommodation" and by physical repression and terror. Addressing the issue of the failure of poor people of color to develop or participate in discourses on racism and racial mobilization, he said,

> They are conscious of the fact, in the empirical sense -- they suffer in the day-to-day sense. But as I said, this ideology is so strong, and the church has a big role in this, that there exists a certain conformity. There exists a certain accommodation, and besides this the lack of knowledge, right? Also, for the Brazilian people, whenever there was a revolt or some mobilization, it was always strongly repressed by the dominant elite. It always happened in Brazil that popular movements were crushed, with arms, with the military, right? To commit a real massacre. So this is also a thing which counts against any type of mobilization. With the military coup of '64, with the dictatorship and repression, every day the *favela* population suffered from political repression and from the racist ideology. The *negro* is on the bus, or in the *favela* itself and the police come and harass whomever they want. No one knows what they might do at dawn because anything can happen. So, without a doubt fear is one of the fundamental factors that can explain this type of behavior, and it's not just this, there are many other things, but the fear, repression, the fear of violence is a very terrible thing, really very terrible. So people look for some kind of paradise inside the church and so accommodation without a doubt leads to this behavior.

Unlike Otavio, most of the militants I spoke with emphasized not physical terror but ideological, and ultimately, discursive manipulation. Mario, a a light-skinned man in his thirties, spoke volubly on this subject and others. Although I first approached Mario on a Santa Teresa-bound bus after seeing him at a black movement event we had both attended, he defined himself as "not involved" in the movement. As I later discovered, his disavowal of identification with the movement was based more on a disappointed cynicism towards its factious organizations movement than with his own politics and activities. Working independently of any organization, Mario taught Afro-Brazilian dance to children on various morros and told them stories related to African-Brazilian heritage, such as the legend of Zumbi. He was also involved in efforts to disseminate information on AIDS prevention to centers of Candomble in the Rio area. When I asked him about the lack of everyday discourse on racism, he said;

> People think that racism doesn't exist. They forget history, that we were slaves, that we are slaves even today. They say that racial discrimination doesn't exist in this country, but it reveals itself in society. The *negro* is always treated differently from the other, the white. So really, the people who say they don't

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> see this, don't want to see it. Sometimes I think they just don't want to see it. Because racism does exist. I think that saying racism doesn't exist is convenient for the system. It exists. The *negros*, where are they? Why are the whites in all the good places; *negros* have the same abilities....

It is notable that Mario moves from the comment that "people think that racism doesn't exist," to statements about what "they say," and "the people who say they don't see this." He moves in a sense, from a statement about psychology to one about discourse. In his comment, "saying that racism doesn't exist is convenient for the system," Mario refers very directly to role of the discourses of *democracia racial* in maintaining the political economy of racism. He seems to refer both to dominant whites and to people of color. Although Mario seems to suggest a kind of deliberate dissimulation is at work in the discourses of *democracia racial*, he continues to invoke more directly psychological processes of denial, a communal form of repression. In "forgetting history," Brazilians become blind to what Otavio had also described as a seamless, ongoing process of exploitation, the fact that, "we are slaves even today."

Joao spoke directly to the issue of psychological internalization and the lack of public discourse on racism;

> You have to understand that it's a thing of internalization (*introjecao*), because it is not a thing which works through an explicit process. It works through a process of internalization and assimilation. This begins in the childhood of the *negro*, that is the issue. Brazil needs to exorcise racism.... In the sixties, the *negros* in the United States exorcised racism, they went to the streets, a literature emerged, the movement emerged, but we here have not arrived at this stage of exorcising racism. Racism is like sex here in Brazil. They aren't subjects to be discussed in the home.

As he often did, Joao evoked a series of metaphors -- psychological, religious, and discursive -- in order to describe for me what he saw as the mangled consciousness of poor people of color. As does Mario he moves from explicitly psychological language to references to discourse and silence. Racism is like a demon, Joao suggests, and poor Brazilians of color, like African-Americans, must exorcise this "introjected" demon and project it where it belongs, into the body politic, where it can be appropriately identified and fought. Notably, Joao never suggests that "people think that racism doesn't exist." Like sex, it is all around one, a part of

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common knowledge and practice, but its particularities become unspeakable. Thinking not of these particularities but of the constant allusions to, and representations of, sex that characterize everyday discourses in Rio, I suggested to Joao that a more appropriate analogy might be the avoidance of discussions of menstruation in mixed company. Hardly skipping a beat, he said that menstruation is thought of as a problem specific to women, which they must "resolve" in much the same way that racism is regarded as "a problem of *negros*." "The *negro* has to resolve it. And look! Leave us *pardos* out of it! That's his problem, it has nothing to do with me!" Joao burst into laughter. As he later told me, in a number of different ways, racism is always spoken of as someone else's problem.

In describing the problem of consciousness among poor people of color, Jose emphasized the public discourses of the mass media;

> We can't deny that those who control information, who control the media, define a type of culture, and wind up determining everything. This type of system in Brazil, the communication media, manipulates and brainwashes people. And a large portion the *negro* population is being deluded by this false discourse. They dismiss racism in Brazil and [seem to believe] that Brazil is living out a great *democracia racial* and that everyone is equal -- which everyone knows is not true. If you go into any business, you will see two people, one *negro* and other white, employed in the same work, and the white is earning more than the *negro*. So shit, what kind of racial democracy is this?

Apparently contradicting himself, Jose says that people are "deluded by this false discourse" of *democracia racial*, yet it is a discourse "which everyone knows is not true." In this comment, he seems to suggest a kind of double consciousness, in which ideological entanglement or "brainwashing" (or in Otavio's terms, "accommodation") coexists with an awareness of routine forms of racialized discrimination. I was to hear such comments over and over in my conversations with activists. They both echoed and spoke to, of course, the very issues that preoccupied me in my research on the *morro*. Activists constantly invoked the "delusion," the marxian notion of false consciousness, and then, in logical terms, undermined it with references to the "true" or "deep" knowledge of racism among poor people of color.

Eduardo, a man in his forties, also referred to this apparent paradox of seeming to

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"accept" the discourses of *democracia racial* while knowing, "deep down," that racism exists. The director of a primarily culturalist black movement organization located in Rio's north zone, Eduardo was deeply concerned with exposing what he saw as "veiled" forms of racism. His organization was explicitly concerned and with the issue of self esteem among people of color and the work of re-crafting a positive *negro* identity. For him, as for other activists, such work had to begin with an emergence from silence and a recognition of the most subtle and insidious forms of racism;

> In this general way, people wind up accepting [the idea of *democracia racial*] but they know [racism] exists. But [they believe] they have to stay silent right, that thing of having eyes but not seeing, having a mouth and not speaking.... But they have consciousness, deep down they have consciousness that racism exists. But they think it's not the same as South Africa, because supposedly, no one kills. So they think it's good [as it is]. There's no fighting. There's no war. "It's better not to get mixed up in it." The person doesn't perceive that veiled forms of discrimination are as bad as other forms of open discrimination.

Eduardo's comments obviously, have a bearing on the silence and discursive frames through which racism was dealt with both on the *morro*, and to an extent, among middle-class whites in Santa Teresa. His imagery of people as "having eyes and not seeing, having a mouth and not speaking," reminded me of my own sense of being surrounded by a palpable silence on the *morro*, and of the nearly simultaneous discomfort and boredom which with white informants so often greeted my questions. Eduardo was certainly correct when he suggested that so many people associate racism not with the quotidian discourses and practices that surround them but with the violence (and representations of violence) of other countries. "No one throws stones," Virginia, my white informant in Edificio Silvestre said tersely. "There isn't violence, nothing," Eliza, my elite informant asserted, "It's not like the Unites States, you know?" My informants on the *morro* were certainly aware of the attacks on their dignity that occurred in everyday contexts but exactly as Eduardo suggested, they engaged in a variety of locutions (as well as everyday forms of silence) that insisted that "It's better not to get mixed up in it."

Continuing his comments on the notion of brainwashing, Jose introduced the ideology of *branqueamento*;

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> There are still some *negros* who contribute to the [idea of *democracia racial*]. I am not against interracial marriage or multiracial relationships but there are people in Brazil who ascend socially because the system needs some examples [of successful people of color.] And [these people] are left totally deluded by this discourse [of *democracia racial*]. Even their personal relations become used, they even distance themselves from most of the population, those that don't have the same upward mobility.

As is the case with all the militants who discussed the issue with me, Jose rejects the notion that interracial marriage is evidence of *democracia racial*. Rather, he sees the public celebration of interracial marriage and relationships as a particularly insidious form of ideological cooptation. *Branqueamento*, or whitening, while often conceived by Brazilianist scholars as a hegemonic ideology directed toward the positive valuation of the biological "whitening" of Brazil's population through miscegenation, is seen by Jose and other activists as more fundamentally directed towards *ideological* whitening. Through *branqueamento*, one becomes alienated from one's "true self." As will be seen, this notion of a "true" or "authentic" self was often figured by activists as a critical ingredient in the construction of a uniquely Brazilian anti-racist discourse.

Addressing the issue of the problematic consciousness of African-Brazilians from a somewhat different angle, Joao commented on the processes of internalization at greater length;

> So in this process in Brazilian society, it's not a class issue, but an issue of race, of racial consciousness itself. In the community we receive this very powerful socialization coming from the level of Brazilian society and this [process] is also impacted by the media. When this mirror appears [before us], it confirms what we are living in a day-to-day sense -- being on the street, being a domestic servant, doing the cleaning. So, with this mirror, I only see myself in this form, meaning the mirror doesn't see me as a writer, as an airline pilot, as an engineer. It doesn't see any of that, so I just stay where I am.

It is notable that in his metaphorical framing, Joao attributes agency not only to the person seeing their reflection but to the mirror itself. In another conversation, Joao told me that "the white man is a mirror." Joao's language of course, is Fanonian, and like Fanon's anguished writing, it echoes the insights of both Hegel and Lacan; people of color inevitably see themselves reflected in the eyes of the dominator. These eyes are cold, blind to the humanity of the other

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and utterly lacking in imaginative vision. The mirror puts a freeze on intersubjectivity and the dominated, as Joao suggests, becomes entrapped within his own frozen reflection. Continuing in this Fanonian frame, Joao continued;

> There is another model that I want to follow, but this model is white. But I am going to try to be white and trying to be white means that I will forget that I am a *negro*. What puts me closest to being white is being a *mulato*, so I am a *moreno*, I am a *pardo*. If I am a *preto* I will be farther away from [the white.] This is the reality... that we call a dominating racist ideology.

