ABSTRACT

Realism, Race and Citizenship: Four Moments in the Making of the Black Body, Colombia and Brazil, 1853 - 1907

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Abstract

Realism, Race and Citizenship: Four Moments in the Making of the Black Body, Colombia and Brazil, 1853 - 1907 investigates the visual and literary mechanisms used to refurbish racial and social hierarchies in Brazil and Colombia in the aftermath of the abolition of slavery. Chorographic paintings, scientific photographs, identification documents, and naturalist literature are taken to together to argue that: on the one hand, the slave is the fleshy object that defines freedom and, in the postcolonial moment, citizenship. In “Realism, Race and Citizenship: Four Moments in the Making of the Black Body, Colombia and Brazil, 1853 – 1907,” I propose that in geo-political spaces where the abolition of slavery and the re-branding of work were intensely debated and violently fought over, realist programs of representation facilitated the propagation of modern racializing schemas. Chapters 1 and 2 study the watercolors created for the Comisión Corográfica (the pre-eminent mapping project of nineteenth century Colombia) and scientific photographs produced in Brazil. These chapters uncover the stylistic conventions that make possible the staging of blackness as visible and immutable biological inferiority and as cumulative category that encompasses a variety of physical and social characteristics including but not limited to skin color, occupation, costume, and physical environment. Chapters 3 and 4 argue that the disavowal of slavery structures Brazilian naturalist novels such as O Cortiço (Aluísio Azevedo, 1890) as well as legislative debates about the nation and the citizen. By focusing on the visual and narrative orchestration blackness, my dissertation provides a critical framework for understanding how realist aesthetic conventions configured (and continue to animate) discourses of race and citizenship in Brazil and Colombia.
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Introduction

Figure 1: Chocó: venta de aguardiente en el pueblo de Lloró
Manuel María Paz, 1853
_Obras completas de la Comisión Corográfica_. Vol. I. Guido Barona et al., 2000, p. 89
In Colombia, images such as *Chocó: venta de aguardiente en el pueblo de Lloró* (1853) are summarily taken as documental or testimonial tokens that, according to governmental agencies, museum exhibits, educational programs and art historical appraisals, provide accurate renditions of the physical appearance and social customs of people who lived during the embryonic decades of the Colombian nation-state. In the midst of bicentennial celebrations of independence aiming to invigorate national sentiment, watercolors such as *Chocó: Venta de aguardiente en Lloró* often circulate as material evidence of the nation’s past. These images are offered as sentimental tokens that allow contemporary Colombians to behold an image of their communal ancestors. In *Realism, Race and Citizenship: Four Moments in the Making of the Black Body, Colombia and Brazil, 1853 – 1907*, I argue that apparently innocuous images and objects, such as the watercolors produced for the *Comisión Corográfica* (which I often refer to as chorographic painting) or, similarly, state-issued employee ID cards, rather than merely recording what is “already there” in fact produce disturbing racial and social scripts. A critical appraisal of projects concerned with creating national visual identities is imperative particularly during our contemporary moment characterized as it is by state-sponsored pedagogical projects like *Súmese a la Expedición Botánica* that encourage the participation of the citizenry in the public life of the Colombian nation by promoting “la observación e investigación del entorno natural, la vida cotidiana y las prácticas culturales...”
By highlighting the ideological imprints of the eighteenth and nineteenth century projects from which *Súmese a la Expedición Botánica* derives its inspiration, I hope, at first instance, to problematize the celebratory recuperation of mapping projects such as the *Comisión Corográfica* or the *Expedición Botánica* that elide the complex web of signification these representational programs mobilize. As an intervention in the field of cultural studies, *Realism, Race, and Citizenship* aims to demonstrate that, in post-colonial contexts such as Colombia and Brazil, the ordinariness of realist visual, literary, legal and scientific texts is neither naturally given nor easily achieved. Rather, what we perceive and regularly dismiss as institutional, truthful, and ordinary renditions of people and places are, more often than not, the result of an elaborate system of manufacture, distribution and consumption that is itself largely concealed from view. The overall argument of the chapters that follow is that at the end of the nineteenth century realist artifacts were part and parcel of a discourse that had as one of its most pressing objectives the invigoration of systems of subjection based on racial difference. More succinctly, I chronicle the way in which chorographic paintings, scientific photographs, identification documents, and naturalist narratives facilitated racial theorizations and were crucial for the definition and

1 This is the stated objective of *Súmese a la Expedición Botánica*, a project funded by the Colombian Ministry of Culture and administered by the Biblioteca Nacional. An exhibit of the photographic and narrative works submitted by participants can be access at: www.bibliotecanacional.gov.co/expedicion
illustration of race, and specifically “blackness,” in Brazil and Colombia in the mid-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.

At first glance, the image above portrays an idyllic scene in the country-side. Adhering to the conventions of picturesque\textsuperscript{2} mise-en-scène, this watercolor presents the viewer with a quaint visual plane inhabited by country folk and animals. Preeminent objects in the image like the thatch-roof house and the fence are rendered minutely. The observer can clearly discern the lines characteristic of bamboo walls, the thickness of the roof, the contours of vases placed on a shelf in the right wall. The rooster perched on the derelict fence adds accuracy, by way of cultural invocation, to the scene. As denotative detail, the rooster—the most common of birds—signals the countryside, a place where the rhythm of life is regulated by the crowing of such domestic animals. The infinitesimal care with which the bamboo walls have been transcribed onto paper is the kind of detail noticeable to a viewer that stands in close proximity to the scene. This is important, for as

\textsuperscript{2} The term “picturesque” is an Anglicization of the French \textit{pittoresque} or the Italian \textit{pittoresco} initially referring to whatever was suitable for painting. It came into vogue in the language of aesthetics in the eighteenth century to distinguish between the beautiful and the sublime. Since the eighteenth century, the picturesque has developed into a category that encompasses a wide variety of visual objects and ideological strategies, extending from landscape and genre paintings of the eighteenth century to contemporary post-cards of the “natives” of Bolivia, Somalia or Russia, for example. I engage the picturesque as an artistic materialization of the epistemological category of realism and will develop further in Chapter One. For a discussion of the relationship between scientific language, perception, and picturesque painting in England, see, Charlotte Klonk’s \textit{Science and the perception of nature: British landscape art in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries}. For an insightful account of how images of the “everyday” came to occupy a pre-eminent place in the artistic production of England in the nineteenth century, see David Solkin’s \textit{Painting out of the Ordinary}. 

4
I demonstrate in the chapters that follow, what is shown and what is not is fundamental for picturesque, and more broadly speaking for realism, genres that only seem to bare it all.

Upon closer examination, the picturesque quaintness of *Venta de aguardiente* morphs into a grotesque example of the procedures by which racial stereotypes are given visual content. In *Venta de aguardiente*, the detailed rendition afforded to man-made objects is denied to the three human beings that inhabit this watercolor. It is almost as if the very eye that looked intently upon the bamboo structure out of which booze was sold could hardly focus on the faces of those who presumably stood before him. What is particularly vexing about the portrayal of the humans in this image is the absence of the face. The front of the head of each of the protagonists of this scene is rendered with the least possible detail to be anatomically correct: each head possesses a pair eyes, a nose, and lips. The disquieting effect of this minimalism is that it fails to elicit particularity. As spectators, we can barely ascertain the features of each face, except those of the man who seems to be talking to the female attendant. His countenance, however, is a horrible example of the stylistic distortions of nineteenth century racial discourse—vast fleshy lips, concave nose, and protuberant mandible. It is in the treatment of the human face that we discover the epistemological violence of this image in which the distorting detail is the final touch that dehumanizes. Seen in this light, *Venta de aguardiente* is now revealed as what Foucault might have called a dispositif which works to code and mobilize particular discourses of race at a moment of intense debate around questions of national
identity, belonging, labor, and citizenship in Colombia. *Realism, Race, and Citizenship* contributes to the work of scholars who analyze visual racializing ventures as integral component of the formation of the nation-state. This research has generated rich insights that advance our understanding of how race was conceptualized in Western Europe, the United States, and Latin America in the nineteenth century. My dissertation enriches this field by tracing a genealogy of how realist narratives and visualizing strategies work to actualize the fantasy of race for the Brazilian and Colombian population in the aftermath

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3 In recent decades visual cultures scholars have produced important works on the relationship between photography, empire and nation building. In *Colonialism and the object: empire, material culture, and the museum*, Tim Barringer and Tom Flynn have compiled a series of essays that deal with the relationship between colonialism and the production of three-dimensional non-representational art. The collection is also dedicated to the study of the museum where, in the West particularly, art has come to be displayed. In *Raw Histories: Photographs, Anthropology and Museums*, Elizabeth Edwards argues that photographs are not merely indexical images of things but are part of a dynamic historical dialogue and exchange, which is active not only in the creation of the photograph but in its subsequent social existence in archives and museum spaces. Many books have been published on the relationship between photography and race. I have been particularly influenced by Deborah Poole’s *Vision Race and Modernity*. In this work, Poole explores the role visual images and technologies have played in shaping modern understandings of race in the Andean world. Particularly, *Vision, Race and Modernity* traces the shifts in the representation of indigenous people from the eighteenth through the early twentieth century, and explains how these shifts contributed to and informed understandings of race and racial difference. James Ryan’s *Picturing empire: photography and the visualization of the British Empire* considers the role of photography in the exploration, colonization, and domestication of foreign places at the height of British empire making. More succinctly, Ryan explores how photographic images bolstered imperial imagination and domination. *Photography’s Other Histories* edited by Christopher Pinney and Nicolas Peterson is immensely valuable because the articles collected chronicle the diverse photographic practices that have flourished in postcolonial societies. As such, the articles collected in *Photography’s Other Histories* understand this visual technology and artistic practice as a globally disseminated and locally appropriated medium. Finally, *Only Skin Deep*, edited by Coco Fusco and Brian Wallis chronicles the way photography has been fundamental in shaping the meaning of race in American culture. Taken together these works challenge popular discourses which attempt to separate art and “race” so that visual works of art are only ever critiqued in terms of aesthetic criteria and almost never seen as contributing to the making of racial discourse and ideology.
of the abolition of slavery. By providing an analysis of objects and discourses that
syncopate and inform everyday ways of looking and classifying citizens, *Realism, Race,
and Citizenship* revitalizes discussions of realism. In doing so, I uncover how in post-
colonial settings, realist visual and literary objects animate interpretative schemas that
function to both show and obscure the procedures by which bodies are imprinted with
racial scripts.

**Realist Fictions, Realist Enterprises**

Realism, as a mode of representation and as epistemological category, is a
notoriously slippery concept. The word can describe both subject matter and form of
representation and can apply to both visual and literary work. In the Western tradition,
discussions about representation of the material world go back to Plato and Aristotle. In
his discussions on mimesis, Plato provides us with one major criterion of realism: the
accurate portrayal of material reality. This is the notion of realism that is appealed to
when we talk about photography, detailed literary descriptions of people and places, and
perspectival paintings. Generally speaking, these practices or techniques purport to give
the reader or viewer a faithful representation of the material world as it appears. For
Aristotle, by contrast, the realism of a work of art is the result of an intellectual effort.
Rather than reproducing the world as it is, mimetic art endeavors to approximate an
individual’s innate way of knowing the world by mobilizing conventions that help the
viewer or reader identify what is represented in the work of art with its referent in the
material world. For Aristotle, realism results from a pact between the artist, the work of art and the viewer that relies on authenticity and plausibility (Potolsky 13-42).

Realism as a term in relation to art and literature came into common use in the mid-nineteenth century. By and large, the development of realist novel and visual culture coincided with modern secular materialist understandings of reality. Realism emerged together with botany, anatomy, geology, criminology; scientific discourses that derived from empiricism, a way of thinking that replaces divine intervention for human observation and asserts that the material world can be explained rationally and using systematic methods for gathering knowledge. By accepting that there is a reliable link between our senses and the world in which we live, realism assumes that “the external world is real, and that our senses give us a true report of it” (Watt 89). Thematically and formally, realism has been celebrated for bringing about the transformation of the ordinary, the ugly, and the deranged into proper subjects for visual and written representation. Realism is also the aesthetic movement that mobilized objectivity, or unaffected description, as the proper grammar for such projects of representation.

In the nineteenth century, the adoption of scientific codes in art proved controversial. In France after the revolution of 1848 the label realism came to prominence as a derogatory term. Art critics wielded the negative word to condemn the paintings of Gustave Courbet or the novels of Flaubert and Balzac. In paintings such as L’Enterrement à Ornans (1851) and Les baigneuses (1853), Courbet defied the tenets of idealism, which aspired to perfection, beauty, and novelty. Courbet’s subjects were
rejected because they were the antithesis of beauty, belonged to the lower classes, were ragged, dirty, and fat. What was more egregious was that Courbet rendered these haggard bodies on huge canvases an in so doing elevated them to a scale previously reserved for historical painting. In the face of the immense controversy elicited by his paintings, Courbet championed realism by insisting that his objective, and by extension art’s purpose, was to “depict the manners, ideas, and appearance of my time as I see it, in short, to produce a living art” (“Manisfesto of Realism” quoted in Rubin 158). The meticulous attention to detail that Courbet advocated for in visual production was as controversial, if not more so, when applied to literary works of art. In 1857, one of the seminal works of realism and its author were indicted and charged with obscenity. That year, Gustave Flaubert appeared in court to fend against charges that his novel, *Madame Bovary*, was an affront to public morality. The controversy over realism has, in short, raged over since the mid-nineteenth century when both the concept of realism and artistic production associated with it began to be re-articulated.

As a category of analysis, realism belongs to the twentieth century. For our purposes, I will briefly sketch out four trends in the elaboration of a critical apparatus in the evaluation of realism. One of the first critical approaches to the study of the realist genre was developed by Georg Lukács. In *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism* Lukács argues that realism represents the highest form of literary achievement. For him realism embodies the artistic balance between objective reality and subjective consciousness. In the works of Balzac, for example, Lukács finds characters that typify
the characteristic social and economic forces of the capitalist era without ceasing to be recognized as representations of individuals. The fetishization of subjectivity is at the center of Lukács’ quarrel with modernism, which he identifies as the anti-thesis of realism. For Lukács, the ultimate problem with modernism is that by emphasizing only individual psychology it neglects the objective forces of history and remains lost within the solipsistic perspective of the individual. For Lukács, the over-valuation of the subjective as artistic strategy is incapable of making an objective critical assessment of reality and experience as they are determined by capitalism.

In the mid-twentieth century, post-structuralist critiques denounced realism as a genre that naturalizes the status quo. As such, and derived from Roland Barthes’ influential analysis, realism became a literary vehicle for ideological control. In *S/Z*, Barthes writes that the “life” that realism imitates is “a nauseating mixture of common opinions, a smothering layer of received ideas” (206). Realistic rendition does not reflect what it purports to show, rather, it spins what “has already been read, seen, done, experienced” (20). For Barthes, realism is but one interpretation, one particular arrangement of codes. In other words, realism does not attempt to represent reality, realism tries to fasten a code to a particular referent. Barthes’ critique of realism is wide-ranging, but it often returns to the role of the visual field in realist writing. Realism, he argues, relies on the pictorial code. Barthes notes how often literary realist descriptions borrow from the visual arts, alluding to the model of landscape painting in setting a scene or to still life in detailing objects. Realist writers, argues Barthes, try to pass these coded
descriptions (or conventions of representation) off as personal observations. As such, the realist writer moves not from the material world to language but from pictorial to literary codes or conventions (54-5). Barthes goes on to argue that the foundational principle of realism is consistency. A literary text, for example, appears as realistic because its events are manifestly joined “with a kind of logical paste” that establishes causal relationships between events, characters, and places (156). The realist author, Barthes explains, uses every trick in the book to ensure that his narrative maintains a sense of continuity, thereby sustaining the ruse that the conventions it weaves together are a truthful depiction of the world. The criticism of realism does not end with Barthes’ dismantling of its claims to transparent representation. Feminist scholars, for example, introduced the problematics of gender into contemporary assessments of the movement.

Canonical realist novels center on women’s lives and their deaths. In fact, it can be argued that the driving narrative force of nineteenth century realism is to work out, in fiction, the deep transformations of women’s changing social, political, and economic roles in society. Realist writers dedicate considerable amount of ink to conjure stories about women who work outside the home, demonstrate independent thought, divorce their husbands, and exchange sex for money. As Christopher Prendergast has argued, “realism is best understood as an economy of positions and drives based on the relations of actual or imaginary looking, an economy where there is typically, or stereotypically, a male looker (painter, narrator, or the like) and one of the privileged objects of vision is the body of a woman” (5). Feminist scholars have argued that the representational
strategies of realism are too cozily aligned with the reproduction of patriarchy. Naomi Schor, for example, writes that the realist (and by extension the naturalist) text works to police and discipline female sexuality. In *Breaking the Chain: Women, Theory, and French Realist Fiction*, Schor asserts that the “binding of female energy is the enabling condition of the forward movement of the ‘classic text.’ Realism is the paradoxical moment in Western literature when representation can neither accommodate the Otherness of Woman nor exist without it” (xi). In the feminist critique of realism, the body, gender and sexuality are not just themes in the realist canon, they are the constitutive building blocks of the genre.

Questions of otherness, its functions and manifestations in the Western artistic canon, were also being questioned by scholars working to trace the legacies of colonialism. Critics working in this tradition argued that the control of the colonized other is a fundamental axis (or disavowed engine) of realism. In his generative study of colonialism, Edward Said describes the “language, thought, vision” of orientalism as a form of realism. He describes realism an “anatomical and enumerative” mode of representation that aims to “designate, name, point to, [and] fix” both the body of the colonized subject and colonized space (*Orientalism* 72). Homi Bhabha, in his reading of this passage, re-iterates the link between “colonial power” and “realism.” In Bhabha’s interpretation, realism furnishes colonizing power with a symbolic image, a narrative or a discourse of itself as stable and continuous force. For Bhabha not all realist literary works have connections with colonialism but colonial discourse is always a realist narrative
enterprise because it nourishes itself by claiming to directly and effectively represent colonial reality. Bhabha writes that colonial discourse “resembles a form of narrative whereby the productivity and circulation of signs are bound in a reformed and recognizable totality. It employs a system of representation, a regime of truth, that is structurally similar to realism” (Location of Culture 71). Bhabha goes on to posit realism and the stereotype as related and reified forms of discourse that undergird colonial enterprises and national imaginaries (152-3). In Bhabha’s schema (and drawing on Fanon), the nation is a pedagogical procedure and it is narrated to its subjects. In this process of narration, the stereotype and realist literature are put to work in the elaboration of an idea of the nation as constant and self-identical through time.

The field of criticism concerned with realist aesthetics is of course quite broad and far more complex than what I have summarized here. What I want to highlight about these debates is that they allow us to shift our attention away from the vexed question of the veracity—frequently mobilized by national institutions such as museums and deeply esteemed in some quarters of art historical criticism—when we analyze visual products such as the watercolors produced for the Comisión Corográfica or the racial photographs taken in Brazil but paid for and commissioned by the Swiss scientist Louis Agassiz, which I study in Chapter Two. The analytical framework I presented above encourages us to emphasize what Raymond Williams would describe as the communicative function of realism. As William has astutely shown, the reality presented in the realist novel is constructed in and through (a pact of) perception and communication (language). As
such, it is in “the practical interaction of what is personally seen, interpreted and organized and what can be socially recognized, known and formed” that reality (and its representation) is ascertained or where it “is richly and subtlety manifested” (The Long Revolution 315). By focusing on the communicative function of realism—the fact that through the interchange of discourse, reality is reproduced and made socially recognizable—we can begin to consider the visual and literary texts analyzed in this dissertation as aesthetic objects or commodities of domination enlisted for the reconstruction, in the post-colonial and post-slavery moment, of geo-political spaces in which diminishing the black subject continued to be prime cultural, psychic, and economic currency.

In bringing together visual and literary artifacts from two different geographical locales, Realism, Race, and Citizenship stresses the point that realism is a locally produced but trans-Atlantic method or a strategy (or in Barthes’ words, a ruse) of social representation that mobilizes many versions of itself and endeavors to fulfill different objectives. A synthesis of visual and literary analyses of realism as well as a transnational approach stands to benefit interdisciplinary studies of the nation-state and citizenship in Latin America which have been largely textual.4 Realism, Race and

4 One of the most influential studies of the power of the written word, literature, and the city in construction of the nation in Latin America is Angel Rama’s La ciudad letrada. In this critically acclaimed book, Rama argues that the power of the Spanish Crown was made manifest through the careful architectural planning of American cities where institutional and legal powers were administered through a specialized cadre of elite men called letrados. In Rama’s study, it is the
Citizenship contributes to this body of work of tracing the narrative strategies of the nation-state by arguing that in mid-nineteenth century Colombia and Brazil, realist discourses provide spaces for looking (the photographic studio, the museum, the novel) and crafting racial thought. I contend that in order to study the operations of racial ideology in the construction of national subjects, we must examine, as Diana Taylor has argued, the practices of posing, looking, being seen, being seen looking, and returning the look that characterize the process of making national communities during transitional and violent moments. (Disappearing Acts 92). By putting visual and narrative texts in conversation and bringing realist strategies of representation to bear on concepts such as nation and citizenship, Realism, Race, and Citizenship puts pressure on conventional accounts of realism and theorizations of the nation that bypass the field of the visual. As such, the pressing objectives of this dissertation are: 1) to explain how realist conventions of looking and exposing are actualized in visual objects and narrative texts; and 2) to re-
evaluate the relationship between realism and the business of making the nation and the citizen.

Readers of this dissertation will find that although its analytic force derives from an investigation of artifacts produced in two different geo-political regions, its methodology is not comparative. This approach is not the result of an oversight or the careless convergence of the distinctive socio-economic and political histories of Brazil and Colombia. It is, rather, the result of placing the objects analysed here in the transnational circuit in which they were originally produced. This multi-disciplinary and multiply located dissertation project is influenced by Paul Gilroy’s call for a strategic realignment of investigation that urges scholars to move beyond strict national boundaries.

5 It is important to note that the artists and scientists hired to work on the Comisión were working in an international context in which ideas emanating in different places of the globe were adopted, tested, and applied to the Colombian context. Carmelo Fernández, who joined the Comisión in 1851, was born in Venezuela and took his first painting and drawing classes in Caracas under the direction of the French army Captain Lassabe. In the 1840s, he became acquainted with Agustín Codazzi and accompanied the Italian geographer to Paris to supervise the engraving of the maps and drawings created for the Atlas físico y político de la república de Venezuela elaborated by Codazzi between 1833 and 1840. Fernández was replaced by Henry Price, a young British music and painting professor who had relocated to Bogotá in the 1840s. In 1853, the staff of the Comisión changed again. This time, the military engineer Manuel María Paz accompanied Agustín Codazzi in his travels through Colombian territory. Paz studied cartographic drawing under the tutelage of Ramón Torres Mendez at the Sociedad de Pintura i Dibujo of Bogotá. Another memorable member of the Comisión, José Jeronimo Triana, studied Colombia’s botanical riches. The immense herbarium he collected (2,200 plants) was better known in Paris than in the country where the vegetation was found. For biographical information on the members of the Comisión Corográfica, see: Gabriel Jaramillo’s La pintura en Colombia; Lázaro Girón’s “Un recuerdo de la Comisión Corográfica;” Patricia Londoño’s Acuarelas y dibujos de Henry Price para la Comisión Corográfica de la Nueva Granada; and José Rueda’s biographic entry, “José Jeronimo Triana: Ficha Bibliográfica” in Gran Enciclopedia de Colombia: Biografías. See also the exhibition catalogue, Carmelo Fernández: pintor grancolombiano, 1809-1887.
and explore the movements of peoples, objects, and ideas across the Atlantic ocean. Going beyond national borders (which are always in flux, anyway) allows us to draw connections between particular historical processes that have shaped how we construct, experience, and reproduce systems of subjugation and routes of liberation. In the context of this dissertation, Gilroy’s “black Atlantic” paradigm allows us to see “race” as: 1) a nexus of cultural, material, and knowledge exchange and 2) as a concept that is constituted by transitions, transactions, and rehearsals rather than as a static set of cognates.

Building on Gilroy’s framework, Joseph Roach develops a theory of the “circum-Atlantic” world and invites us to find, in the currents that put different geographies in communication, the “vortex” of “diasporic and genocidal histories of Africa and the Americas, North and South, in the creation of the culture of modernity” (4). I consider the objects analyzed in this dissertation—and the realist discourses that mobilize them—as aesthetic commodities that enliven the recalcitrant trace of colonialism in the post-colonial moment of supposed freedom and equality. As kernels of colonial discourse, the objects I analyze must be understood as: a) objects that rehearse the impetus to differentiate by activating the combinatory concept of race as the ground zero of identity, b) strategies of “crisis management and containment” (Goldberg 40), and c) as evidence of the former master’s anxiety over loosing absolute control over the population.

Judith Butler’s concept of performativity is useful for understanding how racial codification construes self-referential and repetitive articulations in order to produce
blackness as an “encrustation” (to use Walter Benjamin’s term) of nakedness, dispossession, incompetence, unbound sexuality, aggression, political madness. In *Bodies that Matter*, Butler argues that performativity is best understood as a field of discourse that operates through the “reiteration of a norm or set of norms, and to the extent that it acquires an act-like status in the present, it conceals or dissimulates the conventions of which it is a repetition” (12). I argue that the serial appearance of black people naked, alone, drinking, disheveled, and with work tools in diverse visual and written media and at different historical moments points to the manufacturing of blackness as a “reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects of what it names”—the Negro (2).

Putting these concepts together allows us to examine racial photographs or the novel *O Cortiço* written by the Brazilian writer Aluísio Azevedo in 1890 not as a static depthless surfaces but as spaces, zones, or performative structures that allow us to “take seriously the repertoire of embodied practices” required to produce a state-generated visual product, a watercolor or a novel as “important system[s] of knowing and transmitting knowledge” (Taylor 26). By treating realist visual and literary objects as performative text, we can begin to unload the multivalent discourses and practices through which race and citizenship become coherent in Colombia and Brazil in the nineteenth century.

**Imaging Blackness after Slavery in Colombia and Brazil**
In Colombia as well as Brazil, the inclusion of African descendants in the national community of citizens was fraught with the legacies of the colonial period. As I detail in the subsequent chapters, for the formerly subjugated, to be included in the visual artistic production of the time was to be submitted to new forms of objectification. Precisely at the moment when legal subjectivity was attained, bondage was recast as visual objectification. In the pages that follow, I argue that to be legally free but to circulate as picturesque image or as photographic scientific specimen acerbated a form of pained experience in which the process of “humanization” mandated by the law was curtailed by scenarios of racialization that took place in photographic studios, police precincts, and museums. Such images, as we will see, supported a post-slavery “economy of meaning” or a “regime of sense that guaranteed a new order of truth and turned on a new structure of documentation whose institutionalized effect was to reverse the political axis of representation, making it no longer a sign of power and prestige to be recorded, but a sign of subjection” (Tagg 54). For the “freed,” freedom did not entail the enjoyment of a plenitude of rights and the pursuit of happiness. In the post-colonial moment, slavery was substituted for what Saidiya V. Hartman has called a “burden individuality” or a form of being in which the former slave is: “freed from slavery and free of resources, emancipated and subordinated, self-possessed and indebted, equal and inferior, liberated and encumbered, sovereign and dominated, citizen and subject” (117).  