For Joao, the brutalizing effects of "dominating racist ideology" achieve their most profound impact in the space in which stigmatized people of color attempt to negotiate their own identities, and in which they attempt to imagine a life outside of the narrow and limiting confines that the mirror -- white domination -- has imposed. Returning to *branqueamento*, Joao appears to be concerned less with the issue interracial marriage and "cleaning the family" in a strictly "biological" sense than he is with the culturally-produced impulse to escape the blackness within oneself. In line with Mario's comments about "forgetting history," Joao says, "I will forget that I am a *negro*." Both imply that Brazilians of color are entangled within a process -- perhaps partly conscious and partly unconscious -- of repressing the authentic self. This "true self," it is further implied, exists outside of the "*negro*" represented in the internalized mirror of dominant, public representation, and outside of the *moreno*, or non-*negro* projected onto the self. At a very simple level of course, Joao is referring to what so many people, both inside and outside the movement regard as a failure, among poor people of color, to identify as *negro*.

Mario also commented on what he saw as the inability of people of color to identify themselves as *negro*. Referring to the cultural semantics of the word itself, he said,

> The *negro* is connected to ugliness, to the troublemaker... to bad things -- he is really associated with all that. The word "*negro*" carries all this in a very powerful way in Brazilian society, it carries a symbolic burden. It carries the history of slavery. The *negro* was a slave and master didn't place him [in the position of] a human being. So, no one wants to be a *negro* in this country. Now, these days, all that must be in one's head, right?

As though elaborating on Mario's comments, Joao continued his reflection on

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consciousness and identity;

> There are two moments. There is that moment in which you are aware of racism, this general kind of consciousness that they have. They know that racism exists in Brazil. But no one wants to deal with racial consciousness, they want their own individual consciousness. .... Although they are *negros*, they don't refer to themselves as *negros*, they talk about "the *negro* in Brazil," "the *negro* question," as if they are speaking from outside. Because he is not a *negro*, "the *negro* is the other one over there. It is this other who has a problem with racism, not me. The problem attacks him, it doesn't attack me." ..... We are educated to be ashamed of being *negro.* "The *negro* is the other, I'm not the *negro*, I'm *moreno*, I'm *mulato*, I'm a *mulatinha.*" Why? This issue is fundamental because this difference is put into our heads even in school.[4]

What Joao and Mario both emphasize is that it is not only the discourses of *democracia racial* that undermine *negro* identity and solidarity (by suggesting that such solidarity is unnecessary or even nonsensical) ; it is also, and perhaps more crucially, the internalization of racist ideology itself. For Joao especially, the use of intermediate terms (*moreno, mulato, pardo* etc.) and all that they connote (and perhaps perform as well) represent, above all, a way of escaping from the *negro* that is both within and without. Joao's description of the internal dialogue by which the person of color draws an equation between blackness and otherness seems intended in both the literal sense, and in the more complicated Fanonian sense as well.

Joao also referred explicitly to the painful conundrums of blackness when he described what he had observed as an avoidance of the movement among middle-class people of color;

> The process that these people confront is extremely difficult. One way or the other they can't manage. How can I explain this to you? Listen, I'll put it this way: the black movement is a greater pain than the pain of putting up with discrimination. So these people, *negros* of the middle class, can't bear this pain. They prefer to endure the pain of discrimination, which is a softer pain -- a softer pain because they don't have to worry themselves with the larger issue, that of the affirmation of identity.... Because for these people, it's much easier to deal with the issue of class than with the issue of race.

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[4] Joao is not only referring the everyday discourses of the schoolyard but to standard textbooks in which a conventional array of "racial "types are pictured, defined and named. Predictably, these textbook descriptions are embedded within larger discussions of the significance of the Brazilian racial triad (European, Indian and Negro) and the racial permutations presented by their offspring, within the historical formation of Brazilian society. A number of the children I knew in Morro do Sangue Bom owned these textbooks and two presented them to me as authoritative responses to the questions I was asking about race and color.

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This pain, Joao argued, was also avoided by poor people of color, who sought no less than middle-class people of color, to escape from blackness. He became even more explicit about what he saw as the ideological and psychological function of intermediate color terms;

> There is an ideological mechanism which reproduces this whole idea that it isn't good to be a *negro*. And this is why I tell you that being a *negro* creates a greater pain. If for example, I went to Morro do Sangue Bom and had this conversation with people there, they would say this to me and I wouldn't argue with them because I would see that [insisting that they are *negros*] would hurt more than someone going up there to discriminate.... I know that I am a *negro* but people call me a mulato, and this hurts me a lot more. What am I going to say? That he is a *negro*? He will never accept that. Because to be a *negro* -- people understand [it as the idea that] the *negro* is black, and for this reason [they say], "I am a *mulato*, I am a *mulato claro*, I am *moreno*. So I am not a *negro*, the *negro* is that pretao (big black guy) over there, that *negao*. That guy is a *negro*!" He doesn't understand that black (*preto*) is a color and *negro* is an ethnicity, that he can say, "I am a *mulato negro*, I am a *pardo negro*, I am a *moreno negro*, I am a *preto negro*." But they don't accept this. .... The whites who live in the community, although they are poor, they still have the attitude that they are always superior because they are white. "I live here but I'm white. I'm not a *negro*, no, I live here but I'm white."

Eduardo also framed the issues of consciousness and identity by spelling out first, an internal dialogue of otherness and then, the everyday discourse that focuses on black racism as a means of avoiding the far more fundamental issue of white racism;

> So, the *negro* is also a racist, he doesn't want the other *negro*, because he doesn't like himself. He thinks he is dirty, he is ugly, he is a bad thing. So he thinks, "How could I want something that is like myself?" So, it's this issue of many *negros* discriminating against other *negros*. Because he doesn't feel himself to be a person, he doesn't feel that the other is a person either. And society always uses this argument rather than discuss the [real] racial issue. They are always talking about how the *negro* discriminates against the other *negro*. It's a historical issue.

What Eduardo, Joao, and other militants seemed to describe was not merely what is usually called "false consciousness," but even more clearly, a wounded consciousness that seeks to turn away from pain. Eduardo suggests, correctly I believe, that the moral and political implications of black racism -- or wounded consciousness -- seem to be lost on dominant whites. Whites' references to black-on-black discrimination are used in fact, to simultaneously justify their own racism and to deny personal culpability. "*Negros* themselves discriminate against each

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other so what do they expect from me?" one of my middle-class white informants said.

Mario discussed the issue of the internalization of dominant discourses about blackness in a personal way. He also suggested the persistence of a pained inner dialogue with oneself:

> You are brought up and educated within another ideology. It's like I'm always thinking, I found myself with a black body, but with the ideas of a white ideology. That is something I ask myself about. Because I knew that I had this ideology, but I had this body, this hair, this skin, which are exterior markers that I am a *negro*, and there's no way to change that.... So you were brought up with this ideology from the time you were little. And the heroes that you have, from history, for example. History doesn't have any *negro* heroes. [Although] these days there are Brazilian historians who are trying to retrace the issue of black history. If you don't have *negro* heroes, you don't have anything to identify yourself with this race.... So you have heroes of the other race in order to feel stronger. You use this, which comes from outside, but it isn't you, it's not of your race. So it creates conflict... History always told the good deeds of the whites. The *negro* is always the poor one, dirty, a pig, a second-class citizen.5

Mario also emphasized the continuing psychological burden imposed by racism in his adult life:

> We have a very painful history. We are burdened by this history. I think this has an impact within us; I see it in myself. Like sometimes these things happen, you know? The other day, I went to a party at this white guy's house and everyone there was white. When I walked into the party, I perceived that everyone was startled. It's that thing of being accepted or not being accepted. We are burdened by this whole history. Afterwards, I said to myself, "No, that has nothing to do with it, I'm such a fool." All these things, you know. Then I was fine. But look, I myself have an awareness of these things; I still suffer from the impact of it. I think we are always suffering from this impact, [the question] of being accepted or not being accepted by this society. And all of us, *negros*, whites, *amarelos*, Indians, are wanting a place, our place. So I see [the situation] like that, and a lot of others see it like that -- even those who don't talk about the racial issue, who aren't proud of being *negro*. They are afraid to speak.

What Mario describes is a pervasive sense of "paranoia," a kind of second-guessing about the attitudes and intentions of whites that many of my informants on the *morro* also

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5 Fanon makes a similar point from within a psychoanlaytic framework. Referring to his homeland, he writes,

> The black schoolboy in the Antilles, who in his lessons is forever talking about "our ancestors, the Gauls," identifies himself with the exploror, the bringer of civilization, the white man who carries truth to the savages -- and all-white truth. There is identification -- that is, the young Negro subjectively adopts a white man's attitude. He invests the hero, who is white, with all his own aggression -- at that age closely linked to sacrificial dedication, a sacrificial dedication permeated with sadism (1967:147).

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described. Feeling initially that his blackness has startled, perhaps even frightened or angered a room full of whites, he must carefully assess the situation and understand who he is in the eyes of the other guests. In such moments he suggests, he feels not only the tension of the present moment but the weight of history, the association of blackness with slavery. Later he chastises himself, and thinks himself a "fool"; he suggests that in this instance, it was himself and not the other guests who were startled and tense. Yet he goes on to suggest that the question of whether one will be "accepted" or not permeates every encounter. The desire for true intersubjectivity, he implies, is universal. Once again, as other activist informants had, Mario suggests that although other *negros* "don't talk about the racial issue," and "aren't proud of being *negro*," they also are conscious of the struggle over and desire for intersubjectivity, the desire to "have a place." It is not so much a lack of consciousness (or "false consciousness") that restrains them, but fear.

Generally speaking however, my activist informants articulated a vision and an analysis of the consciousness of poor people of color that would appear -- in some of their comments at least -- to be somewhat at odds with my analysis of discourses in Morro do Sangue Bom. Joao's discussion of what he represents as the pressured, Fanonian psychology that informs the use of terms such as *moreno*, *mulato* and *pardo* would seem to represent a fundamental misunderstanding of what I have called the indexical discourse of color -- and a lack of awareness of what I have called the discourse on race. The suggestion of Jose, Eduardo and others, that poor people of color tend not to be aware of, or to recognize, various forms of racialized discrimination -- from subtle, supposedly non-violent forms, to the historically entrenched racialization of social structures -- seems to contradict the often richly articulated narratives of racism produced by my informants on the *morro*. It seems to assume, in addition, that the silence surrounding the issue of racism is an empty rather than a very full, and meaningful one.