6 Achille Mbembe and, most recently, Abdul R. JanMohamed have made similar claims. Mbembe
In the latter part of the nineteenth century, Colombia and Brazil were faced with an altered racial structure in which the “negro” was no longer a thing to be possessed but a citizen. As Latin American nations moved from Spanish colonial outposts to liberal republics, criollo⁷ elites “revamped the racial divisions created under colonial rule, even as they drew on classical liberalism to reject imperial hierarchies” (Appelbaum, Mcpherson, Resemblatt 4). To ensure the success of the independence movement, it was necessary, letrados⁸ believed, to explore and map territories, found institutions, create laws, write constitutions and national histories, classify inhabitants, describe cultural practices, diversify the economy, and generate a sense of national identity. To achieve the dream of independence, letrados devised political strategies based on new understandings of society, the economic market, and international relations. At the same time, these elites also relied on various modern strategies of social control to construct the new nation-states. Prominent among these tactics was the creation of a representational order

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⁷ The term criollo usually refers to American-born people who could claim and be recognized as having Spanish ancestry. Criollo was a social class in elaborate caste system elaborated by the Spanish in the American colonies.

⁸ I use the word letrados to designate erudite members of the criollo elite who promoted scientific, political, social learning and the foundation of institutions and newspapers and who usually performed pivotal roles in state government.
anchored in Enlightenment ideals of “knowledge” and “truth.” As I will show, visual and written production became a source of power and dominance essential for the task of building a new nation and establishing hierarchical organization of that society (Rodríguez 171). The purpose of this new representational order was to re-constitute the criollo elite as primary political, economic and cultural executor and the castas (people of mixed Spanish, African, and Indian descent) as less than ideal but necessary components of the new community of citizens. As Santiago Catro-Gómez has argued, the criollo elite “tenía interés en construir ad intra el lugar antropológico de las castas para legitimar sus ambiciones de dominio sobre aquellas” (273).

In Colombia, the creation of literary and visual archives that undergirded new classifications of national citizens, and blacks in particular, began in the late eighteenth century and was energized by the wars of independence from Spain. In the narratives that fueled the war, enslaved peoples emerged as enemies of the state. In the speeches, proclamations, and letters written by Simón Bolívar, to take the most venerated figure of the independence movement, enslaved people were portrayed as inciters of violent confrontations in the emergent republic. In A las naciones del mundo (1813), a document in which Bolívar declares “la guerra a muerte” against the Spanish and criollos realistas⁹ and where he offers a prognosis of the disintegration of the First Republic, the castas, especially black slaves and libertos (freed people) appear as venomous creatures. In this

⁹ The term realistas refers to supporters of the Spanish Crown who were often criollos and not solely Spaniards or royal bureaucrats.
version of the story of independence, “los negros, libres y esclavos, cebándose en la sangre y bienes de los patriotas...cometieron en aquellos valles, y especialmente en el pueblo de Guatire [Venezuela] los más horrendos asesinatos, robos, violencias y devastaciones” (Escritos Políticos 20). In Bolívar’s account of the war, the specter of terror does not emanate from realista armies dispatched by the Spanish Crown or organized by treacherous criollos. What is portrayed as the injurious force is the sum total of the actions of the “negros sublevados” that convert Venezuela into a place where “por todas partes corr[e] la sangre, y los cadáveres [son] el ornato de las calles y plazas” (ibid). Bolívar’s narrative about the war fastens narrative codes—sangre, cadávers, asesinatos, robos, devastaciones—to a particular referent: the black man. This interpretation of the wars of independence establishes a direct correlation between the “negraje” and the horrific violence that consumed the territory. By adopting a reportorial tone, Bolívar mobilizes one of the main realist conventions of the nineteenth century, that is, the mastering point of view that has access to a wide field of vision and who is able to truthfully recount what was witnessed (which is immediately equated with what happened). By using this realist narrative strategy, Bolívar impregnates the fight for independence with racial connotations that transform the war into a situation in which the

10 For a historical analysis of the failure of the First Republic, known also as the patria boba, see: David Bushnell’s The Making of Modern Colombia: a nation in spite of itself; German Carrera’s Disputa de la Independencia y otras peripecias del método critico en historia de ayer y de hoy; Rebecca Earle’s Spain and the Independence of Colombia 1810-1825 and Hermes Tovar’s, “Guerras de opinión y represión en Colombia durante la independencia (1810-1820).”
*criollos* have to defend themselves against gruesome attacks by the colonial army, which are, in reality, devastating attacks by blacks.

Although in his narrative blacks are coded as violent beings, Bolívar realized that without enslaved men as soldiers the independence movement could not begin to dream about victory against the Spanish armies. Two years after he identified black slaves as the avengers of chaos and destruction, Bolívar issued the *Curápuno* decrees, freeing slaves who fought for the Republican cause. In spite of promises of freedom in exchange for participation in the wars of independence, African descendants continued to be held as property in the newly constituted Colombian Republic. The *Ley de Vientres o Ley de Partos* was the first legislative attempt to end slavery. In 1821, the *Congreso de Cúcuta* approved a law, which stipulated that all children of enslaved mothers born after that date were legally free. This law, however, was only a rhetorical ruse. The “freed” children were to remain in the service of their mothers’ master until their eighteenth birthday. According to legislators, a period of captivity even while one was legally free was a necessary and preparatory stage in the transformation of slave into citizen:

> Es preciso en el estado de ignorancia y degradación moral a que esta porción desgraciada de la humanidad se halla reducida, es preciso en tal estado hacer hombres antes de hacer ciudadanos (*Decreto sobre la libertad de esclavos* qtd Grases and Becco 237).

For members of the Colombian legislature, slaves were morally degraded creatures to be redeemed and elevated to the status of human by virtue of continuing to exist as
property.\textsuperscript{11} A 1842 amendment to the Ley de vientres libres extended the period of “tutelage” until the age of 25 and created the concertaje system to keep “libertos” or “manumisos” working for the master.\textsuperscript{12} Libertos or manumisos were to be gainfully employed or face being classified as vagrants and risk being conscripted into the army as punishment for evading the continued domination of the master.\textsuperscript{13} Blacks without masters were a source of constant fear in the minds of criollos who a few years before 1852, the date of the legal derogation of slavery, imagined economic ruin and social disorder as devastating result of the impending abolition of slavery. In 1849, three years before the abolition of slavery, an anonymous writer in El Neogranadino discusses the potential disastrous consequences of the definite eradication of slavery:

\begin{quote}
11 For an analysis of the debates surrounding the abolition of slavery in Colombia, see: Jaime Uribe’s “La controversia jurídica y filosófica librada en la Nueva Granada en torno a la liberación de los esclavos y la importancia económica y social de la esclavitud en el siglo XIX” and “Esclavos y señores en la sociedad Colombiana del siglo XVIII.”
12 Libertos or manumisos were the designation given to those who “benefited” from the law of Vientre libre. In the decades before the total abolition of slavery, manumisos or libertos were forced to remain in the master’s haciendas. This system of labor was known as concertaje, and the workers as concertados. In The Devil and Commodity Fetishism, Michael Taussig discusses how “concertaje” as a system of labor survived the abolition of slavery and was a common practice until recently. Taussig also points out, however, that free blacks preferring absolute freedom to the concertaje system emigrated to the Pacific littoral where they were able to clear the land and engage in small scale agriculture.
13 On May 29, 1842, the newspaper Gaceta de Nueva Granada published the amendments to the manumission law. Article 4 states: “Entregado que sea al joven el documento de que habla el articulo anterior [certificado de manumisión], es un deber del alcalde destinarlo hasta que cumpla veinticinco años á oficio, arte, profesion ú ocupacion útil, concertándolo a servir con su antiguo amo ó con otra persona de respeto que pueda educarlo […].” Article Six, defines the forms of punishment meted out to those who refused the system of concertaje: “Los jóvenes de que hablan los artículos anteriores que no se concertaren, ó que concertados se fugaren, ó no cumplieren debidamente con las obligaciones de su concierto, serán como vagos destinados por el alcalde al ejército permanente […].” See, Gaceta de la Nueva Granada, Bogotá May 29, 1842.
\end{quote}
El esclavo aborrece el trabajo porque es para él una pena i una consecuencia de su servidumbre. Emancipado, su primera dilijencia es tomar posesion de su libertad entregándose al ocio i al abuso de su albeldría, pues el infeliz no concibe otro modo de manifestar que es dueño de sus acciones i regulador de su vida… Por tanto, liberar de repente a todos los esclavos sería poner en grave crisis economica al pais i provocar el desencadenamiento de innumerables delitos (El Neogranadino 209).

In 1851, after thirty years of constant and heated debate and sometimes armed conflict over questions of freedom and labor, the liberal government of José Hilario López declared the absolute abolition of slavery to take effect on January 1st of the following year. One of the immediate material consequences of the dismantling of slavery was war. A few months after abolition was signed into law, Julio Arboleda, one of the most important landowners of the Cauca Province, raised an army against the government of López and refused to follow the law (Valencia 37-57).

This brief history of the discourse surrounding abolition in Colombia helps us understand how abhorrent the thought of the free black person was for the Colombian elite. To think about the place of blackness in the criollo imaginary is to begin to unravel the role of fear and racism in the construction of notions such as citizenship and freedom. As we will see, the production of images of the nation and its people is informed by the social and political thinking that permeated Colombian society at the time.

In Brazil, the end of slavery incited the same fears that drove some Colombian men to war. While the process of abolition in these two countries was influenced by different historical conditions, some similarities in how freedom was legally orchestrated
are worth noting, mainly, the promulgation of legal decrees declaring freedom in order to prologue enslavement.

Until 1850, Brazil was a major player in the slave trafficking industry. From the sixteenth to the mid-nineteenth century, Brazil received the largest contingent of African peoples in the Americas, some estimates place that number at three and a half million.¹⁴ Slavery existed in Brazil until 1888, longer than in other place in the Western Hemisphere with the exception of Cuba.¹⁵ Brazil’s slow and measured process of abolition was initially a consequence of external political pressures, mainly from England (Bethell 385, Conrad 65-69). According to these authors, antislavery attitudes which

¹⁴ Marshall C. Eakin calculates that in 1821, Brazil had 3 million inhabitants, one 150,000 lived in Rio de Janeiro. According to Eakin’s calculations, half of the population of Brazil were slaves, with the racially mixed accounting for another quarter of the colony’s inhabitants, and Portuguese colonists accounting for only 100,000 (28). See, Brazil: The Once and Future Country. Although a pervasive force in Brazilian society, slavery was unequally spread across the country. In 1872, only five provinces (Rio de Janeiro with 30%, Bahia with 15%, Minas Gerais with 14%, São Paulo with 7% and Rio Grande do Sul also with 7%) held 73% of the nation's total slave population. See Ronaldo Vainfas, Dicionário do Brasil Imperial.

¹⁵ The historiography of Brazilian slavery is vast. For some representative publications, see: Emilia Viotti da Costa’s, Da sensala à colônia and The Brazilian Empire: Myths and Histories; Carlos Eugênio Libano Soares’s A capoeira escrava e outras tradições rebeldes no Rio de Janeiro (1808–1850); and Stuart B. Schwartz, Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society: Bahia, 1550-1835. For analyses of race, gender, and family, see: Sandra Lauderdale Graham’s Caetana Says No: Women’s Stories from a Brazilian Slave Society which explores gender and patriarchy through two women’s stories from nineteenth century Brazil’s coffee plantation regions. See also, Na senzala, uma flor: Esperanças e recordações da família escrava—Brasil Sudeste, século XIX by Robert W. Slenes, which places the enslaved family at the center of plantation society.
permeated England, the United States, and Latin America in the first half of the nineteenth century barely impacted Brazilian society and law.\textsuperscript{16}

What is remarkable about the history of slavery in Brazil is that the trade flourished during the first half of the century when it was being abolished in the Americas, Britain and the United States. In Brazil the political retreat from slavery began in 1831 when a law was passed abolishing the traffic. This law, however, was never enforced. In 1845, the British passed the Aberdeen Bill, which allowed the British navy to capture slave ships, take possession of the cargo, and imprison those in charge even if the boat was in Brazilian waters. The consequence of this Bill was immediate and paradoxical. The Bill provoked panic amongst planters and miners and led to a monumental increase in the commerce in slaves. In this regard, it is calculated that in the first half of the nineteenth century alone Brazil imported one and a half million Africans to work in the bourgeoning coffee industry (Eakin 33).

In the 1860s, the emancipationist movement grew and culminated in the 1871 passage of legislation freeing the newborn children of enslaved women.\textsuperscript{17} The \textit{Lei do ventre livre} (Free Womb Law), as the law came to be known, was greatly debated and

\textsuperscript{16} Though many critics focus on the conservative and pro-slavery stand of the Brazilian intelligentsia, Gregory Rabassa in \textit{O negro na ficção brasileira} argues that anti-slavery sentiment and advocacy began to appear in the eighteenth century. He points out that priests such as Santa Maria Jabotão and Ribeiro da Rocha openly attacked the institution of slavery (83).