I would argue however, that my own analysis and that of activists in the black movement are only slightly different ways of describing the same issues. Black movement militants have been accused in various contexts, of being "out of touch" with the problems, experiences, and

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what might be called the phenomenological perspectives of poor people of color. Yet, this is hardly the case. Some of the comments of my activist informants seemed to echo statements I heard on the *morro* to a nearly uncanny degree. Joao's and Eduardo's Fanonian scenarios, probably based as much on experience and deeply personal insights as on exposure to the more philosophical literature on racism, were no less accessible to Jacinto, Dona Janete's son. Jacinto had never made it past the equivalent of junior high school, yet I explicitly asked him for his "philosophical" analysis of black racism. I have quoted his response in Chapter Five, but it is worth repeating here. He referred to those whom my activist informants would describe as under the sway of ideological whitening;

> He doesn't like the other *negro*. He is a racist and not even his mirror tells him [who he is]. Because he has rage against his race. Like, he has rage against his own color. Sometimes that climate inside the home -- he has rage against his father and his mother for being *negro*, for putting him in the world of the *negro*, so he dismisses them.

As I have noted above, activists tend to suggest, through a variety of locutions, that poor people of color both "know" and "do not know," about the racialized nature of their own oppression. Joao told me that "they have a fractured consciousness" both in terms of oppression and in terms of their own identities. His analysis of consciousness was not systematically and consistently discursive yet it provides a different kind of frame through which to read discourses on color, race, and racism. Ultimately the metaphors that my activist informants used -- fracturing, splintering, entrapment, superficiality and depth -- were immediately familiar to me and I have used them repeatedly. Narratives of racism can hardly be understood apart from silence. The indexical discourse of color can not be understood without reference to the wounding implications of blackness. The discourse on race is a subterranean one, almost buried by the quotidian performance of euphemism, dissimulation, avoidance and ettiquette.

Joia's pained comment, "I am know I am a *negra* but I'm really *morena*, right?" aptly illustrates the critical thrust of activists' accounts of "*racismo ala Brasil*." Although Joao fails to distinguish between different discursive registers in his account of attempts to approximate

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whiteness and escape from blackness, Joia's comment reminds us that both the descriptive and indexical discourses of color are themselves cultural signs, failed attempts at neutrality and politeness, and they speak to both private and communal forms of agony and entrapment. The pain and shame of blackness that Joao refers to moreover, is the same or similar to what I have tried to describe, following the lead of my informants, in Chapter Three. Activists emphasize the shadows cast by the performance of what is most quotidian, and the implications of what appears on the surface of daily life. My documentation of subterranean discourses and muffled narratives does not truly contradict activist's accounts so much as it complicates them still further. They implicitly assert that superficial appearances (including the prominence of silence) are of greater *political* significance than that which is deeper. Whether that which is deeper is defined as consciousness or as discourse, their assertion is undeniable.

The question of the differences between my own and activists' accounts revolves really, around the problem of describing the entrapment that is racism, and in even broader terms, how we, as scholars and/or activists describe, or allude to, the nature of consciousness. Although my activist informants refer implicitly and explicitly to discourse and silence, they attempt, to a far greater degree than do I, to plumb the depths of "*consciencia*" -- a word which signifies "consciousness," its English equivalent, as well as the supposedly more mundane notions of "awareness" and "recognition." In my focus on what people say and do not say, I have stayed close to the ground and have tried, to a degree, to maintain the caution carried in Dona Janete's observation that "The heart of another is such that no one can enter it." In my own analysis discourse is both a focus of study and a method. In choosing it as a way of describing certain aspects of racism, I recognize that the experiential and phenomenological perspectives that inform the understandings of activists and people on the *morro* are not directly accessible to me. It may be that my activist informants have gone out on something of a hermeneutical limb, yet as the following section would seem to suggest, their descriptions of the consciousness of poor people of color may also be, at least in part, autobiographical reflections.

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Becoming *Negro Assumido*: The Discourse of Conversion

Given the cultural and psychological conundrums that activists describe, how does one break out of the pattern of "delusion" and "fractured consciousness" and achieve *consciencia negra*? Early in my fieldwork, I learned that activists draw a fundamental distinction between what they call the "*negro assumido*" (assumed *negro*) and the "*negro nao-assumido*" (non-assumed *negro*). "No one is born *negro* in this country," Joao explained, "one must become *negro*."

To become *negro assumido* is to reject the polite discourses and miscegenated identities associated with intermediate racial terms (*moreno, mulato, pardo*, etc.) in favor of an unambiguous, unsoftened, and unqualified *negro* identity. It is to make a psychological leap into what activists sometimes call "negritude," and to undergo what they describe as something akin to a conversion experience. While there was considerable diversity in the experiences of the activists who told me their personal stories, there were a number of common themes that emerged in their telling. Although neither I, nor they, can answer, in any ultimate sense, the question of why some Brazilians of color become *negros assumidos* and others do not, their stories illuminate, if not the path to *consciencia negra*, then the discourses used to describe and in a more immediate sense, carry the process.

When I asked how and why they became involved in the black movement, and by extension, how they became *negros assumidos*, a number of militants began their accounts by describing their personal brushes with racism during adolescence. On occasion, the confrontation with racism is described as producing an abrupt and disturbing sense of revelation or insight. Jose provided such an account. Brought up in a stable working-class household in the north zone of Rio, Jose, like many boys and young men of his background, was an avid soccer player.

"Look, this is a very interesting thing," he began, referring to an incident that occurred when he was eighteen or nineteen,

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> I participated in a club in the Baixada [Fluminense]. I was an athlete. And one time I arrived to take a swim in the pool at the club. But they told me I couldn't take a swim. I wanted to know why. They wouldn't give me a straight answer. They wouldn't tell me a single reason. Later, a close friend of mine said, "Look Jose, what happened is that this is an elite club and you arrived at an hour during which *negros* are not permitted to swim in the pool." .... It was a thing that I hadn't perceived before. I only perceived this racism issue after that. And God, it's really interesting how you start this introspection, how you suddenly become aware that at various other moments, you were discriminated against. Only [when it happened], you didn't have consciousness, you weren't aware that you were discriminated against.

Referring to comments he had made during an earlier moment of our interview, he continued,

> It's like everything I said before about the issue of the media throwing all that [at you], making you constantly deny yourself. It makes you forget that you are a *negro*. You look in the mirror but you don't see your color, you see a person. You think you're above it all. So, after that, I began to question things.

Thus, when Jose is told directly that he has been discriminated against because of his color, he realizes, apparently for the first time, that he is, in fact, a *negro*. Whereas before he had seen himself as just "a person," perhaps a person with white as well as black ancestors, now he sees himself in the eyes of the other, as a marked person, an unambiguously black person. The mirror that Jose describes is a different one from that described by Joao: what Jose describes is not seeing the image of the *negro* cast by racism, but the whitened or neutral image that he had projected upon himself. Jose does not depict this neutrality as the innocent color-blindness of a child who has been untouched by the brutality of racism, but as a distortion, a self-delusion that "makes you constantly deny yourself." He is invoking, of course, the discourses of *democracia racial*. As he tells it, only by encountering racism directly -- and perhaps hearing the word "*negro*" applied to himself -- was Jose able to grasp who he was for the other, and ultimately, he seems to imply, who he must become for himself. Jose suggests that after he had this experience, he began to reinterpret his own past, to perceive meanings that he had not previously recognized.

Jose's experience of reappraising his past was described by others as well. Although

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Eduardo did not describe his coming to consciousness of racism as occurring in one abrupt flash, he said that his involvement with the black movement precipitated a reinterpretation of painful events from his childhood. Responding to my question concerning his first awareness of racism he said,

> The only thing I remember are some things that happened when I was younger. Only later did I go out and struggle [against racism.] .... I began to work when I was only fourteen; I was an office boy. I was delivering correspondence to a certain place, and I was looking for a certain person. The person who attended me treated me very badly because I was a *negro*. They said that they were going to call the police, and I don't what all. I was terrified and got out of there and was even fired from my job because of this. And another thing. I took a test to get a job in this store. At that time, I wasn't aware of this issue of struggle, I didn't have consciousness. [After I took the test] I went back to the store, hoping for a job at the front counter. I asked this girl there if there were any messages for me and she told me that there were no openings at the front counter but that there was an opening in the stockroom, in back. But she didn't even know my name; later she asked me, "What is your name?" So she didn't even look [at my test score] but I had already seen the score.[6] I got very angry and didn't go back for the opening [in the stock room].

Notably, Eduardo's story about applying for a job in a store is a very typical one. Although certainly qualified to work with the public and with the cash register at the front counters of stores, Brazilians of color are routinely denied these positions and are sent to the stockrooms, kitchens and other back stage areas where they are less visible.[7] It is especially interesting that in the first occurrence, Eduardo describes a feeling of terror, and in the second instance, he describes himself as having been "very angry" -- yet he emphatically insists that he was unaware that his dismissal and rejection may have been motivated by racism. He continued;

> Only after I had gone to the university and got involved in the black movement, where people were talking about the issue of veiled racism did I go back and question [these things that happened.] It's a very subtle thing and I wasn't able to perceive it at the time.... And the manager of that store had a lot of power. An equal fighting with an equal, that's one thing, but this [other situation] is very

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6 The test that Eduardo referred to was specifically intended to assess his ability to perform the duties of a cashier, not those of a stockroom clerk.

7 In Veja, the newsmagazine I referred to in the first chapter, a jounalist remarked on one of the differences between Brazil and South Africa. In South African restaurants, all the patrons are white and all the waiters are black. In Brazilian restaurants, both the patrons and the waiters are white.

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> difficult. So this is what we [at this organization] want to show people... that racism is veiled but it exists.

Two issues emerge from Eduardo's comments. One is the meaning of the statement, so often heard in Brazil, that racism is "subtle," or "veiled." What seems to be implied in Eduardo's comments is not so much that discrimination is truly subtle and difficult to perceive (subtlety appears to be absent from his account), but that usually, it is difficult to prove the racially motivated nature of discrimination. Eduardo's story suggests that he may, in fact, have been aware that racism was operating in his encounters, but because he could not prove it, he lacked the confidence to make an accusation of racism.