\textsuperscript{17} Many tentative steps were taken before 1871 to end slavery. In 1866, a decree barred the employment of enslaved people in government works; in 1867 the Crown published Perdigão Malheiro’s “A escravidão no Brasil,” which contained recommendations for gradual abolition; and in 1867, the Emperor himself proposed full emancipation (Conrad 79; Needell 238).
fiercely opposed; eleven of the twelve representatives of the province of Rio de Janeiro voted against it (Alencastro 30). Despite fierce debates, this law did not definitively established freedom. It, instead, prolonged captivity. The Lei do Ventre Livre was, like in the case of Colombia’s Ley de Vientres, proposed as a step in the gradual process of abolition in which those born beginning 1871 were free but were to remain in their master’s care until the age of twenty one.\footnote{The Law of 1871 also liberated state-owned slaves, codified the right of slaves to purchase their own freedom, established an Emancipation Fund to pay plantation owners for their “loss” of property and attempted to create a register (matrícula) of all Brazil's existing slaves (Bethell 80).} In 1880, important politicians such as Joaquim Nabuco and José do Patrocínio gave a new impetus to the abolitionist movement. Together they founded the Sociedade Brasileira Contra a Escravidão, the journal O Abolicionista and A Revista Ilustrada. Final abolition took effect seventeen years later. On May 13\textsuperscript{th}, 1888, Princess Isabel signed the Lei Áurea (Golden Law) into law, the legal step that finally extinguished slavery in Brazil but that would cost the Crown its hold on power. A year after slavery was outlawed, the monarchy fell under the pressure of plantation owners and the military who disagreed with the centralizing, liberal, and anti-slavery tendencies of the government (Viotti Da sensala 87).

The end of forced labor, the founding of an independent republic, a new wave of immigration, and the rapid growth of cities were among the most important transformations of nineteenth century Brazilian society. These processes ignited the need to formulate new ideas about community and belonging. In this context, the racial legacy
of the colonial period came to be seen as one of the fundamental problems of the nascent nation-state. In Brazil, a slave holding society where at least forty percent of the population was of African descent and where being African was immediately associated with bondage, “racial” identity was a constant source of anxiety (Skidmore 29). For many intellectuals, the “africanization” of Brazil had dire social and, perhaps most pressing, biological consequences. Early in the nineteenth century, the cost of slavery began to be determined using European and American medical, social, and legal texts and doctrines that invariably classified Brazil as a space where degeneration ran rampant. Especially worrisome to Brazilian elites were the perils of race mixture, which, according to North American and European scientists and intellectuals, produced “degenerate” populations with all the defects of the inferior races and few, if any, of the strengths supposedly associated with European racial heritage. In these discussions, blackness emerged as stifling factor of development (Borges 1993, Skidmore 1998).

For Raimundo Nina Rodrigues (1862-1906), father of Brazilian anthropology and criminology, the presence of blacks was the main cause of the nation’s backwardness and inferiority (7). According to Nancy Leys Stepan most Brazilian intellectuals rejected the

19 Nina Rodrigues expanded on his idea of the deleterious influence of blacks in his books Os africanos no Brasil; O animismo fetichista do negro no Brasil, 1935; Os africanos no Brasil, 1977; As raças humanas e a responsabilidade penal no Brasil, 1957. In her 1998 book Illusões da liberdade: a Escola Nina Rodrigues e a Antropologia no Brasil, Mariza Corrêa argues that although the most radical of Rodrigues’ proposals were never put in place, his ideas were hugely influential to the generation of scholars who came after him and who went on to become important bureaucrats, doctors, and scientists and founding members of the Legal Medicine Departments in
virulent determinism of Rodrigues and instead promoted a discourse that saw the deleterious effects of racial composition as curable. Intellectuals such as Sílvio Romero embraced social evolutionary schemas that de-emphasized biology and underscored the role of human action and environment in the development of human societies. These intellectuals, Stepan writes, prescribed a program of sanitary, educational and medical intervention by which, they hoped, the advancement of civilization, progress, and national health would be ensured (The Hour of Eugenics 156-157). Racial perfection was also to be achieved through intimate comingling with white Europeans, to that end, those who believed in the perfectibility of the Brazilian race vociferously called for the intensification of European immigration and saw in mestiçagem or branqueamento a strategy of adaptation and invigoration of the white race and annihilation of the unwanted black element.

In the case of Colombia and Brazil, fear and disdain of the emancipated black reveal the vexed nature of citizenship and nationhood in post-colonial contexts. As Saidiya Hartman has noted, the rights of the bourgeois individual citizen, based as they are on the ownership of things and people, depend and require the black to serve as “will-less actant” to a white liberal subject who thrives on his/her will to dominate (62). Bolivar’s description of black carnage and the ideology of branqueamento have as a

Law schools in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. Among these “disciples” we have: Afrânio Peixoto, Oscar Freire, and Arthur Ramos.
common ideological root, the productive and profitable abjection of the black body. Investigating how the former slave was represented during the decades-long process of abolition in these two countries brings forth how on the one hand, the slave is the fleshy object that defines and defies freedom and, in the postcolonial moment, citizenship. An examination of the image world these conflictive decades engendered, also allows us to understand how black freedom was burdened by forms of representation that confined blackness to savagery, sloth, laziness, incompetence, and so on.

**Four Moments in the Realist Construction of Race**

**I. Moment One: The Picturesque Rendition of Race**

In Chapter One, entitled “The Fictional-Real: Chorographic Painting and the Visual Institution of Race, Colombia, 1853” I investigate the manner in which the visual objects and literary texts produced under the auspices of the Comisión Corógrafica, a nine year (1850-1859) project of mapping the Colombian territory, supplemented racial discourses. I argue that in an age of declarations of freedom and equality, the watercolors of peoples and vistas provided aesthetic tools by which the population could be divided from within. More succinctly, I argue that the language of realism—in its picturesque register—actualizes and conventionalizes the fantasy of race for the Colombian populace.

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20 In mid-nineteenth century Latin America, excepting Venezuela, Nueva Granada (today known as Colombia) was the only country that could boast about having a *carta geográfica* of its territory (Sanchez 18). This was an important feat that remained unrivaled until the last decades of the century. For as late as 1885 less than one ninth of the of the globe’s surfaced had been mapped or surveyed (Brown 280).
The watercolors produced for the Colombian Comisión Corográfica were visual pedagogical documents crafted, quite consciously, with the objective of “da[r] a conocer el país en el exterior en todas sus faces i especialmente en las que sean adecuadas para promover la inmigracion de estranjeros industriosos” (Mandate of the Comisión qtd in Sánchez 569). As advertisements of a immigration policy that sought to lure industrious (white) settlers to the country, the watercolors produced by the Comisión would serve, government officials believed, as a corrective to the misperceptions held by foreigners about the country; mainly, that Colombia was a county marred by bloody political conflict were roads barely existed and where the visitor could die due to a malignant and unforgiving climate (Sánchez 196-198, 570). In this chapter I argue that the idyllic and picturesque nature of the images that make up the chorographic archive fulfills the elite’s desire to represent the Colombian nation as a conglomerate of scarcely populated towns and harmonious and peaceful human beings. Unlike the historical paintings of the time, none of the surviving chorographic documents bear traces of the protracted civil conflict that characterized nineteenth century Colombia. The watercolors turn away from the portrayal of ruined haciendas, peasant-rebels, bloody cadavers (so prominent in Bolívar’s narratives) and wild natural space to focus its reporting eye on peasants standing by fruit trees and rivers located in small towns and with rolling hills in the background.

I contend that the pastoral idyll of chorographic imagery serves many purposes. In addition to furnishing and mobilizing racial codes, the watercolors present a rural environment where people don’t work or where work appears to be a joyful activity
undertaken willingly. However, as I discussed earlier, the control of labor was, and continues to be, one of the most important political and economic issues in rural spaces in the Colombian nation-state. Disagreement over how to best secure laboring bodies was at the forefront of violent confrontations between different factions of Colombian elites. I read the peaceful nature of chorographic images as strategies to offset fears of an unruly peasantry that did indeed routinely engage in acts of defiance and took part in the political conflicts of the time. As visual supplements of cartographic mapping to be consumed by audiences beyond the borders of the nation, chorographic paintings tame the insurgents and translate difficult political scenarios of conflict into visual tokens that, being akin to souvenirs, work to transliterate the rebellious into tamed, observed, familiar and static (but productive) racial tropes.

II. Moment Two: The Anthropometric Crafting of Blackness

In Chapter One, I show that the chorographic enterprise pictures race as a relational concept that brings together pose, clothing, work tools, and other details to bear on the representation of blackness. In Chapter Two, entitled, “Scientific and Picturesque

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21 The nineteenth century in Colombia was characterized by constant civil war. Cristina Rojas details how in Colombia, war and violence has played a crucial role in the establishment and expansion of the nation-state and bourgeois economic and political interests. See Civilization and Violence. For histories of nineteenth century Colombia that take into consideration issues of race, consult: Nancy Appelbaum’s, “Whitening the Region: Caucano Mediation and “Antioqueno Colonization” in Nineteenth-Century Colombia” and Muddied Waters: Race, Region, and Local History in Colombia, 1846-1948; Marixa Lasso’s Myths of Harmony: Race and Republicanism during the Age of Revolution and James Sanders’ Contentious Republicans: Popular Politics, Race, and Class in Nineteenth Century Colombia. For an analysis of racial discourses in Latin America, see: Richard Graham et al. The Idea of Race in Latin America, 1870-1940.
Photography and the Crafting of Blackness, Brazil 1865,” I analyze two different photographic archives produced by in Brazil in 1865. The first group of images was commissioned by the Swiss scientist and Harvard professor Louis Agassiz while on his scientific tour of Brazil. The photographs were, however, taken by Augusto Stahl a German photographer who arrived in Recife in 1853 and, who by 1862, had received the title of, “Photographer to the Emperor, Dom Pedro II.” The second set of images is the photographic series created by Christiano Júnior, which he advertised as souvenirs for European tourists in route to their countries. My investigation of Agassiz’s work focuses on the role of photography in the visual construction of trans-Atlantic scientific racial discourses. More explicitly, the chapter explores the procedures by which Agassiz’s physiological discourse avails itself of realist pictorial conventions to produce and circulate images of blacks. I offer a reading of Christiano Júnior’s photographic oeuvre and its function when it does not travel, when it is consumed by Brazilian elites instead of European and North American tourists.

Anthropometric and picturesque photographic archives analyzed in this chapter, I argue, performed at least two simultaneous kinds of social work. In Agassiz’s narration of race in the United States (via Brazil), anthropometric photographs were staged to stabilize the meaning of “racial” difference. As we will see, however, the photograph could never be forced to provide unyielding support for Agassiz’s claims. In the photographs taken by Júnior and sold as tourist souvenirs I find a reactionary ideological response to the changing legal and economic roles of black people in Brazil. My reading
of Agassiz’s and Júnior’s photographs exposes the conventions of capture and exposure that make it possible to articulate a variety of visual grammars and vocabularies through which particular articulations of racial difference may be manifested and formulated simultaneously.

### III. The Third Moment: The Literary Inscription of Blackness


My reading of O Cortiço, a serialized novel published in book form in 1890, moves in two inter-related directions. First, I propose that the most important characteristic of this celebrated novel is its preoccupation with race and sexual (and social) mixture or, using the language of the time, “miscegenation.” In this novel, slaves, blacks, immigrants, prostitutes, and domestic workers live together in a tenement. If scientific photographs trained viewers to see the insignias of blackness, in O Cortiço, we are invited to observe as environment and biology interact to produce certain types of bodies and behaviors. Mobilizing the conceptual frameworks of naturalism—observation, experimentation, and biological determinism—the novel purports to portray a cast of characters types as they attempt to survive a perilous environment and defective physical and moral constitutions. I show that for Azevedo, social and sexual liaisons between members of different racial, cultural, and economic groups leads not to the funding of a
new society as in novels of the Romantic era such as *Iracema* (1865) by José de Alencar, but to degeneration and death. *O Cortiço*, I argue, discredits and condemns miscegenation or racial mixture as a way to construct a new society after colonialism and slavery.

*O Cortiço* has become a seminal text in the Brazilian literary canon. In the long tradition of criticism this novel has engendered, the question of race has often been addressed by discussing the role of the sensuous *mulata* character, Rita Bahiana. The second aim of this chapter is to locate an analysis of the text at the intersection of race and gender but I shift the focus of attention from the myth of perfumed *mulata* to the site/sight of the grotesque black woman slave that no one is supposed to desire yet everyone must profit from. I argue that the author’s treatment of his black female slave character—Bertoleza—makes manifest the problems that the abolition of slavery posed for Brazilian elites as they endeavored to take charge of the proper biological and economic reproduction of the nation. Bringing the complexity of race and gender to bear on this naturalist text puts pressure on critical accounts of *O Cortiço* that sidestep questions of slavery and the role of the black woman altogether. Read alongside other objects (or strategies of visualization) allow us to better understand the visual operations

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22 The narrator designates her as *crioula*. In Portuguese this term may refer to an enslaved person born in Brazil or to anyone of African ancestry.
of the naturalist novel; operations that seek to re-signify the legacy of slavery and the enslaved woman’s body in the emerging nation-state.

IV. The Fourth Moment: Identifying the Citizen

In “Identifying the Racial Subjects of the Nation,” the last chapter of the dissertation, I engage again with visual analysis and return to an examination of state-sponsored projects of differentiation and control. In this section, I investigate the debates surrounding the adoption of identification documents\(^\text{23}\) in Rio de Janeiro. In the preceding chapters I have been arguing that realist stagings of the body (whether chorographic, photographic, or literary) have been fundamental in the construction of Brazilian and Colombian modes of reproducing and consuming the black body. In this chapter, I analyze identification documents in the post-colonial Brazilian setting to understand how the Brazilian state appropriated the conventions of realism to control the population through visual racializing schemes \textit{and} to provide legitimacy to the economic and social claims of “honorable” citizens. To ascertain the process by which the Brazilian nation state appropriates the language of realism, this chapter draws connections between

\(^{23}\) Detailing the history of identification documents, Valentin Groebner writes that among the most important functions of the sovereign nation-state is the creation and maintenance of an informational archive about its citizens. He contends that contemporary technologies of ascribing social identity to a human body, such as state-issued IDs, DNA profiles, iris scans, and bio-metrics are new developments in a centuries-old quest to define and fix histories to bodies. Groebner points out that unlike our current times and well into the Renaissance a “person was not necessarily recognized by his face” (24). By the close of the eighteenth century, writes Groebner, identification papers and technologies became an imperative of the state and a fixed and demonstrable identity became an essential feature of an individual’s social existence (16).
systems of slave surveillance and state forms of identification.