The second issue that emerges is that of the significance of his involvement with the black movement. It is implied that the movement gave Eduardo an interpretive schema -- grounded clearly, in discourse -- with which to confidently reinterpret his past, as well as his present experiences. It was "people talking about the issue of veiled racism" that gave him the language to "question" and to "perceive" what he no doubt strongly suspected previously.

Although some of those in the black movement were, like Eduardo, first exposed to black movement discourse while pursuing university degrees, Jose suggested that there are other routes to participation in the black movement. After his experience at the athletic club, he felt compelled to discuss the issue of racism with his friends. "They were difficult discussions in the beginning, " he said;

> I had the questions but I didn't have anything theoretical in my head with which to elaborate [on the issue]. It was a very new thing for me. It was difficult with my friends in the neighborhood because they were at the same intellectual level that I was, at the same level of knowledge about the issue. So the discussion didn't grow very much ... Then around 1980 I began working at a job in [a certain place] and I made friends with someone who worked in the room across the hall. He was a *negro* also, and we began to discuss the racial question. Once we started this discussion, other people started to appear and from there, the discussion began to grow.

Jose's and others' accounts point, obviously, to the fact that there are no highly developed everyday discourses on racism in Brazil. Jose's neighborhood friends, like Jose himself, were unable to generate an effective, sustained discussion of racism and the issues

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related to *negro* identity. In finding like-minded friends at least, Jose was fortunate; generally the initially solitary attempt to come to grips with racism is described as a lonesome and alienating process. "You have to assume your identity individually," as Otavio put it. As Jose makes clear, "discussion" must be actively pursued in order to achieve a "theoretical" understanding of Brazil's contradictory and "masked" forms of racism. "Talking to people," i.e., the achievement of fluency in an analytical, "unmasking" anti-racist discourse, is conceived as crucial to the achievement of *consciencia negra.*

Otavio provided a similar, though truncated account;

> It's very, very difficult to get conscientized. I myself came to consciousness only when I began to study better, to talk to people. When I was younger, I was ashamed to go to my friends' houses, which were nice houses. I was ashamed of showing myself there, as a *negro*. So this process is very violent.

I assumed that Otavio referred to formal (university) study but he corrected me. "On the contrary, I learned nothing about racial issues in school," he explained. "It was studying on my own and talking to people who were in the movement, and others that I met along the way."

Mario, like Eduardo, was introduced to the discourse of the black movement while a university student. However, he describes his own coming to consciousness as occurring in the context of visits to the northeastern state of Bahia;

> During the time that I was a student I began to get involved in the black movement. I wanted to know things about myself that I didn't have answers for, as a *negro*. So I wanted to be around other *negros*. Because I had an education -- I'm a dentist and I had an elite education. I was the only *negro* and the rest [of the students] were all white. So, I was more in the white world than in the black world. I absorbed things from both worlds but I absorbed a lot of things from the other [white] world, because I had to absorb them -- sink or swim! At that time, I spent some time in Bahia. And in Bahia, I saw so many *negros*. Rio de Janeiro has *negros* but they're all in the periphery, but in Bahia you even see *negros* in the South Zone. *Negros* are on the beach, they're in the bars, *negros* are everywhere! So it was a very strong thing of identification for me, with them. Their identification was the same as mine. And it made me happy to see this other who is the same, who is similar to me. And there [in Bahia] also I began to get involved in Candomble, which is specifically [a religion] of the *negro* population. I went to Salvador a number of times... and got to know various people in Candomble and various people in the black movement in Salvador.

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Mario speaks directly to his experience of converting from what was no doubt a nominal Catholicism to Candomble, regarded as the most "pure," "African" religion in Brazil. His description is both metanymically and metaphorically related to all of the accounts that I have quoted; the achievement of *consciencia negra* and the process of becoming a *negro assumido* is described as if it were a conversion experience. Flashes of insight, the adoption of new frames and languages, the reinterpretation of the past (and its association with feelings of shame and ignorance), and the sense of a present position of recognition and illumination from which there is no turning back, are all described or alluded to by the activists who responded to my more personal questions.

Once the process of racial conversion begins, the converted, like their counterparts in the religious arena, often feel at odds with those around them. They seem to feel themselves in possession of an esoteric kind of knowledge and understanding that is rejected and dismissed by others. As Mario said, "Whenever I brought up the issue of racism, people would say the problem was in my head -- even my friends and family." Quite aside from its similarity to narratives of religious conversion, the process of attaining fluency in anti-racist discourses occurs before a backdrop of silence and denial. As I had with my informants in Morro do Sangue Bom, I asked activists if their parents or other relatives had ever spoken to them about racism during their childhood. This question often produced references to the sense of isolation they felt as adults. Otavio, who was, in fact, more comfortable occupying an impersonal spokesperson's role in our interview, responded to my question with distancing generalizations about "poor families." Nevertheless, his comments were among the most moving that I heard, for he described how he had learned to abide the gulf that lay between himself and his parents;

> No, even today my parents don't know exactly what I do. They don't have an understanding. And this whole process also, of family culture that we have, poor families don't have much time to spend together. Work starts very early and the mother and father go off to work and come home late. So that culture of familial intimacy, that gets lost. We all care for each other but that thing of always hanging out together, conversing, discussing things, it doesn't happen much in families like mine. So my mother and father know that I have confidence in

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> myself, and that I am doing what I want to do. They know that I work with the *negro* issue, but they don't know exactly what that's about. They don't have an understanding of it. And I also don't come home and force the issue on them. Because the biggest problem of the militant is that he arrives home and wants to teach a class to his parents, to lecture them, his mother and father who are already forty or fifty years old and have lived a life of oppression and repression. I don't want to teach my father and mother. On the contrary, I have a great deal of respect for them. My mother is illiterate. My father made it only to the junior high. So I'm not going to take on this attitude with them. I respect them very, very much, for all the experiences they've had, all the suffering they've gone through and frankly, I only talk about these things when they ask me. I don't bring it up with them. So this issue is not really discussed at home.

Other activists were less sanguine about the lack of open discussions concerning racism at home. When I asked Eduardo if he had ever heard discussions of racism when he was a child, he said,

> Never! It's very rare [that people talk about it.] Most people had this other discourse when I was little, that the *negro* has to progress and marry a white person to "clean" the family. We discussed that here [in the organization] and everyone [who was present] said that that [discourse] had occurred in their families! We don't have this discourse of talking about racism because only a very short time ago we came out of the period of political repression. We didn't live in a democracy. You couldn't discuss this, ever!

As an adult however, Eduardo attempted to discuss the issue of racism with his niece;

> At home there is an [ongoing] fight with my niece whom we brought up -- my sister is deceased -- about what I think and what she thinks. In April we had an interesting lecture [here in the organization] about women and she came and listened. She perceives it, she knows that [racism] exists. But she doesn't have a way of struggling against it, she doesn't have consciousness and deep down, she winds up accomodating.

Jose especially, responded to this question in strongly emotional terms:

> No, it isn't discussed. I am the son of humble parents. My mother is totally illiterate, she can neither read nor write. My father, no, he can read and write. But this discussion never arose at home. Because I think [the family] was in this process, principally my father, he was very much in this process of becoming a middle-class family. And from within this perspective, as a specialist worker who was upwardly mobile, he didn't discuss these issues... After [what happened at] the club, I remembered some things, I remembered the high school [that I went to] where I was called names like "monkey," and so on.... I remember I came home and talked about this. And the response was always the same: "Oh, don't pay attention, they don't know what they're saying, it's just a joke." You understand, always that type of evasion. Open discussion did not

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> exist! If today, you got 100 militants together and asked them this question, you would find that perhaps one would say that this issue was brought up at home! Even today, as a person who has become militant, I have great difficulty in developing this discussion in my home. Because the people in my family reject it, they don't want to discuss it.

Jose, spoke with pride however, about his relationship with his young niece;

> I have a niece who is 11 years old, and with her, I manage to discuss it, because I started discussing the racial issue with her from the time she was three years old. Even though she is surrounded by this type of *negra* who wants to be white and all that, straightening the hair, she has a deep perception of the issue of discrimination and how it can effect her. Now, even though she doesn't reproduce the discourse [about racism], she is attentive to it. The first moment something happens to her, she will run straight into militancy! You know, she will begin to question [dominant] values. Because she is attentive. Even if it's in a kind of joking way, we discuss it.

Jose's comment that his niece does not yet "reproduce the discourse" is particularly interesting; it highlights the fundamentally discursive nature of racial conversion.

Mario, like Jose, was unable to discuss racism and other issues related to *consciencia negra* with the adult members of his family, yet he pursued such discussions with the younger generation. His own account of having identified, in an anguished and confused way with "white heroes" as a child, was clearly more than a Fanonian illustration; he hoped to protect his nieces and nephews from a similar experience;

> I tell stories about Zumbi to my nieces and nephews. I say, "Look, I have a story, a story that is not told in your education, in this whitening ideology." Nothing is written so I have to tell this to my nieces and nephews. They asked me, "Why aren't *negros* in power?" If you don't hear this history in your family, where will you hear it?

All of these accounts emphasize the fundamentally discursive nature of *consciencia negra*. Although in much of their language activist informants seem to suggest the possibility of an "authentic" identity that has been stolen and concealed through history, silence and denial, they also seem to recognize the constructed, even invented nature of identity. In saying that his niece does not yet "reproduce the discourse," Jose highlights what he himself views as the centrality of subversive talk in the process of becoming a *negro assumido*. In telling stories to his nieces and nephews, Mario is clearly attempting to invent a kind of oral tradition, almost it

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would seem, out of the thin air of silence. Generally speaking, when militants reflect on the issue of "self esteem" among people of color, they are concerned not only with what is clearly an extremely difficult re-appropriation of the term *negro*, but with highly constructed notions of memory, culture and the racial self.

Yet clearly, and inevitably it would seem, attempts to construct a counterhegemonic discourse of *consciencia negra* sometimes echo, in often subtle but disturbing ways, the shadow of essentialism that lurks in all discourses of color and race in Brazil. When speaking from within the discourse on race, my informants on the *morro* sometimes referred to "*sangue*" or blood, as the true, authentic substance of race. Black movement militants tend to substitute the notion of blood with that of culture, yet such notions of culture are often articulated from within an essentializing discourse of authenticity--almost as though culture were a dormant substance lodged in the body that need only be reactivated through the re-discovery of one's true identity.