The purpose of this chapter is to unpack the *carteira de trabalho*, an identification document created to identify domestic workers in the first decade of the twentieth century, as an example of racial inscription in Brazil. In this last chapter I explore the process by which the Brazilian state and its managing elites used the discourse and techniques of human identification—techniques derived from slave surveillance methods—to configure the primary subjects of the nation—the suspect and the citizen—in the aftermath of the abolition of slavery and the institution of the republic. By examining the history of identification, I show that what has by now constituted itself as a fundamental ritual of citizenship in Brazil—carrying a *carteira de trabalho*, for example—is the result of a fin-de-siècle campaign developed by the state to, first and foremost, re-organize the language of difference by which individuals were incorporated into the fold/field of the nation.

Just as race is a fictional account about bodies and behavior conjured up in the service of domination, the identification documents analyzed in this section created a new fiction: that identification papers could substitute for the bodies of those whom they helped to identify. At the end of the day, identification documentation is nothing more that a “portable token of an originary act of bureaucratic recognition of an ‘authentic object’—an ‘accurate description’ of the bearer recognized and signed by an accredited official, and available for repeated acts of probative ratification (Caplan 51).” The excitement over identification in some quarters of Rio de Janeiro’s intelligentsia derives
from the scientific and legal promise that the identification document seems to furnish—that each citizen be at all times, places, and circumstances recognized as this or that particular person.

Taken together, the following chapters argue that visual and literary products that took the indexical representation of reality as their gold standard created a web of narrative practices and strategies of exposure that, in the instances I investigate here, brought about the revaluation of the emancipated and, what is most important, the reproduction and staging of blackness as an ambivalent array of visual and textual orchestration that sometimes refracted black people as servile, primitive, threatening and, at other moments, as sentimental tokens of a foreign land or as peculiar examples of a different realm of humanity.
Chapter One: The Fictional-Real: Chorographic Painting and the Visual Institution of Race, Colombia, 1853

In this chapter I argue that the writers and painters of the Comisión Corográfica, the first state-sponsored of geographic project, crafted a territorial and visual coherent story of Colombia by utilizing particular forms of narration and visualization that revamped colonial forms of domination while expounding a liberal rhetoric of progress. The strategies of visualization (mainly watercolor painting) and narration (i.e., the report or informe) utilized by the members of the Comisión derived from chorography, a word rarely used today that refers to a branch of geography concerned with picturing and describing localities and which dates from the works of Ptolemy, Strabo, and Eratosthenes. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries chorography became associated with the genres of picturesque painting and travel. In this chapter I discuss how the members of the Comisión deployed the conventions of picturesque realism to map the emerging nation-state, a process that solidified the visual and narrative codes that have come to define the manner in which the black body is shown in Colombian national visual culture and narrative archive.

To better understand the connections between mapping and the visual and narrative constructions of blackness in Colombian post-abolition period, I have divided this chapter in five sections. The first section provides a brief description of chorography and how this mode of mapping was put in the service of early capitalist expansion in Europe and in the colonies. In the second section, I discuss how chorography was appropriated by Colombian elites in the mid-nineteenth century. The third section is dedicated to an analysis of Agustín Codazzi’s narrative construction of the Province of Chocó and its population. In the fourth section I delve into an analysis of the watercolors of people and landscapes produced for the Comisión. In these sections, I argue that narratives such as Codazzi’s and images of the people galvanized and
helped solify racial discourses in Colombia. I conclude the chapter by aligning the conventions of chorographic painting and writing with the managerial aims of the nation-state.

**Chorography: A Brief History**

Critics usually follow Ptolemy’s *Geographia*, the only work on cartography to have survived from Greco-Roman era and one of the most influential scientific treatises in Western world, to define the differences between geography and chorography. For Ptolemy, the difference between sciences dedicated to the description of environmental phenomena was a question of subject matter. Geography aims to describe the whole while chorography deals with localities: “Geography is a representation in picture of the whole known world together with the phenomena that are contained therein. It differs from Chorography in that Chorography, selecting certain places from the whole, treats more fully the particulars of each by themselves—even dealing with the smallest conceivable localities, such as harbors, farms, villages, rivers, courses, and such like” (17). This difference in scope also leads to a difference in formal method. While geography is allied with mathematics, chorography is aligned with the visual arts:

> Geography looks at the position rather than the quality, noting the relation of distances everywhere, and emulating the art of painting only in some of its major descriptions. *Chorography needs an artists*, and no one presents it rightly unless he is an artist. Geography does not call for the same requirements…more over Chorography does not have need of mathematics, which is an important part of Geography (18, emphasis added).

In Ptolemy’s view, the final aim of chorography was to enhance the general map by creating recognizable images of the visible features of single parts of the inhabited world. An invitation to engage in visual representation was thus offered to the chorographer, who had to posses the skill of a painter in rendering ports, farms, villages, rivers and streams, or who could paint “only the eye or the ear by itself” (17). Choreography was, in short, the articulation of environment visually and qualitatively.
In the early modern period, the practice of chorography coincided with the shift from feudalism to early capitalism and the expansion of Europe to other parts of the world. It was also during this period that chorography progressed into an interdisciplinary genre that included elements of travel narrative, maps and painting, ethnography, and local histories and aspired to “narrate the land” integrally (Klein 9). In addition to being a pictorial endeavor and during this period of economic, political, and cultural change, chorography begun to be understood as a narrative practice of detailing environment “not exclusively as it exists in the present moment but as it has existed historically as well. This means not only describing surface features of the land (rivers, forests, etc.) but also the ‘place’ a given locale has held in history, including the languages spoken there, the customs of its people, material artifacts the land may hold, etc” (Ezell et al. 22). In Spain, like in other places in Europe, most notably England, France, and Italy, chorographies were commissioned by members of the landed gentry and the bourgeoisie (Helgerson 146). These elites used chorographic works as inventory records in order to claim ownership of communal lands, and thus establish fixed boundaries between estates (Adrian 26).

In the early modern period, chorography evolved into a visual political and economic documentary genre.

Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker explain that in England, for example, one of the characteristics of the shift from feudalism to capitalism were land enclosures, or the expropriation of communal and arable fields of land by the nobility. In England, as in other countries in Europe, the landed bourgeoisie took advantage of the boom in the prices of wheat and other agricultural products to enclose previously uncultivated and communal lands (Bermingham 73). Linebaugh and Rediker argue that the systematic appropriation of public lands forced thousands of people out of their land into unemployment, poverty, and into the colonies. Using chorographies as
badges of ownership, the landed aristocracy was able to amplify its wealth while peasants were
displaced and dispossessed and became subject to severe labor and criminal codes. In the process,
peasants came to be classified as homeless and vagabonds (18). According to these historians, the
massive enclosures of land created the conditions of possibility for the commodification of land
and labor required by the emerging economic system of capitalism (16-7).

In the Americas, not surprisingly, chorography was used as a pictorial and narrative
device that facilitated the conquest and administration of newly appropriated lands. Beginning in
the 1550s, the Spanish Crown initiated the process of “making visible” the New World and as
many critics have noted, mapping of the known solidified the cultural, economic, and social
power of new colonial powers (Mundy 11-2). As David Woodward has shown, the revived
importance of mapping and geography in the age of conquest, allowed for the idea of a world
“over which systematic dominance was possible, and provided a powerful framework for political
expansion and control” (87). This mode of spatial and historical representation, Walter Mignolo
has argued, combined the appearance of ideological transparency with an unacknowledged
political function. The gridded spaces of Renaissance maps established themselves as the only
true and accurate way of representing territory, thereby effectively erasing almost all other forms
territorial illustration of their authority to represent the world (110-116). Contrary to what
happened in Western Europe where chorography was used to empower members of the noble
class, in the Americas, chorography was deployed as an essential tool in the administration and
surveillance of colonial spaces as well as the concentration of sovereign power.

A detailed analysis of the history of chorography in particular and mapping in general is
beyond the scope of this chapter. However, what I would like to highlight from this summary
discussion of chorography is that as part of what Svetlana Alpers has called, the “mapping
“La Geografía es la base fundamental de toda especulación [sic] política,” wrote Francisco José de Caldas in his preface to his geographical treatise entitled Estado de la Geografía del Vireinato de Santa Fé de Bogotá, con relación á la economía y al comercio (1). In this essay, Caldas, leader of the revolutionary movement, lamented the lack of geographical knowledge of the country. He complained that there was not even a map of Santa Fé and much less a map of adjacent territories such as Venezuela and Ecuador. For Caldas, effective governance after independence depended on accurate knowledge of the “physical” and “human” characteristics of the territory (“Prospecto” 1). Wanting to energize scientific and social knowledge of the country, he founded the Semanario de la Nueva Granada (1808-1811), a journal with the purpose of publishing scientific studies on geography as well as the natural sciences. The journal published articles by Alexander von Humboldt, José Manuel Restrepo (who went on to write the first history of Colombia), Jorge Tadeo Lozano, a member of the botanical
expedition led by José Celestino Mutis,¹ statistical records of births and deaths submitted by members of the clergy, statistics on smallpox vaccinations, literature, and poetry (Appel 83). Decades after the proclamation of independence and Caldas’ program for mapping republican space, political stability appeared as an ever-receding dream and visual representation of Colombian space had not yet been achieved.

In 1850, the official start date of the Comisión Corográfica, it had been forty years since independence and the geographic and political constitution nation and the boundaries of the territory were still heavily contested and loosely defined.² Independence from Spain was achieved in 1810 but by the 1830s, the Gran Colombia had fractured into 3 independent nations (Venezuela, Ecuador, and Nueva Granada). By 1850, the territory of Nueva Granada (Colombia) had divided into 29 providences and the administrative organization of the government was reconfigured every time a different political party ascended to power. This constant flux in the configuration of the territory and political instability were accompanied by fratricidal war. After the Wars of Independence and until the middle of the century, there were nine wars and nearly fifty regional or local conflicts (Rojas 19).³

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¹ José Celestino Mutis led a botanic expedition of the Colombian territory which lasted three decades and which became one of the greatest intellectual endeavors in Colombia. Many members of the Expedición Botánica became advocates of independence from Spain. For a detailed analysis of the Expedición and its effects on the political life of the country, see Angela Pérez-Mejía’s La Geografía de los tiempos difíciles, 2002
² Colombia declared independence on July 20th, 1810. However, the first years of the republic were marked by such intense conflicts that in 1815 the Spanish army was able to lay siege in Cartagena and regain partial control of the territory. Final independence was achieved in 1821. Colombians celebrate independence on the 20th of July and posit 1810 as the final year of colonial rule. See Javier Ocampo’s, La patria boba, 1998.
³ According to Cristina Rojas, wars were fought during the following years: 1851, 1854, 1859-1862, 1876-1877, 1884-1885, 1895. For a more detailed analysis of conflict in nineteenth century
Perhaps because of the chaos that characterized the post-independence period, there was a consensus about the need to create a visual record of the territory, which was evidenced by the number of geographic publications that appeared in the two decades following independence from Spain. This desire to make visible the land was the impetus for the law of May 1831 that approved the conformation of a geographical commission to create an official map of the nation (Sánchez 77). This project would not be realized until the liberal president José Hilario López authorized and funded a project—the Comisión Corográfica—to elaborate detailed maps of Colombia. A few months after the passage of the law, Italian geographer, engineer, and military man, Agustín Codazzi, arrived in Santa Fé de Bogotá to commandeer a project that sought to codify, appropriate, and visually organize every nook and cranny of the territory.

Mapping was an urgent need for government officials. The dearth of topographical knowledge made it difficult to ascertain what resources the state was supposed to administer. There were no clear records, for example, about land tenure: the state did not know which were public lands and which were privately owned. This lack of knowledge made it difficult to collect taxes and to institute agricultural development plans. The issue of land ownership and productivity was a crucial one. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Colombia had the highest foreign debt of any Latin American country and the economy was in disarray due to

Colombia, see: Paul Oquist’s Violence, Conflict, and Politics in Colombia and Safford and Palacios’ Colombia: Fragmented Land, Divided Society.

4 Some of the most important works of geography published between 1820 and 1830 were: Francisco Antonio Zea’s, Colombia: Siendo una relación geográfica, agricultural, commercial, política de aquel pays, adaptada para todo lector en general y para el comerciante y colono en particular (1822); José Manuel Restrepo’s 1827 publication of Historia de la Revolución de la República de Colombia included an Atlas of Colombia; Juan Jose Nieto, Geografía histórica, estadística y local de la Provincia de Cartagena, República de la Nueva Granada descrita por cantones (1839) was one of the first publications to contain detailed descriptions of the provinces.
constant warfare (Sánchez 54). Facing this dire economic situation, governmental officials desperately sought ways to increase the country’s economic profile. In addition, by the middle of the century, Colombia’s economic base changed from mining to export agriculture. Global booms in the price of tobacco, coffee, and sugarcane drove this transformation. In order to make export agriculture a profitable business, governmental officials recognized the need for a complete overhauling of the transportation system. They also needed to take inventory of, appropriate, and make productive “baldios” (uncultivated land). The Comisión was instituted with the aim of providing practical solutions to the most pressing economic problems of the nation. The chorographic project was to identify unused land and to lay the foundations for a new transportation system. Chorographic reports would also serve, officials hoped, to entice investors and particularly European immigrants, whom they considered to be a disciplined and productive work force (Sánchez 170-200, LeGrand 10-13). Supporting economic development was not the only goal of the Comisión. Its members were also to embark on a “ethnographic” discovery of the country which would provide socio-cultural information about a population dispersed throughout the vast territory of the emerging nation.