Essentialism always shadows any politics of identity, to greater or lesser degrees. What makes *consciencia negra* so interesting in Brazil is the fact that as a set of discourses, it is intended as a countervailing force against what are generally thought to be non-essentialist, fluid notions of identity that are structured around color distinctions. Although many have suggested that militants have imported a foreign politics of identity in a more or less wholesale fashion, it is evident that transnational discourses of negritude, as they are articulated in Brazil, fulfill different functions, address different issues and contest different meanings than they do in countries which tend to articulate, through dominant discursive modes, a simple bipolar and dichotomous vision of racial identity. It is obviously notable as well that contrary to the conventional wisdom on racialized identity in Brazil, poor people of color such as those in Morro do Sangue Bom do share, to a degree, the discourses and understandings that divide the world into black and white. In referring to "fractured consciousness" and "deep knowing" among poor people of color, activists signal their awareness of this fact. The emphasis on bipolar visions of identity, it is clear, are constructed less by the transplantation of foreign discourses, and not only by the ideological residue of dominant discourses, but by the raw

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experience of racism. Blackness is an experience of oppression to which all people of color are subject; the intractability of the material structures that contain it impose upon color a unifying force.

"For the Totality of the Brazilian Population": Critiquing the Movement from Inside

In concluding this chapter, I must note some of the ways in which activists themselves critique the movement. It is in such self-reflective comments that the larger social and political context in which the movement operatesbecomes clearer. Mario, who characterized himself as outside of the movement focused on the enormous distance between most of the movement personnel and poor people of color;

> There are many fights within the movement.... It's a question of power... You have to be very careful with this. Because to protect out heritage [*nosso origem*] you have to watch out for this system that has been implanted. The black movement says it is against this system but it works in collusion with the system.... Where are the *negros*? They are not in the Zona Sul. They are in the suburbios, in the peripheral areas, on the *morros*, in the *favelas*; they are not in the Zona Sul. We have to speak with them, not just with each other, we have to speak with others.... But no one wants to go [to those places.] Those who don't become part of the system.

Mario refers to what some African-Americans have called an "ebony tower" -- the tendency among *negro* intellectuals and activists to remain distant from the impoverished and marginalized sites at which racism launches its most crushing forms of oppression. *Negro* elites, however they are defined, are constantly vulnerable to various forms of cooptation. Mario seems to suggest that even activists concerned with *consciencia negra* have allowed themselves to be seduced by the insularity of middle-class worlds and like their white counterparts, have refused to cross the class frontier.

Mario's critique is obviously well-founded, yet the issue is related to far more than a class-based squeamishness. Joao told me that it was far easier to give lectures in universities, even when he was the only person of color present, than to go into the "community" where his racialized call to arms was met with blankness, cynicism and misunderstanding. Once again,

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those who critique the movement from outside tend to suggest that it is the fundamental foreigness of black movement discourse, its attempted imposition of alien models on local realities, that creates this discursive disjuncture. While I have argued that the discourses of my activist informants and people on Morro do Sangue Bom are not so distant as they at first seem -- not in their content, at any rate -- it is nevertheless true that the registers and styles used by the two groups remain very different. It is these differences that activists, who are aware of the discursive gap, tend to emphasize. Jose was particularly concerned with this issue;

> Another thing which is very complicated and difficult for the movement is that it still hasn't found a language with which to reach the masses. It doesn't do to have a very academic discourse. You know, it's no good to go to the masses and start asserting certain things that they don't understand because it isn't their language. As it isn't their language, they reject it -- it's just "blah, blah, blah"... It is not a mobilizing discourse, it's a very academic discourse, you know?.... This is a population that doesn't know the reality of our history. They don't know the cultural reality. So shit, how are you going to say that this population is going to understand and going to follow that whole discourse that you throw at them?

Jose's comment that poor people of color "don't know the reality of our history" would seem, in many ways, to be inaccurate. They are schooled, not so much in ignorance and denial as in silence and exhausted forms of resignation. Jose is probably right however, in his assertion that an "academic discourse" cannot and will not penetrate silence and convince the "masses" that battles over racialized discrimination can possibly be won, now or in the future. The discourse of the movement is a fundamentally analytical and cerebral one and while people in Morro do Sangue Bom are certainly capable of producing, in their own terms, analytical and descriptive statements about racism, their discourse, as I have argued, is a fundamentally moral one.

As was so often the case, Jose reversed himself when he continued, "We know how to say that racism exists in Brazil, everyone already knows that it exists. It is not effective to just say Joe So-and-So was discriminated against because he is *preto*." Here he acknowledges that the problem is not, after all, ignorance. He began to talk of the need for a movement with a

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broader base;

> It is no longer possible for the entities of the black movement not to establish alliances with other sectors of the popular movement. It is not effective for the entities of the black movement to continue to discuss only the issue of the *negro*. Because we are going to create simply a mass of *negros* who are conscientized. It is necessary to talk to [other] people, with the white, about racism. It is necessary, because most of the time, the white is racist even though he doesn't know he is racist. It's a question of the cultural behavior that they have. So it doesn't do to just have *negros* talking to *negros*.

As Jose continued, I was struck by the degree to which he echoed other activist informants. Superficially, he seemed to be proposing a more viable strategy for recruitment and mobilization but at a deeper level, he was articulating a distinctly Brazilian vision of change. Jose, like all activists, knew that many Brazilians, especially middle-class whites, tend to assert that a Brazilian black movement would be inherently racist; it would create separations where none had existed before. Activists such as Jose, however, often invoked the dream not of a black movement composed entirely by people of color, but of a movement directed towards all forms of discrimination. Jose spoke not only of the need to discuss discrimination in more general terms, but of the need to search for possible on-the-ground sites of mobilization;

> The black movement wants, it really wants, to become a movement of weight, of political weight in Brazil. It has to have a proposal not only for the *negro* community. It has to have a proposal for the totality of the Brazilian population. It has to propose a political alternative, not only for *negros*.... These days, it doesn't do to discuss the racial issue only within the entities of the black movement. It has to be within the residents association.... [The movement] doesn't discuss the [larger] issue of discrimination. In the same way that *negros* are discriminated against, so the homosexual is discriminated against. The woman is discriminated against. The northeasterner is discriminated against. The Jew and the Arab are discriminated against.... I think this discussion has to occur. This is very difficult work, it isn't easy... There are certain communities in which the way to organize is not through the residents association, but through the soccer team. Sometimes it is a carnaval group. You have to be aware of that type of thing. And [you have this situation] with the left, that action in which you only organize yourselves if you are in a room discussing political and ideological questions -- as if reality isn't really there.

Otavio, who spoke in most the most abstract and condemnatory terms against white racism, was also concerned both with broader processes of discrimination and with the divisive, counter-productive dangers inherent in more rigid forms of identity politics. For him as well, the

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battle lines of the movement should not be drawn between blacks and whites but between racism and anti-racism;

> And you can't commit reverse racism. This is a great preoccupation of ours, that some in the black movement might commit reverse racism. In Brazil, racism was directed against the Indian, and principally against the *negro*. If you go to Europe you see that it is directed against the Turks in Germany. It's not a thing of the skin. It's really a cultural question, fundamentally cultural and ideological.

All of these comments address and speak against the shadows of essentialism that are present in the discourse of *consciencia negra*. In the midst of a long-winded discussion of agrarian reform (an extremely potent, historically entrenched dream that potentially effects all rural poor, and not only those of African descent), Joao paused;

> I will tell you that I do not have anything against white people. I don't, sincerely, sincerely. If you ask me if I have three personal motives to not like a white person, personally, I don't have any.... Now, ideologically, I combat the system that whites represent, this system that has exploited me, that has exploited my parents, my grandparents and my great grandparents.

In this comment, Joao cast racism into dominating structures, and away from notions of naturalized opposition between rigidly racialized individuals. Had Joao spoken with Neusa, my informant in Morro do Sangue Bom who felt that the existence of a successful black movement would undermine her friendships with whites, he would have reassured her. Joao, as I knew, had been married to a supportive white woman for more than twenty years and he did not abide color lines and clannishness in his personal life. Although a fully converted *negro assumido*, he had hardly abandoned the prescriptive principles that constitute the heart of yearning within *democracia racial*. Despite his calculatedly vociferous rhetoric, so extraordinary and unfamiliar in most of the contexts in which I conducted my research, Joao projected the same warmth and humor that sheltered me in Morro do Sangue Bom. Racism in Brazil has never been about simple oppositions, nor will it ever be. "How long will you be staying in Brazil?" one veteran activist asked me just after we had met for an interview. With a kind of proud confidence, I told them that I would stay for a minimum of a year and a half. "Oh, that is too bad," he said and began to laugh quietly. He noted that the famed French anthropologist, Roger Bastide, had spent

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many years in Brazil, studying the very issues that had brought me to the country. "There is so much to talk about," he began, and continued to speak about silence, denial and hope long after my supply of audio tapes had been exhausted.

There is clearly a sense in which Joao and all of the other militants I met were subversively dangerous -- as they were surely thought to be -- yet I remain convinced that their hope was not to turn Brazil upside down and inside out but simply to turn it more fully and honestly toward its own dreaming.

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8

Conclusion: Dreaming

Whether named or unnamed, *democracia racial* lies at the heart of all discourses on color, race and racism in Brazil. Its puzzles and paradoxes, as a consequence, occupy the center of my discussion. In this dissertation, I have tried to treat *democracia racial* as itself constituted by a set of overlapping discourses or perhaps more properly, as a series of themes that are articulated within a range of discursive registers. While it obviously represents what we generally understand by the term "ideology," I have sought to locate it within the mouths of speaking subjects, to represent it as tangible, concrete and empirically grounded. Here I would like to pursue a brief, but more general and admittedly provisional discussion of *democracia racial.*

While constituted through discourse, *democracia racial,* is, at the same time, both too powerful and too nebulous to summarize and identify with quotes and quotes of quotes. It resists facile paraphrasing. As an ideology, it is an exceptionally caprious one. Its meaning has always resonated well beyond Brazilian borders, for traditionally, it has been movingly represented as a beacon of hope in a confused and violently divided world. Yet, within the past two decades especially, *democracia racial* has been insistently called a "myth." Although this renaming of *democracia racial* is sometimes attributed to North American scholars -- who are accused of looking down their ethnocentric noses at Brazil -- the expression "the myth of *democracia racial*" is often requisite in Brazilian intellectual circles as well. Explicit debates

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about the nature of *democracia racial* have certainly been inspired by extremely passionate forms of nationalism but the battle lines have never been clearly drawn: at roughly the same time, the American anthropologist, Charles Wagley, championed *democracia racial*, while the Brazilian anthropologist, Thales de Azevedo, challenged it.

When intellectuals call *democracia racial* a "myth" they typically invoke political and common-sense understandings of the term rather than traditional anthropological ones. *Democracia racial*, in other words, is a misjudgement, a fallacy, a deception, a lie, or in slightly more sophisticated terms, a mystification. What is being referred to is that set of beliefs and discourses that assert that racialized prejudice and discrimination, to the extent that they exist at all in Brazil, are so subtle and mild as to be practically meaningless and without significant material consequence.

Defined as such, *democracia racial* represents an especially salient and convenient target for various forms of critique. *Democracia racial* can be dismembered internally, for as many have noted, it lacks consistency and logical coherance. Nineteenth century elite discourses of *branqueamento*, for example, penetrated and buttressed those that denied the force of racialized prejudice, and in contemporary discursive arenas, the celebration of color-blind love and notions of "lightening the family" go hand in hand. More to the point for many who have explicitly challenged *democracia racial* over the last contentious decade of Brazilianist studies, is the obvious and enormous hiatus between assertions of equality and what my informants in Morro do Sangue Bom call "*realidade*" -- the concreteness of racialized oppression and its observable consequences. Juxtaposed against this reality, *democracia racial* appears to be pure delusion and it lends itself to those forms of critical analysis that highlight hegemonic domination, obfuscation, false consciousness and directly instrumental forms of mystification.

While I certainly align myself with those who critique the delusional thrust of *democracia racial*, such a formulation remains incomplete. The incantatory reference to it as a "myth" may lead us to assume that we understand *democracia racial* when we have merely glossed it with a label. Even when its internal contradictions are cogently described, *democracia*

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racial tends to be figured as monolithic and monological, a single-tongued ideology with a single and entirely fallacious message. As such, references to the "myth of *democracia racial*" hardly do justice to the heteroglot, double-voiced, and slippery sites at which it is articulated. The framing of *democracia racial* as an easily identifiable, monoglot master narrative -- as a rather pathetic, if persistent smokescreen, really -- can not account for the fact that it flows so easily across the borders of class and color, nor for the fact that Brazilians continue to defend it with a passion that clearly reflects something more complicated than a vulgar nationalism.

At various points in this dissertation, I have alluded to a distinction that other scholars do not make: that between the descriptive and prescriptive claims of *democracia racial.* Conventional discussions of *democracia racial* only engage the former claims and ignore that latter. My own focus on the presecriptive claims of *democracia racial* is directly based on my observations in Morro do Sangue Bom, where the fundamental, inherent and essential equality of all people is insistently invoked.

One evening I dropped in to visit Marta and there I found Beto, obviously reeling from an afternoon spent drinking *cachaca.* When he was sober, I enjoyed his company but at times like this, he could be irritating. For ten minutes he discoursed on whiskey. "Some like it straight, some like it with a little ice, and some have it with orange juice. That is how it is here in Brazil," he said as though coming to the conclusion of his lecture. "And how is in your land?" I told him that it was the same. "You see!" he said, "Everyone is equal! Black, white, I don't know what, it's all the same. Equal! There are no differences!" These comments too, I want to argue, take their place within the discourses of *democracia racial* and as such, they represent an unassailable moral high ground from which Beto could stake his claim to equality. "Of course there are no real differences," I said to Beto, "but there is discrimination." He waved his arm back and forth dismissively. Now he was shouting. "Everyone in equal! Here in Brazil, everyone is equal!"

In Morro do Sangue Bom, insistent claims to inherent equality refer to universal human values, but they are articulated from within a distinctly Brazilian idiom. "We're all going to the

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same little hole," they say. When they pronounce this judgement before racist whites, they know they are standing on solid ground, that their antagonists will be reduced to stuttering, shame, and finally, silence. *Sem graca*, they are stripped naked before a graphically final judgement. There are precious and memorable moments in Brazil when the tables are turned. "The same blood that runs your veins runs in my veins!" they say. Occasional references to "*sangue negro*" are nearly drownded out by the much louder and more emphatic chorus, "The blood is the same!" "*NOS SOMOS TODOS IGUAIS!*"

The finality and the shaming power of these statements resides also in the fact that the speaker knows that the hearer knows that the speaker knows. Poor people of color draw upon an idiomatic repetoire that is embraced not by them alone but by all Brazilians. More than a mere "invention of the people" it pulses at the center of Brazil and its unique history and for the faithful, it is given by God. While these prescriptive claims to a shared and undivided humanity may have a double-voiced quality when they come from the mouths of poor people of color, this quality is not directly addressed to the difference between speakers and hearers but rather, it summons the collectively-held notion of the moral force of a shared heritage, a common family, a unified nation. Racism is repugnant. It is immoral. It is, above all, un-Brazilian. It poisons what is closest to the shared heart, the common spirit of Brazil. Those who practice it, no matter how secure in their presumed superiority, always wind up in the "same little hole" and take their place alongside of Brazil's founding triad. No matter how constrained and surrounded by contradiction and cruelty, within the registers through which they are spoken, these are things upon which all Brazilians can agree. Undeniably, this also is *democracia racial*. To call *democracia racial* a mere myth-as-smokescreen is to miss the extent to which it is also a series of heteroglot narratives which are nearly mystical as well as mystifying, and which implicitly direct themselves to the future as well as to the past.

Democracia racial is undoubtedly a myth but it is also, I would assert, a dream. In authoritatively articulating its prescriptive claims, poor people of color are not describing Brazil as it is, but as it should be. Despite their resignation and exhaustion, people such those in Morro

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do Sangue Bom are clearly among the self-appointed guardians of this dream. Their silence, their apparent passivity, as well as their careful maintenance of a democratic ethos within their own sequestered communities, are stances that are informed by defense and a subterranean antagonism but they are also directed towards the protection of an extremely fragile sense of hope. Their faith is compromised, suffused with cynicism, beset on all sides by the certain knowledge of past and future betrayals, but poor people of color can not let go of *democracia racial* because it is a dream that they share with all other Brazilians. In so many ways, it is a dream that is about them, about their citizenship and their humanity, their contribution to their country, first as slaves and then as wage laborers. *Democracia racial* is, as I have noted, their moral high ground, perhaps the only one they have that is recognized, however incompletely and hypocritically, by their nation.

Needless to say, Analucia's dark-skinned husband, Jair, was profoundly outraged and hurt when he discovered that his white neighbor on the *morro* had said to another neighbor that if it were up to her, all negros would die. Confronting her, Jair had asked how she could say such a thing when he had always greeted her with neighborly courtesy and warmth. As Jair described it to me later, he felt called upon to defend not only himself, his family, and his race, but also his nation. "Tomorrow," Jair said rhetorically, "you may fall in the middle of the road. And who will go to help you?" He continued,

> Before we die, we will have already witnessed so much. Before we die -- on our feet, still working, sick and full of worms -- But to die? After we die, everyone is equal. There are no differences! Racism should have ended a long time ago. Because each of us depends on the other. One hand washes the other... No one is better than anyone else. And if we together were a united Brazil?... All of us should be equal. Because if we were all equal, our Brazil would have a greater force with which to go forward into the struggle.

****

Dreams of a glory that remains just beyond reach have always animated Brazil and her people. They represent an extremely distinctive and undeniably poignant, rather than a generic

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and thoroughly predictable form of nationalism. It is not only the content of these dreams but the peculiar passion that underlies them that is constantly referenced and indexed in Brazilian idioms of self-representation, including, naturally, those articulated by the nation's elite.

Jose Honorio Rodrigues, a revered historian of the traditional mold, was merely one of many Brazilian intellectuals who sought to question these dreams, to assess their potential and to define their relationship to national character. It is Brazilians' peculiar approach to their own speech, he suggested provocatively, that spells their entrapment, that represents the fatal flaw behind their failure to achieve national glory. It is "rhetoric," he concluded, that presents the greatest "obstacle" to Brazilian "prosperity and efficiency." While the "liking of rhetoric" and the promiscuous outpouring of an "excess of words" is hardly unique to Brazilians, he explained, their passionate embracing of it, and their lack of ironic perspective on it, is the most damning trait of their character. Rodrigues apparently did not visit communities such as Morro do Sangue Bom -- where a taste for irony seems to be one of life's fundamental necessities -- but there are Brazilians, principally those of his own class, for whom he speaks.

Whereas "rhetoric is clearly and consciously regonized as such" by others, "in Brazil," Rodrigues argued, "rhetoric is an integral part of thought and is presented as a solution" (1967:47). He continued;

> Brazilian patriotism is connected with a consciously developed and preserved history. Brazilian national life suffers, however, from a capital defect: the confusion of words with deeds, aspirations with achievements -- in a word, verbalism joined with a lack of political realism (Ibid: 50).

Rodrigues it seems, fell into precisely the same trap when he wrote of his nation's history that "gentleness in dealing with the Negro slave became general" and that "miscegenation and the possibility of rising in the world created an atmosphere of peaceful relations and fellowship" (Ibid:47). He spoke in the rhetoric of dreaming and did not recognize it as such.

In an extended disquisition on the "psychology of the Brazilian," -- another study in national character -- Jose Fernando Carneiro notes that "There has always been in Brazil, the presentiment of a future of grandeur." It is the "idea of unity" Carneiro believed, "that lays the

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foundation for our hope in the future" (1971:55). As did Jair of Morro do Sangue Bom, Carneiro referred in large measure to racial unity. This unity was threatened, Carneiro observed further, by the Brazilian "preoccupation with hiding the *negro*," (Ibid:37) by the attempt to "flee from the subject," and more generally, by the "national shame on the question of the black race" (Ibid:38).