The Comisión was also imagined as an adventure to be narrated in written and pictorial form. The publicista, title given in the nineteenth century to a particular mixture of ethnographer, writer, and journalist, was to write a “dicionario geográfico y estadístico” and to compose “una obra dramática y descriptiva.” The dibujante (illustrator or painter) was to translate what he saw in his “marchas y aventuras” into “diseños” of “las razas” and “los tipos característicos de la población de cada provincia, no pudiendo ser menos de dos” (Mandate of the Comisión, Loaiza 45-46). Based on his travels with the Comisión, Manuel Ancízar (the Comisión’s publicista), published what became the most famous travel narrative of mid-nineteenth century Colombia.
Between 1850 and 1852, Ancizar’s writing appeared under the title *Peregrinación del Alpha* in *El Neo-granadino*, an influential newspaper he founded and edited. *Peregrinación* became the “obra dramática” that literally showed other *criollos* the contours of the country. Carmelo Fernández, Enrique Price, and Manuel María Paz, the *Comisión’s dibujantes*, worked to create a pictorial map of the country’s population and culture. Together they produced more than 200 láminas or watercolors of peoples, vistas, musical instruments, and monuments. Codazzi’s chorographic writings and the watercolors painted by Manuel María Paz in the Provinces of Cauca and Chocó are at the forefront of the analysis I present in the remainder of this chapter.

**Chorographic Narration and the Production of Blackness**

Drawing on Barbara Shapiro’s discussion of how chorographic writing aided and abated the transmission of “discourses of fact” outside the confines of the legal apparatus of the state (64), I conceive the *Comisión Corográfica* as, first and foremost, a venture to construct the nation as “fact.” The topographic maps, the extensive collection of flora and fauna samples and the paintings of people and places that became part of the chorographic archive offered a symbolic affirmation of the political fact or reality of an entity whose very existence was at the time increasingly called into question: a consolidated and sovereign Colombian nation-state. Not only were men engaged in constant war but the land itself seemed to refuse to yield to the desire to discipline it, to make it fruitful. The multi-disciplinary endeavor of the *Comisión* configured a conceptual factory that was, as Efraín Sanchez has noted, charged with manufacturing a political community out of unwieldy mountain ranges, cumbersome roads, isolated and scarcely inhabited enclaves, and unruly human beings (647).

Brook Larson writes that chorography and travel writing were the main discourses buttressing the social construction of race in nineteenth century Colombia (76). He goes on to
argue that: “Colombia’s Creole elite was the first to produce a rhetorical argument that pinned the country’s economic backwardness squarely on the concept of racial inferiority” (75). The association between economic stagnation and blackness is made apparent in Codazzi’s writing of his travels through the Cauca region where at every turn, he grafts laziness and indolence onto the bodies that through his disparaging observations and commentary become black.

Between 1853 and 1855, Agustín Codazzi and his crew explored the vast Estado del Cauca (see figure 4). “Tierra caliente,” specially the provinces of Valle, Chocó and Caquetá were seen as bountiful and particularly rich in natural resources such as gold, sugar, coffee, cacao, rubber, and quinine that for centuries sustained Colombia’s place in the international economic system. In Codazzi’s eyes, this unrestrained fertility was to blame for the lack of productivity in the region. In this place where “ya no había el poder omnipotente que sometiera a los negros,” farming and mining were abandoned and thus nature reverted to its “estado salvaje de exuberancia” (140).
Figure 2: Carta Corográfica de la Provincia del Cauca
Agustín Codazzi, 1853
In spite of the fact that in 1853, the Estado del Cauca was the most prosperous region of the country (Colmerares 22), Codazzi narrates it as if it were in a state of decadence—“cuando se reflexiona que en lugar de las numerosas haciendas de café y algodón que debería haber, apenas se ven unas matas mal cultivadas”—provoked by the inhabitants’ refusal to systematically cultivate the land (143). The problem, as Codazzi understands it, is that the Cauca region is reigned by blacks, who are “flojo[s] para el trabajo” (85).

For Codazzi, the only alternative to the impending (but imaginary) stagnation of the region and the destruction of the national economy is to import criollo settlers from the Antioquia and Tolima region to teach the Cauca natives that “cultivadores… activos e inteligentes acumulan riquezas” which bestows upon them the title of “hombres provechosos y ciudadanos útiles que concurren con sus brazos y su inteligencia al crecimiento de la riqueza nacional” (143). For Codazzi, the future productivity of the land depended on an industrious and conscientious “cultivador” criollo who would transform fertility into productivity. For Codazzi, the lethargic and apathetic character of the Estado del Cauca’s inhabitants, who were in their majority “a variedad de colores y fisionomías entre las cuales dominaban siempre las razas caucásica y la negra,” (118) became a problem of state; as such it would have to be solved legally:

Genios perversos o mal intencionados han infundido a esta gente tosca e ignorante [la raza Africana], la idea de que no deben trabajar para los blancos y que las tierras de estos se deben repartir entre ellos... Debe, pues, en primer lugar, buscar los medios de explotar sus minas, obligando por reglamentos severos a trabajar en ellas a la clase jornalera, so pena de considerarlos como vagos. ¿Qué sería de la República si los hombres que deben servir de peones no quisieran hacer nada, conténtándose con vegetar nada más? (451, emphasis added)

Not only have blacks (incited by someone else, of course) abandoned their role as natural workers, to make matters worst, blacks had become proprietors of some of the richest mines in the South Pacific. The solution to this aberration, Codazzi suggests, is to expropriate the lands
they now owned and return black, Indians and their descendants into forced labor which the law abolished but which Codazzi wishes to reinstitute through the legal and social construction of a new category: the *vago* (vagrant) or indolent worker.⁵ Throughout his reports, which were often recommendations to governors and provincial authorities, Codazzi often establishes an indelible connection between the capacity (or their lack thereof) to work of the *castas* and the economic future of region and, consequently, the nation. For him, there will be no progress if the elites, somehow, don’t manage to once again control the labor force. The virtual absence in Codazzi’s narrative of any descriptions of the cultural and social life of the places he describes and his almost obsessive focus on the people’s productive relationship to the land signals his utilitarian view of nature and populations. In Codazzi’s geography, the importance of a population is ascertained in direct proportionality to the labor it mobilizes to make productive its environment. In this geo-economic scheme, the blacks and Indians who lived in “completa independencia,” that is, those who did not have an overseer, were injurious but necessary to the future of the nation-state. On one hand, they refused to make the land productive, this refusal of labor consecrated them as nefarious elements to the development of the nation state. On the other hand, however, they were imagined as *innate* peons necessary for the economic progress of the territory. This ambivalence towards *castas* and their productive behavior became one of the principal organizing paradigms in Codazzi’s geography as well as *letrados’* political and social discourse.

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⁵ Various laws were, in fact, passed to control vagrancy. The text of the law is reproduced in Luis Ortiz Mesa’s *El federalismo en Antioquia, 1850-1880: Aspectos políticos*. The code redefined as vagrants prostitutes and all those who could not prove to derive income from property or from decent occupation (90-91). As we will see, vagrancy also emerges as a productive category of control in post-abolition Brazil.
If Codazzi’s narrative helped to designate black bodies as antithetical to the economic progress of the new nation-state, the watercolors produced to illustrate his explorations of the territory created a visual grammar for the categorization of racial difference.

**Chorography and the Visualization of Blackness**

The visual legacy of the *Comisión* is vast and collectively authored. Today, the collection is composed of 151 watercolors; thirty of these have been attributed to Carmelo Fernández, another twenty-six to Henrique Price and ninety-five to Manuel María Paz. Although the these images were executed at various moments in time and by different painters, on examining the chorographic visual archive one immediately achieves a sense of the banality and monotony of its subject matter, style, and composition. In general, chorographic images are concerned with small towns and rural space (see figure 5). Towns become simple drawings of streets and houses (see figures 6 and 7). In some images of the countryside, vegetation figures prominently: the background appears on the verge of consumption by thick vegetation (see figures 8 and 9). In most instances, however, the natural world appears sparingly; mountains can be devised far away, vegetation is sparse, and animals, in the few cases they are shown, are domesticated species such as equines, canines, and bovines and related ruminants (see figure 10). In direct opposition to the written descriptions of nature that dominate Ancízar’s travel book and Codazzi’s geography, the láminas do not seem to be interested in representing nature in a process of transformation into cultivated land. If anything, natural space is represented as serene, unobtrusive, sparse. There are no images of cultivated spaces. Interior living spaces are also conspicuously missing from this visual universe. Everything we see takes place outside, in the open, and during the day.

The monotony in style is detected again when representations of people are involved. Watercolor after watercolor depict an individual or a small group of people who stare into space,
never at one another. They are usually posed using the conventions of *tableaux vivants* and dressed in what these images helped to establish as “folkloric” attire (see figure 11). With the exception of watercolors that show “notables,” almost of all of captions for images of people mention the region where they live and the racial category to which those portrayed purportedly belong.

Figure 3: Neiva: vista del Nevado del Huila, tomada desde el pueblo de San Agustín. Muanel María Paz, 1857
Courtesy of the Biblioteca Nacional, Bogotá Colombia
Figure 4: Buenaventura: vista de Los Farallones de Cali desde la ciudad
Manuel María Paz, 1853
Figure 5: Chocó: vista de una calle de Quibdó
Manuel María Paz, 1853
Figure 6: Chocó: cargueros de la montaña de Novitá
Manuel María Paz, 1853
Figure 7: Provincia del Casanare: mulato e indio pescando
Anonymous, 1856
Courtesy of the Biblioteca Nacional de Colombia
Figure 8: Provincia de Casanare: vista de la Sierra Nevada de Chita o Güicán tomada desde Moreno
Anonymous, 1856
Obras completas de la Comisión Corográfica. Vol. III. Augusto J. Gómez López et al. 2000, p. 103
Colombian art critics have usually categorized the more than 100 surviving watercolors created under the auspices of the Comisión Corográfica as examples of documentary painting (González 12). Efraín Sánchez Cabra, for example, aligns the visual products of the Comisión...
with costumbrismo⁶ and argues that both genres endeavor to faithfully represent “personas y lugares reales en situaciones reales” (8). For art critics, the indelible link between these images and reality is found in the “accurate” representations of dress, ecosystems, and objects. In a recent article, Aída Martínez Carreño, founder and longtime director of the Colombian Museo del Siglo XIX, argues that artistic productions, especially paintings, have “un altísimo valor” for the investigation of Colombian popular culture. For Martínez Carreño, collections such as the Comisión Corográfica are:

una fuente más confiable que el relato escrito, al cual se le añaden juicios de valor tales como bello o desagradable, ridículo o apropiado, según la moda, o desactualizado y otros semejantes, fruto de la apreciación del escritor (69, emphasis added).

Martínez Carreño defines chorographic images as “imagen[s] pintada[s] con propósito documental” (67), as such, she values this visual mode of production because they participate in and expound a realist aesthetic, broadly defined as an attempt to create “objective” representations of the external world based on the impartial and meticulous observation of contemporary life (Nochlin 13). Martínez Carreño’s endorsement of the chorographic image as trust-worthy tool particularly suited for historical investigation derives, in part, from her understanding of the chorographic image as perfect rendition or transparent relay to a singular

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⁶ The term costumbrismo refers to the literary or pictorial practice of representation that emerged in Latin America in the nineteenth century. It specializes in the depiction of local “types” and “customs.” To Natalia Majluf, “the main difference between the images produced with a scientific impetus and costumbrista images is the fact that costumbrista paintings move away from natural history to the representation of culture” (23). Costumbrismo took its representational cues from travel and custom books, crier series, and the picturesque. In Reproducing Nations, Natalia Majluf makes the case that costumbrismo is a product of the popular press and argues that travelers, editors, artists, and lithographers are foundational figures in the construction of new "national" images" (34). On Colombian costumbrismo, see Beatriz Gonzáles’ Una Confrontación de Miradas: Ramón Torres Méndez y Edward Walkhouse Mark; Efraín Sánchez’s “Tipos y costumbres de la nueva Granada” and Calderon’s Caricatura y costumbrismo.
originary subject/object imagined to exist or to have existed somewhere, at some point in time. For Martínez Carreño, chorographic images are what Barthes has called a “message without a code,” or, an image that presents us with an object as if this object is intrinsically there, independent of the viewing subject or the history and cultural practices that determine how something will be looked upon (Barthes “Rhetoric of the Image” 137). Because the documentary image is conceived of as indexical sign, the painter is posited as “passive before experience and his existence can be described as an arc extending between two, and only two, points: the retina and the brush” (Bryson “The natural attitude” 27). In the practice of documenting invoked by Martínez Carreño, the artist, is no longer a cultural worker who has learned the conventions of, participates in, and propagates long-standing cultural practices or a subject located in history. Instead, the artist emerges as a person whose relationship to what he experiences is essentially optical. This interpretation of the chorographic visual corpus as unmediated transcription of reality succumbs, perhaps to hastily, to the Enlightenment idea that unencumbered observation and representation is possible. The problem with Martínez Carreño’s interpretation of documentary art or realism is that it easily succumbs to the mystification of this genre as “ingenuous” art. As Linda Nochlin has pointed out, in painting as in other visual art forms, the image—be it referential or not—must be transformed to accommodate it to the two-dimensional surface of the canvas. In addition, even if a painting “looks” like its referent, the production of that image requires that the painter make stylistic choices. Color, plane, size, and point of view, for example, determine how an image of a particular object or subject will appear on canvas or paper (Realism 15). Realism, as Nochlin points out, “was as much inspired by politics as any aesthetics or taste” (Bathers 210) If we take into consideration the range of stylistic maneuvering
and decisions required to produce an image, the clean simplicity Martínez Carreño attributes to the chorographic image materializes as elaborate montage to make it appear as such.