While implicitly critiquing *democracia racial* as a specious rhetoric that purports to describe the reality of Brazilian social life, Carneiro argued that national unity might still be built upon a modification of the most fundamental virtues of Brazilian national character;

> We have to change ourselves, without abandoning the fundamental features of our character, such as [those of] tenderness, the love of family, the spirit of conciliation.... Our substance is very good, but it has been badly used. There is a tiresome preachment of tenderness, which is frequently used as a disguise for a lack of convictions. It is even a lack of character. We need to preserve this tenderness, making it yet more authentic, without ever using it as a smokescreen (Ibid:55-56).

Neither Rodrigues nor Carneiro refer directly, in the passages I quote, to *democracia racial*, but their attempts to speak to the peculiarities of Brazilian national character address the larger understanding of it that I am proposing. The Brazilian dreaming of *democracia racial*, such comments might suggest, is indeed fundamentally rhetorical in nature and the "tenderness" that it, and related discourses, tiresomely "preach" is often used as a "*cortina de fumaca*," as a smokescreen. Although undermined by insincerity, inauthenticity and a "lack of convictions" there is, Carneiro tells us, something in the value given to this tenderness that is worth saving.

The "lack of convictions" that Carneiro refers to is hardly a unique preoccupation but is one that constantly emerges, in one form or another, in Brazilian discussions of national character. A toleration, to a fault, for ambuiguity and contradiction, a kind of cultural and intellectual fluidity and flexibility, and a dread of rigidity, essentialism, direct opposition and open confrontation are constantly invoked in describing and defining what makes one most deeply Brazilian. For Carneiro, as for others, there is both good and bad to be found here. "From ideological eclecticism," Carneiro laments, "one passes into ideological confusion" (Ibid:51). It is this very flexibility of character however, that feeds the "spirit of conciliation" --

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one of the "fundamental features" that must be salvaged. As Carneiro argues directly, "the traditional Brazilian tendency to flee from the prison of ideologies can be an advantage" (Ibid:57).

The peculiar nature of Brazilian racism partakes of this contradictory, fluid, and rhetorically constructed character. "The Brazilian is racist," Carneiro finally states, after pages and pages of gently demystifying illustrations. "Only he is not a convinced racist." "Our prejudices," he concludes insightfully, "operate from within a certain moral doubt" (Ibid:51).

Democracia racial obfuscates oppression and its moral meaning, it silences the victims of racism and it proffers a preachy and inauthentic tenderness in place of a genuine equality and sincere respect. It is, following Rodrigues, a rhetoric that is not recognized as such, a "confusion of words with deeds, aspirations with achievements" (1967:50). It is these aspirations, the tender dreaming that goes on behind *democracia racial*'s prescriptive commandments, however, that most fully constitutes and protects the cultural space of "moral doubt" that Carneiro refers to. There is, finally, something that is different about Brazil. While typically mis-identified, there are moments in which it seems almost real enough to touch. When I left Brazil, I missed it. That the dreaming is a tiny fire that must be constantly stoked, tended and defended, is testament to the profoundly fragile ground on which it is built but it surely warmed the voice of a woman in Morro do Sangue Bom when she said, "There is only only race, right? The human race." This dreaming and its ability, no matter how compromised, to throw moral doubt into the rigid face of brutal essentialism -- wherever it is to be found -- may be all that is left of the beacon that Brazil holds out to the world.

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Epilogue

In May of 1992, the city of Rio de Janeiro moved to complete the last-minute preparations for the up-coming International Earth Summit. Heads of state would convene just outside the city while non-governmental organizations would meet in the park attached to Flamengo Beach, not far from Santa Teresa. Thirty-five thousand soldiers, deployed more for symbolic than directly military purposes, seemed glad of something important to do. Wearing tight green uniforms and carrying automatic rifles as though they were sartorial accessories, they posed stiffly on every street corner.

Several days before the Summit, Istoe, a major news magazine, finally acknowledged, in one sentence, what people in places like Morro do Sangue Bom had known for several weeks: "For a country that intends to improve its international image in hosting the conference, the guarantee of the smooth functioning of Eco 92 has, however, a depressing price: the image, which will also run throughout the world, of soldiers and tanks pointed at the population on the streets and, above all, at the *favelas*" (Istoe, 1992). The armored tanks were most numerous at the foot of Rocinha, a *morro* in Rio's south zone which is reputed to be the biggest shantytown in Latin America. There was no mistaking their message.

People such as those in Rocinha and Morro do Sangue Bom had first looked forward to the Summit with a vicarious pride in their city and their country but they were being deliberately and menacingly pushed off the streets and shoved out of the south zone and the city center. What ever forms of hospitality they might have extended to the coming hordes of foreigners, were not wanted. *Favelados*. On the hill, men returned home directly from work or never left the

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morro at all, while women began to stockpile food, so that everyone might "stay in their place" exactly as they were commanded.

Far more ominous however, was the talk of the "*limpeza*" or "cleansing" that was occurring in *morros* all over the city. That local and federal politicians and men high in the police hierarchy truly believed that local drug traffickers represented a threat to the conference participants seemed absurd. That the Earth Summit was being used as an excuse to assassinate certain gang leaders, and thus shift the local ecologies in which rival gangs competed for drug money and the police skimmed the cream from the top, seemed so short-sighted as to be unconscionable from any perspective. It was, however, more plausible. The torture and murder of the city's homeless children, while seemingly routinized, briefly reclaimed its grip on the city's moral imagination after these children virtually disappeared from the streets of the Centro district. Perhaps, like so many people who lived on the hills of the city, they understood what was expected of them and were only hiding until the storm passed. People in Morro do Sangue Bom belived that terrible crimes were being committed, far more openly than was usually the case, on behalf of the delicate sensibilities of the *gringos*.

One morning just before dawn, I was awakened by the angry buzz of helicopters flying overhead. It was two weeks before the Earth Summit. I had been living on the hill for a year and a half. I was ill from what must have been a protracted period of parasitic infection and I was growing anxious about my imminent departure from Brazil. Exhausted, I went back to sleep.

Several hours later when I emerged from the soothing darkness into the sunshine, Dona Janete appeared at the window over my door. "Did you hear?" she asked. I told her that I had and asked her for the news. "They took him away," she said with obvious anxiety. "It was very early, and no one saw, but the police said he broke his leg. They said he was trying to escape and he fell from a roof. They took him away like this" -- she made a slicing motion in the air with her good arm -- "before anyone even knew what was happening." She was talking of

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course, about Delson, the *chefe* of Nova Epoca. There was real fear in Dona Janete's voice and I absorbed it instantly.

On my way to do errands in the city, I passed by the open area at the bottom of the hill. Several of Nova Epoca's men stood in an anxious huddle by the public telephone, broke off to briefly pace in tight circles and repeatedly wiped their brows. Others, unconnected to the gang stood alone or in small groups as though waiting for something to happen. Looking back from where I had come, I realized how quiet it was on the hill. "What is it?" I asked a woman. She told me that the police had taken Delson first to their station house and then to the hospital. His men were anxiously waiting for news of his condition. It was ten o'clock in the morning.

When I returned to the hill just after six o'clock in the evening an enormous crowd was massed at the bottom of the hill. I was struck by the number of unfamiliar faces and how little noise they made. I found a friend and asked her what was happening. "We are waiting for Delson," she said. "The police let him go, then?" I asked. She looked confused for a moment and said, "His body. His family left in the car to go get him. He will return in a box." She began to cry.

At about eight o'clock, the crowd parted for only a moment to let the car pass and more quickly than I could have imagined possible, young men whisked the casket into the association building and slammed and locked the door. Everyone waited until finally, a line formed. I went in with the second group. Delson's face was nestled in a blanket of beautiful white flowers that concealed his entire body.

"For all we know," Dona Janete speculated that night, "he could have been decapitated." Restricted by her partial paralysis, she had not gone to the wake but she knew the details well before I had come to her door hoping to find her still awake. People had already begun to suggest that Delson had been a victim of the *limpeza*. "*Sacrificado*." "This man did not die of a broken leg," I said, stating the obvious. "Even if he had had gangrene," Dona Janete said, "he would never have died so fast." "God only knows what they did to him," Seu Arnaldo muttered.

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Dona Janete sighed heavily and said, "This is what happens. To people like him. But he was a leader of our community." I thought she was going to cry but she did not.

Although everyone had shut their doors and windows and the *morro* was quiet, lights were on all over the hill until well past midnight. Drinking too much coffee and speaking in hushed tones, Dona Janete, Seu Arnaldo and their son Efraim told stories about how it had been before Delson and his men had gained undisputed control of the hill. "Not even a word could you say," Dona Janete whispered. I went to bed knowing the world had changed and the fact that Morro do Sangue Bom was, from a different angle, but a small and unknown place of little consequence seemed to me, incomprehensible.

It did not become less so when I went, the next afternoon, to Delson's funeral on one of eight crowded city buses that Nova Epoca had chartered for the occasion. All the way down the narrow back streets of Santa Teresa, people stood by the roadside waving palm branches and the echoing blast of farewell gun shots resounded from the neighboring hills. There had been more to Delson's reputation and his short life than I had imagined.

For weeks afterwards I pestered my friends for information on who had stepped in to fill Delson's shoes. His death left a vacuum of power that might lead to more killing as his men matched their ambitions against one another. Far more critical was the fact that a leaderless and disorganized Nova Epoca was horribly vulnerable to outside attack. The immediate threat was represented by the police, the more distant one by the Red Command. No two stories were alike but Jorge urged me to accept the one that figured one of Delson's wives as the new leader. The truth of the matter seemed to be that there was no one on the hill who possessed Delson's charisma and connections. After several weeks, Nova Epoca did kill one of their own. Perhaps because the murder had followed so closely upon the death of Delson, or because the victim was widely disliked, it caused only a small and brief ripple on the hill.

People put on a kind of cheer that first seemed false and forced and then, except for the frequent presence of the Nova Epoca men at the bottom of the hill, things appeared to go on much as before. The borders between the community and the outside world, however, were

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closed. I had taken to visiting a friend who lived close to the *morro* and I continually urged him to visit me in my home. After he was questioned at gunpoint while entering the community to buy a fresh chicken, I desisted. We both suffered from insomnia and I sometimes returned from his home to the *morro* after three o'clock in the morning. On one such occasion, a man who appeared to be limping made a very wide circle around me, keeping out of the light cast by a street lamp, and very quietly approached my side. He asked me a question and not hearing him, I asked him to repeat it. Extremely startled, he took a step back and said with obvious anxiety, "Aren't you from here?" "Yes, I am from here," I said with deliberate casualness, "It's just that I didn't hear you." He exhaled audibly and repeated his question: "What's going on down there?" I told them that I had seen a police car parked on the street at a specific hour earlier in the evening but that it had since gone. "It is quiet down below," I reassured him. He thanked me and turning away, hefted a sawed-off shot gun onto his shoulder and moved back into the shadows. From that time on, an evidently leaderless Nova Epoca kept a tense nightly watch.

In the evening, some days later, Seu Arnaldo rapped on his floor (my ceiling) with the handle of a broomstick, a signal for me to come outside where he would speak to me from his bedroom window. "Close and lock your windows and door and don't go out tonight," Seu Aranaldo said, "The X-Nines have been seen." He told me that is was best to put my book down, turn my lights off and go to bed. If anyone knocked on the door, I was not to open it. Even if they claimed to be the police. Because, he told me, they might be the police but they would be wearing masks.

Before the *despedida*, the going-away party that was held for me on Varena's roof, I told Joia and Varena that they must not fail to write to me in the coming months. Given the situation with Nova Epoca, I would worry. Varena insisted that my illness, which briefly improved and then worsened, was caused by my anxiety about leaving. Through nothing more than a simple accident of birth, I kept thinking, I was granted the privilege of abandoning a sinking ship and returning to a world where the fear of calamity was entirely absent and nothing ever seemed to change. There was something in this, as Varena knew, that made me extremely "*nervosa*" and

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she tried to console me by singing the foolish and half-remembered lyrics of a song about "Nova Iorque," the glamorous city to which I would be returning. "We know you won't forget us, Beth," she told me. Towards the end of the raucous *depedida* I allowed myself to cry openly and could barely speak. Halfway to the airport, I realized that I had forgotten my tickets and passport. Still, I made the flight.

I wrote to Joia, Varena and Jorge a number of times over the next year but received no response. In 1993, a year after Delson's death, I read about the siege of Morro do Sangue Bom in the New York Times. The Red Command had arrived. It would be another two years before I would return to the hill and learn the details of the siege -- which residents counted as three separate but related wars that occurred over the space of a year -- but a colleague sent me news clippings about the first war from the Rio papers.

The events in Morro do Sangue Bom became international news largely because they provided evidence for the fact that groups like the Red Command had begun recruiting men who were, or had been, soldiers in the Brazilian Army. They offered not only additional manpower but more significantly, military training and technical expertise.

Digging trenches around the periphery of the community, the Red Command settled in for a protracted battle that began on a Friday night. They fired upon the electrical transformers, throwing the community into complete darkness. The men of Nova Epoca, and their new leader, Barao, were their first targets. Varena later me told that I had known Barao and "adored" him but for reasons about which I could only speculate, I could not find him in my memory. His body was cut into pieces and his second-in-command, Samuel, was ordered to carry them in his arms to the community dumpster. After he had done so, Samuel was shot and killed. The Red Command placed their flag outside the association headquarters, in order, according to the papers, to "intimate the community."

The message was probably intended, however, for the Third Command, a smaller group which had long had it sights on the *boca de fumo* of Morro do Sangue Bom. Recent police activity on a nearby hill that they had previously controlled led to plummeting drug sales and

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they immediately responded to the Red Command's incursion into the most profitable *boca* of Santa Teresa. For the remainder of the weekend evidently, the Third Command and the Red Command turned Morro do Sangue Bom into a blood bath. The victory of the Red Command, while perhaps not yet decisive, appeared inevitable. By the evening of Wednesday, when the military police finally ascended the hill (after, rather than during the war) nine people had been killed and the cement paths were slippery with blood. Leaving with little more than the clothes on their backs, many fled the community, vowing that despite the depth of their roots in Morro do Sangue Bom, they would never return.

When I returned to the hill two years later, very few of the people I had been closest to were still living there. Among them was Jorge, whose unemployment left him entirely unable to relocate his family. He had converted to the Assembly of God, one of the strictest of the Protestant religions in Rio. He entirely renounced his previous roguery and neither drank, nor smoked, nor used the swear words that he had taught me. He attributed his newfound reliance on Jesus to the intense crisis and terror he experienced after a member of the Red Command had vowed to kill him within several day's time. Overnight, Jorge converted and his wife Angela, loyal as ever, followed him into the church soon after. When I found him, he told me, as did every friend that I was able to locate, that my friend Neusa, who always "messed in everything" had been one the first victims of the war. The Red Command had simply knocked on her door and when she opened it, they emptied a round of bullets into her body, in plain view -- as I compulsively forced myself to imagine -- of her six year-old son.

Although the military police had briefly occupied the hill after the first war, they once again abandoned it to its own devices and the Red Command returned to reinstate its claim. It was during this period that Joia's and Daniel's son, Alberto, had a gun held to his head when he was returning to his home after work. No longer a child, Alberto was, like all of the young men in the community, viewed as a potential threat by the men of the Red Command. Having no connection to the hill except a heavily militarized commercial one, they could not distinguish between life-long residents, rival gang members and police informers. Joia was literally sick

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with fear for Alberto, her body falling apart after months of terror. The doctors, she told me, could do nothing.

It was only in 1995, after repeated pleas from the community, that the military police began to occupy Morro do Sangue Bom for an indefinite period. I was introduced to two of the officers when I returned. "Isn't it strange how enemies have become friends?" I asked Dona Janete, also one of the few who had remained stranded on the hill. She nodded but offered qualifications. Many were predicting that they would soon leave, she told me, and besides no one really trusted them. They lounged around in the building that housed the residents association, consorting with God knew whom -- for the gang now seemed to be composed of a mixture of local men and outsiders -- and freely snorted their cocaine and shared in the profits of its sale. It was because they were high that they seemed so friendly and talkative.

Dona Janete's husband, Seu Arnaldo had had a stroke, which she was sure was brought on by the fact that he too, had had a gun held to his head and had been threatened with public execution by a member of the Red Command. Because he worked in an extremely menial position for the municipal water service, he was held accountable for a period in which no water was piped into the community. After his stroke he retired and although he and Dona Janete still laughed at the private jokes they had amassed after more than forty years of marriage -- they were still making up new ones, in fact -- she worried about the blank places in his mind. Finally, they too moved, relocating to a town in Rio's periphery.

Well before my return, the families of both Joia and Varena had fled the *morro* and had begun new lives beyond Rio. Joia, Daniel and their children -- the last, a beautiful girl born while I still lived in Morro do Sangue Bom -- had set up house in a tiny two-room building on the property of Daniel's sister in Niteroi. They had scrimped and gone without for years to expand their house on the hill and had had to abandon it just before it was completed. They had begun all over again, slowly building a smaller house in a growing working class neighborhood several miles from Daniel's sister's house.

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Although Daniel occasionally got together with old friends on the hill, Joia and Alberto refused to return and claimed that they felt no *saudades* or homesickness. Just for a little reunion to kill the *saudades*, I said. Only my own memories of the *epoca de paz* had been left intact, frozen in time by my departure before the war. They tried, rather delicately, to explain it to me -- how bad it had been -- but they soon gave up. I could only nod uncomprehendingly, both wanting and not wanting to hear.

Varena had purchased a dilapidated and leaky but large apartment in the north zone, an hour distant from the city. She had failed to make friends in her new neighborhood where everyone socialized behind the closed doors of second-story apartments like her own. Unlike Joia, she could not repress her homesickness and she visited the hill nearly every week, spending most of her time at the home of Guilherme, Daniel's younger brother, who was now married and a father. She and the husband that she had so sorely missed had reunited and although the family's income increased as a result, Varena worked harder than ever, rising before dawn to make and sell pastries in the city. She had also found comfort and solace within a Protestant congregation. Her descent into alcoholism stopped abruptly and her relationship with her children dramatically improved.

Rosemare, her adopted daughter had stood, quiet but already independent on the sidelines while her homeless brother was "discovered" and adopted by an American couple amidst international publicity. It was a "human interest" story. I learned of it before my return to Brazil, when I saw a photo of Rosemare's brother in the New York Times, and accurately read the trace of her own features in his face. I wrote to the Times reporter and tracked his adoptive mother in California and spoke with her on the phone for hours. Impossibly, I wanted the world to truly be as small as it sometimes seemed, a place where people could hold on to each other. Rosemare, I saw on my return, had grown up, but she and Varena held hands as the three of us walked down the street together. The grace with which Rosemare carried the profound losses of her young life astounded me then, as it had when she was still a child.

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Although the hill was, as everyone said, "*tranquilo*," or calm, for the moment, I had to agree with Joia's explanation for her refusal to meet me there. "Beth," she said, "that community no longer exists. The Morro do Sangue Bom that was, is no more. *Deixa pra la*."

Those who remained missed those who had left and rather half-heartedly, they sometimes pretended not to. They visited each other's homes far less often than in the past. There were people living on the hill whom no one knew. How and why they had come was something that was best left alone. They were not welcomed, as other newcomers, arriving before the war, had been. Many who were born and raised on the hill, like Guilherme and his wife, spent their Saturday nights watching television with the windows tightly shut and the door locked. They went to bed early. They were surrounded by empty, boarded-up houses. Guilherme filled me in on the larger picture of his life. The real value of wages had depreciated appallingly and somehow, people had learned to live with even less. Everyone detested the new president who, Guilherme said, clearly hated the poor, despite his reputation, among the middle classes, as a man of the left.

Beleaguered, resigned and struggling both with implacably gruesome memories and an insecure future, many on the hill had turned to either cocaine or religion. Outside of Jose's and Elena's home, which they had long since abandoned -- I never did find them -- graffiti urged the acceptance of Jesus while mature family men openly sniffled, clearing their nostrils of what had begun as an infrequently indulged recreation and that had become, during or after the war, an unconcealed addiction. Others drowned themselves in *cachaca* and fell on the path, where they stayed, too drunk to get up or to care who might see them. Because so many stayed inside with their doors shut, no one came to help them, or even knew that they had fallen. The concern with appearances and many other social controls, both too numerous and too invisibly constructed to remember by name, had clearly weakened or collapsed.

A community is more than a place, more than the sum of those who are left behind, and while outsiders might not notice or care, it can pass into memory. I felt that Morro do Sangue

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Bom had become, in its desperate, if mostly quiet forms of mourning, something like the *favela* of the imagination. It had become history.

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