Like Martínez Carreño, I see in these images the potential to bring into focus histories of times past. I, however, will be arguing that rather than merely “recording” what is “already there,” chorographic images use concrete detail (dress, flora, fauna, work tools, etc.) as a way to foment visual interpretative schemas that particularize and differentiate the country’s population and geography. Produced in the aftermath of independence and in the wake of the final abolition of slavery, I consider the chorographic image a fundamental element in the symbolic reconstitution of the former colony into a sovereign nation-state. As part of a project that sought to map or visualize the national territory and its population, I consider these images the result of a political and ideological effort on the part of criollo elites to legitimate and make coherent Colombia’s spatial and temporal existence. Most importantly, I contend that these images are exercises in racialization that undergirded the organization of Colombian society during the period immediately following independence.

*Chocó: aspecto exterior de las casas de Novitá* was painted 1853 Manuel María Paz (see figure 12). Paz was one of the painters hired by Agustín Codazzi to paint “los tipos característicos de la población de cada provincia.” This image is one of the ninety-five watercolors Manuel María Paz produced during his six-year tenure at the Colombian Comisión Corográfica (1850-1859). The painting depicts four individuals: two black men and a white

7 In her many works, Olga Restrepo Forero illuminates the crucial role played by the *Comisión Corográfica* in the institutionalization of science and in the propagation of knowledge and ideology in Colombia. See, for example, “Comisión Corográfica y ciencias sociales,” “La Comisión Corográfica. El descubrimiento de una nación” and La Comisión Corográfica: avatares en la configuración del saber.
woman and a man. These four people are arranged in pairs. The two black men stand together in front of a beige wall to the left of the image. In the right plane, we find the white couple perched on the doorway to a house, whose interior is not revealed except for the presence of an *hamaca* (hammock). He stands and she sits.

A striking aspect of this watercolor is the quite literal exposure of the black men’s bodies in contrast to the concealment of the white bodies shown in the painting. One of black men wears a worn, ragged, sleeveless shirt that hangs to his mid-thigh, a hat, and what seems to be a cross dangles from his neck. He firmly grips a machete with his right hand. The other black man wears a loincloth and nothing else. Their arms interlock only to reveal deformed hands. They both stare in the direction of a painter/observer. In contrast to the black men’s nakedness, the white couple on the doorway is dressed. Their clothing conceals almost every part of their body, except for the woman’s decollete. Besides her neck and shoulders, the only “white” body-parts we see are hands and faces. He wears a pair of light colored trousers and a pink long sleeve shirt. She wears a long light blue dress, the sleeves reach her wrists and her hair is neatly combed in a bun on the back of her head. The white man and woman do not seem to be aware of the black men who stand next to them or the observer who paints the scene. They gaze to the right of the image, away from the black men, and seem to be lost in thought.
Figure 10: Chocó: aspecto exterior de las casas de Novitá
Manuel María Paz, 1853
This image, I want to suggest is not an unadulterated rendition of “real phenomena.” I interpret the watercolor above as an exercise in racialization. In this sense, the work of this chapter is to analyze the visual and textual production of the Comisión Corográfica as cultural objects that both reflected and instituted ways of presenting and looking at blacks. More succinctly, what I will be determining in this section of the dissertation is how the chorographic corpus works to distribute new national subjects along a radically uneven socio-economic and racial grid. What in “Chocó: aspecto exterior de las casas de Novitá” might look picturesque is in fact documentation of the violence necessary to create racialized subjects. It also evidences the images mobilized to derogate the principles of citizenship. Paz’s grouping and positioning of the couples within different frameworks (the white couple is perched in the doorway and above the ground where the black couple stands) creates a representational space that encompasses but at the same time separates these two distinct groups of people. This communal disjointing—the people are scarcely aware of each other—is further accentuated by how the bodies are given-to-be-seen. The black men stare at us directly. It is as if they readily offered their stunted and misshapen bodies to be detailed by the painter and seen by the spectator. By making the barely dressed engage us directly, Manuel María Paz cajoles us into fixing our gaze on their bodies. The white couple, in contrast, is inscrutable. They elude us, reject our gaze. As we will see, to be portrayed directly looking at the painter or camera or evading the gaze of the artist or photographer became fundamental in an ensemble of conventions that came to define: a) who was an individual pictured to be venerated by friends, family; and the public at large and, b) who was a scientific specimen to exhibited to be studied.
Certainly, *Chocó: aspecto exterior de las casas de Novitá* appeals to and depends on a referential relationship to the occurrences of everyday life: standing in a doorway or porch to greet neighbors and discuss life’s affairs has been a preeminent way of organizing social interaction; men coming home after tilling the land is also part of the foundational experiences of many human beings. Yet, details that authenticate “concrete reality,” or, that appear to “merely” show a machete or someone in a state of contemplation do not function at a purely denotative level, rather, these details provide evidential alibi for their connotations (Barthes “Myth Today” 57). By assigning the symbols of so-called barbarity to the black men, this image embroiders these bodies as savage while the couple next to them is outfitted with the paraphernalia of civilization (i.e., clothing), is placed within the domestic realm, and is freed from hard labor. This watercolor exemplifies, modern compulsion to visually institute racial difference as the categorical means that divides the population from within. As we will see, the racial differentiation that ascribes immutable biological and social attributes to every body in the national community is a precondition for how each person will be integrated into the citizenry.

The lámina entitled, *Provicia de Santander: tipo africano y mestizo* (1850), could be called “Amidst coca plants” or, simply, “Waiting” since the three figures portrayed stand casually but rather stiffly on a clearing among cocoa trees (see figure 13). Instead, Carmelo Fernández chose to title his work, “tipo africano y mestizo.” This choice is not an innocent one. As products of the enterprise of mapping the nation, the láminas were painted to lend visual support to the process of racial and territorial classification sponsored by the Comisión. With this pictorial tactic, the painters systematize a visual racial typology that stabilizes both the meaning of the image and phenotypical diversity of the population. “Negro,” “mestizo,” and “indio” are the words that most often appear to designate the people shown in the images.
The fact that these are the only words used to describe human beings is already an act of disciplining and standardizing the language of “race.” Racial nomenclature at that time, as it is now, was an unwieldy variety of designations for skin color. “Pardo,” “Moreno,” “zambo,” “indio-negro” were a few of the terms current in the language of the time but none of these were used in the taxonomy diffused by the laminas. As such, this naming practice condenses chaotic and idiosyncratic denominations into more generic categories such as “negro” or “mestizo.” Chorographic racial classification dispensed with specificity and variety in order to show and enshrine a visual world where one racialized subject, or in scientific terminology, a specimen, was made to exemplify the whole racial group. As such, chorographic paintings relied on and helped to constitute the cultural and scientific idea of racial “types.” In the post-colonial context, the discourse of typologies performs three operations simultaneously: it finds and distills (essential) characteristics that (allegedly) distinguish any given human group; it then proceeds to condense this characteristics into an example; finally, it puts into circulation an exemplary human-specimen-type which is offered as identical substitute for a collectivity.
Figure 11: Provincia de Santander: tipo africano y mestizo
Carmelo Fernández, 1850
Courtesy of the Biblioteca Nacional de Colombia
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The racial nomenclature utilized in these watercolors is reminiscent of *casta* paintings of the late eighteenth centuries. This specifically American type of painting took as its subject the process of racial mixing known as *mestizaje*. As one of the most important attempts to create a visual-racial regime of representation, these paintings constitute a pivotal part in the formation of racial categories in Mexico and Perú in particular and in Latin America in general. All of the surviving *casta* painting series are organized as a sequence mixed-race trios—that is, a couple and their offspring. The first of these trios is composed of a Spaniard adult man, an Indian woman, and their *mestizo* child. They are followed by a Spaniard man, an African woman, and their mulatto descendant. The series usually ends with the portrayal of an African man, his Indian companion and their child. The order of appearance of these trios is almost never changed. In so doing, these paintings suggest that the racial diversity of the Americas is the result of the fixed variations the paintings exhibit. By establishing a system for the visual enunciation and organization of racial difference, *casta* paintings attempted to arrest and render recognizable an increasingly fluid and multiple racial reality (Katzew 67-73). In *casta* painting as well as chorographic watercolors, the portrayal of phenotypic equations foment the fiction of mathematical precision and systemic order by encouraging a simple calculation with a constant result, Spaniard plus African equals mulatto, in an universe made up of continual and untidy combinations.

The production of chorographic imagery also relied on conventions first established by costume and travel books ((Majluf 23). With the expansion of European monarchies across vast

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8 For recent appraisals of *casta* paintings, see: Ilona Katzew’s, *Casta Paintings: Images of Race in Eighteenth Century Mexico* and Magali Carrera’s *Imaging Identity in New Spain: Race, Lineage, and the Colonial Body in Portraiture and Casta Paintings.*
territories and continents, the production of maps proliferated. Along with the map, came another publication, the costume book. The costume book was a sort of “parageography” that provided cultural information through the compilation, in book form, of a series of woodcuts or etchings depicting a single figure, centered on an abstract background, and dressed in “native” garb (27). In a single book, the reader would be shown people from Italy, France and Turkey, as well as Nictoria, as Rio de Janeiro was sometimes referred to (Jones 105). In this type of publication, images were usually titled and a short descriptive paragraph was often printed below the image.9 The figure shown was always a human being and was supposed to represent a member of a particular country, gender, and social class. Presenting themselves as sources of socio-cultural information, the costume book dispensed the representation of social life (domestic animals, vegetation, foodstuffs, homes, and so forth) that sustains the subject portrayed in favor of dress as the single marker of the subject’s social identity and geographic location (94). In an age of exploration and conquest, costume books materialize European efforts to impose an “unchanging interpretative grid” on a bewildering range of new data (Defert qtd in Jones 27). This is perhaps the most important consequence of this type of publication: the edification and standardization of dress as a tool in the classification of populations (Ilg 30). The painters of the Comisión also used sartorial practices to picture the population and to instruct new citizens about the cultural, racial, and economic contours of the nation.

9 Works such as François Deserpez’s Recueil de la diversité des habits, qui sont de present en vsage, tant espays d’Europe, Asie, Affrique & Isles sauvages (1562), Ferdinand Bertelli’s Omnium fere gentium nostrae aetatis habitus (1563) and Cesare Vecellio’s De gli Habiti antichi et moderni dei Diverse Parti del Mondo (1590) are regarded as classic publications of this genre. Relación histórica del viaje hecho de orden de su Majestad a la América Meridional (1748) published by Jorge Juan y Santacilia and Antonio de Ulloa is one of the most important examples of travel books about Spanish America.
Because chorographic paintings functions through the exhibition of a “representational example,” it promises to render dress not as particular and contingent individual choice based on fashion, socio-cultural standing and access to the marketplace but a sign system where clothing becomes transparent marker of racial and social identity and emblem of a particular geographic region. In other words, in the costume book and chorographic paintings, variety of sartorial practices becomes conflated to a single model which is made to function as regional/national/social uniform. While chorography presents itself as an index of social reality, repetition and seriality of themes and pictorial elements such as clothing reveal it as a policy of identification and reification. This is the case of the ruana, a poncho-like garment identified today as an example of “traje nacional” of Colombia. Almost all of the indigenous and peasant male subjects represented in rural environments in the paintings of the Comisión Corográfica are pictured wearing a ruana. However, as Jaime Jaramillo Uribe explains, by the nineteenth century, use of the ruana had all but disappeared. At the moment of its disappearance, chorographic painting appropriated and visually established the ruana as customary (195). The fact that in the chorographic stock of images of the Colombian nation all campesinos in all geographic regions are pictured with ruanas created a visual practice that seemed to depict a phenomenal world shared by all, what we might call reality. Put simply, the appearance of the ruana in all geographical locations and on almost all male bodies, signals the chorography’s desire to establish a sense of sameness across rural spaces. But the condition of possibility of sameness turns out to be a carefully doctored, indeed aesthetic choice. One sartorial practice is chosen among the many and disseminated to appear as a constant, “natural” feature in the cultural landscape of the territory. These were some of the elements in a production line that gave birth to the myth of the ruana as one of the most important visual examples of “traje nacional” of
Colombia. This is also the story of how the *ruana*, as the apotheosis of national, rural similarity, obscures the racial and socio-economic conditions and differences that mark the lives and bodies of *campesinos* (both real and pictorial).

*Buena Ventura: campesinos de Cali* (1853) (See figure 14), depicts three men riding horses and carrying agricultural products. The caption to this painting groups them in the same category, *campesinos*. Two of the men are barefoot and all of them wear *ruanas* or ponchos, which, with the passing of time and with the visual help of images such as this one, became an indexical sign that denotes rural workers in Colombia. The man situated to the left of the frame wears a red, blue and white *ruana*, what seems to be an industrially manufactured hat, leather riding pants and rides a white horse. This is the only horse in the image presented with all of its anatomical parts. Moreover, this man does not carry any agricultural product or tool. The presentation of the other two men, however, introduces key elements that set them apart from their counterpart described above. The most significant differences between the man riding the white horse and the two other men are that they carry agricultural products and that the portrayal of the horses they ride is a bit awkward. The man depicted with darker skin carries a stack of sugar cane, wears a blue and white *ruana* and a locally produced straw hat. The third man transports plantains (or bananas) and seems to literally be riding on top of them. He also wears a straw hat, a *ruana* and white cotton pants.

This man and the man who carries the sugar cane ride similarly hued brown horses. The ability of the viewer to see these men’s horses is blocked by the white horse which is shown in full. When we look at the ground, we can clearly distinguish the white horses’ four legs. Only four other legs are shown when there should be an additional four. In fact, the shortage of horse’s legs makes it seem as if instead of two separate horses, the two men were riding a two-headed
horse. As we can see, in spite of the title that construes them as part of the same social collective, these men are differentiated in what they wear and what they transport.

![Figure 12: Buenaventura: campesinos de Cali](image)

Manuel María Paz, 1853

While certain aspects of the watercolor (title, clothing, mode of transport, and triangular grouping) invite the viewer to consider these men as copies of each other, upon closer inspection
we discover that they are, in fact, quite different. The hat and the leather pants of the man who
rides the white horse codify him as a member of a different economic class. His hat and leather
pants are not of local provenance; they were probably manufactured abroad and sold in a few and
selective clothing stores in towns and cities throughout Colombia (Gómez “Moda y libertad”
s.n.). The ability to buy such articles distinguishes him from his companions who wear cheap
locally manufactured products. Although, he is presented as part of the group, it is these
differences that make him appear as individuated: he rides an anatomically correct white horse
(typically associated with pure breeds, the noble class, and/or the high echelons of the army),
sports expensive clothing, and he does not carry an agricultural product. The two other men are
united through their attire, what carries them—an anomalous horse—and what they carry, staples
of agricultural products in the Colombian South Pacific, where Buenaventura is located. What
reveals the ideological substratum on which this image is founded are the fully exposed but
almost invisible anomalies which characterize the portrayal of these two men. In the central plane
of the image, where these two men and their strange horse(s) are positioned, the boundaries
between the orders of life—flora, fauna, homo-sapiens—seem to collapse. In this space, animals,
humans, and specific agricultural products flow seamlessly into each other and create a signifying
system that particularizes the meaning of campesino and campesino labor.

If we were to read this painting as unmediated and objective depiction of reality or as
Beatriz Gonzalez argued, a mechanism with which painters sought to “fijar en la memoria
collectiva los usos y las costumbres,” (Caricatura 28) this watercolor might be interpreted simply
as campesinos casually meeting on their way to or from the market or their plots of land.
However, if we follow this line of analysis, we would fail to understand the social arrangements
and historical conditions that inform the production of these images. When this image was
composed, it had been two years since the definite abolition of slavery. In this context, the sugar cane stalks the dark-skinned man carries is indelibly associated with the plantation, a colonial form of organizing production which survived independence, the writing of liberal constitutions and their proclamations of liberty, equality, and fraternity. In the post-colonial context, Colombia became a supplier of raw materials, including sugar cane, which continued to be harvested using hierarchical and abusive modes of labor. Materially, sugar cane was a product that enriched the nation’s coffers, and its production increased significantly during the nineteenth century (Uribe Jaramillo _Ensayos_ 20) The sweetness of sugar, however, was tainted by the cruelty its production entailed. Symbolically, in the mid-nineteenth century sugar and sugar cane were still associated long, hard, sweaty forced labor performed in vast fields by a large number of black workers managed by an overseer. Sugar cane, then, denotes capital gain and connotes a history of human suffering. Plantains, on the other hand, were the agricultural anti-thesis of sugar cane. Agustín Codazzi considers it a weed that grows anywhere. According to Codazzi, the abundance of plantains in particular contributes to the state of cultural, social, and economic backwardness in which he finds blacks and Indians in the Provinces of Chocó, Cauca, and Caquetá. For Codazzi, the ease with which the crop could be harvested and the simple manner in which Indians and blacks prepared it for consumption were signs of the lack of civilization that characterized these populations (75).
Figure 13: Provincia de Vélez: notables de la capital
Carmelo Fernández, 1850
Obras completas de la Comisión Corográfica, Tomo II, Guido Barona et al. 2000, p 103.
We can define chorographic paintings as a complex visual articulation where the elements that accompany the human being are orchestrated to invest the human body with socio-political and economic meanings. In other words, in chorographic paintings we don’t know someone is an Indian, a campesino, or a black man by virtue of skin color alone; we know their racial and social status by virtue of how the watercolor portrays the human being in relation to other human beings, foodstuffs, work and dress.

While the Comisión mobilized certain taxonomical categories, it labored to make others disappear. The logic of the taxonomic systematization of skin color laid out by chorographic painting disintegrates when it pictures people with light skin. Such is the case of the terms “blanco” and/or “criollo.” These two categories are never deployed in the textual racial nomenclature of the watercolors. Where we assume, based on the naming conventions established in the other watercolors, that the title “blanco” should appear, we instead find a social and economic characterization, “notable” (see figure 15). Why introduce social distinction as a category in a system for cataloguing race? This question might be partially answered by arguing that the members of the Comisión attempted to dislodge whiteness from matters of physique to locate it instead in the social and moral high ground of proper behavior, refined customs, and industriousness.

“Notables” are almost always shown wearing the latest European styles. Men wear tailcoats, vests, boots, riding hats while women are shown wearing loose, draped skirts in light or dark colors, long sleeve shirts, embroidered shawls, and jewelry. Clothing, as Mariselle Meléndez reminds us, is a “rhetorical vehicle” put to the service of “establish[ing] power relationships, social categorizations, and degrees of civilization among societies (24).” By endowing “notables” with certain clothes and locating them in the realm of leisure—they were never pictured with
work tools—chorographic painting constructs an image of “notables” as fashionable, symbolically linked to Europe and dedicated to something other than work. By contrast, Black, Indians, mestizos are never shown in European garb.\textsuperscript{10}

**Realist Nationalism**

Chorographic painting is a visual genre that cannot allow variation to enter its pictorial frame. It leaves out everything that falls out of a pattern of behavior, or better stated, it refuses to acknowledge and portray that which signals multiplicity and individuality. Sartorial standardization, introduced by the costume book and exploited by the chorographic image, is of course, fictive since the standard will necessarily foreclose the representation of variation and exceptions to what it presents as a rule. As we can see, the “realism,” as transparent transcription of reality, ascribed to these images by art critics is the result of a constellation of conventions working together to create a verisimilar version of reality.

As visual dispositifs\textsuperscript{11} designed to instruct Colombian citizens about their environmental surroundings and the people who populated the national territory, chorographic paintings were

\textsuperscript{10} If in the world of chorographic representation, the sartorial habits of the castas appear serialized, monotonous, and repetitious, in the “real” world, members of the castas often engaged in the same sartorial habits of the elites. The sumptuous nature of the dress worn by mestizas, black and Indian women was often commented on by both criollos and foreign travelers. In the eighteenth century, Jorge Juan y Santacilla and Antonio de Ulloa, authors of a famous costume book of the Americas, marveled at the difficulty of discerning a person’s class in Lima. This difficulty, they attributed to the similar use of dress among different social sectors of the population. Rebecca Earle discusses sartorial practices in the Americas in: “Two pairs of Satin Shoes” and “Luxury, Clothing, and Race.”

\textsuperscript{11} Michel Foucault defines dispositifs as heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, [and] scientific statements” (Foucault Power/Knowledge 194). Expanding on the notion of the dispositif, Giorgio Agamben defines the Foucauldian apparatus as “anything that has in some way the
fundamental elements in a “cultural strategy” that as John Tagg argues “turns on a new mode of address and capture” to hail the viewer to participate consciously or unconsciously in the crafting of racial difference and the deployment of racial violence (Tagg xxxii). Contrary to Colombian art historical trends, the analysis presented here considers the archive of chorographic images not as “representacion[es] fidedigna[s],” accurate representations, of the Colombian population (Sánchez Gobierno 583) but as essential components of a particular mode of official representation which functioned through a “hybrid” mixture of “discipline and spectacle, of documentation and publicity” (Tagg xxxii) and that produced race as a relational concept in which the objects and animals that surround the subject portrayed are offered as visual allegories that metonymically fixed ideological texts to organic and socio-cultural details thereby securing the reading of former enslaved bodies as, among other things, musculature apt for hard labor.

The Comisión’s objective of creating a visual archive of “los tipos caractersísticos de la población de cada provincia, no pudiendo ser menos de dos” (Restrepo Forero 300-3) is an explicit demand for and recognition of diversity. At the same time, this diversity is always already constrained since it is premised on a binary logic of apprehension of difference: civilization and barbarism, landowner and peasant, city dweller and campesino, criollo and non-criollo. Chorographic paintings permit a fixed number of racial inscriptions to exist in their visual universe. This standardization of racial nomenclature (Indio, negro, mestizo, africano) promoted the fiction of mathematical precision and systematic order in a world where racial naming was chaotic and continually changing. Standardization gives way to the language of similarities and the fictive similarities created by chorographic painting (such as wearing a ruana) galvanize and capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviors, opinions, or discourses of living beings” (What is an Apparatus? And Other Essays 14)
inculcate the idea of socio-cultural sameness across a vast territory. This is the central contradiction of chorographic painting and nationalism: in the chorographic visual regime, the impulse of differentiation is always there, but the need for sameness complements it. In the nationalist discourse supplemented by chorographic painting, there is a need to divide the territory into regions and the population into racial and social groupings but these disparate regions and discrete human groups must be brought together under the sign of a unified symbol—the nation, Colombia. Chorographic imagery creates a sense of a hierarchical unity among the people and spaces it portrays; the same hierarchical unity that characterizes the national community.

Lines of analysis that equate these visual archives with a disinterested practice of social documentation divest chorographic painting of the symbolic fabrications usually assumed of almost all artistic productions. More importantly, they overlook the pedagogical nature of these images. Through repetition and serialization, chorographic paintings teach the viewer to see an indexical relationship between an image and “reality.” In this way, chorographic paintings offer the viewer cognitive maps to frame and punctuate his or her experience of the world. This is why nationalism is well-served by the realist conventions of chorographic paintings: In so far as chorographic images convince us—the viewers—that something occurred in front of the chisel, that what we see has undergone little or no modification, and that what is shown is representative (autochthonous) of a particular time, place, and group of people, the chorographic visual archive intimates a shared sense of (a consensus about) territory, language, and culture. It was in those fictional-real and intimate worlds where racial thinking and demarcation, for example, could be visually actualized in the service of creating radical distinctions between citizens that were supposed to be united in their equality.
While the chorographic project pictures race as a relational concept, the physiological argumentation of racial thought discussed in the following chapter dispenses with the representation of objects, natural settings, animals in the photographic staging of blackness to show what it produces and categorizes as “black” as a being in a complete state of isolation. In Chapter Two, which explores the role of photography in the visualization and materialization of blackness in Brazil during the decades leading up to the abolition of slavery, I shift the focus of analysis from a state-sponsored project of geographic and ethnographic surveying to inquire about two distinct projects of racial naming to show how the conventions of picturing blackness were the result of a multifaceted and multi-authored project of curtailing black freedom.
Chapter Two: Scientific and Picturesque Photography and the Crafting of Blackness, Brazil 1865

In Chapter One, I analyzed the manner in which racial identity was orchestrated in chorographic painting. In that chapter, I argued that the illustrators of the Comisión Corográfica used the conventions of picturesque realism to create a series of watercolors in which a subject’s racial identity was signaled vis-à-vis the socio-economic elements, work tools and clothing, with which the subject was pictured. I found that in the chorographic visual corpus, racial identity was an associative exercise in which “race” was a composite and relational concept that mobilized skin color, occupation, costume, and geographical setting as aesthetic clues to specify racial meaning. In this chapter, I engage a different, but related, project of racial visualization. In what follows, I will be detailing two particular photographic projects, which I argue, are examples of a larger movement that facilitated the formalization of a photographic visual grammar for the construction and depiction of race in the nineteenth century.

In Against Race Paul Gilroy writes that the “race producing” activity unleashed in the eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries “required a synthesis of logos with icon, of formal scientific rationality with something else—something visual and aesthetic in both senses of that slippery word” (35). The modern concept of race was as much a scientific and linguistic configuration as a visual enterprise elaborated to found ideological discourses about the body. In the nineteenth century, the newly developed technology for chemically “fixing” images to paper was rapidly instituted as an ideal tool for scientific investigation. At a time when photography was widely perceived as the most objective visual medium, many scientists saw photography as a scientific tool and effective publicity method for advertising and conveying racial theories to the public.
This chapter continues the exploration of how race was made visible through realist visual and literary realist conventions. Through an engagement with the photographic corpus compiled by the famous Swiss scientists Louis Agassiz during his travels in Brazil and the cartes de visite produced by the Portuguese photographer Cristiano Júnior in Rio de Janeiro, I show that the process of making race visible is achieved by the creation and deployment of particular visual orchestrations that sustain the presumably transparent veneer of the photographic image and serve as the platform through which ideological notions of racial difference are activated. The thrust of my argument will be that scientific and picturesque photographs, as social objects or what Deborah Poole calls visual commodities, are the currency of a discursive field in which the objective is to reevaluate the body at a moment of political turmoil and social reorganization. I read Agassiz’s early production of a scientific visual corpus as a reactionary program provoked by a disturbing anxiety generated by the abolition of slavery in the United States. I argue that the scientific portrayal of racial otherness, which Agassiz pioneered, was a political strategy to deny legal subjecthood and thus citizenship to those blackened by Agassiz’s photographic forays. Similarly, the picturesque images of Cristiano Júnior served to recast enslaved people as exotic “types” rather than as the most intimate and subjugated of companions. The photographic typification of the slave as picturesque commodity performs a fundamental disavowal of the role of Brazilian colonial elites in the subjugation of Africans and their descendants. I contend that scientific and picturesque regimes of photographic depiction transfer the act of racial inscription from the public and legal fields to the private but commercial sphere of the photographic studio where the slave body suffers a triple transformation: it is transfigured
into scientific specimen, embroidered with blackness and transacted as visual commodity. I argue that this program of radical transfiguration is a political program to banish the former slave from the liberal field of communal relations.

**Anthropometrics and the Visual Concoction of Race**

Before the nineteenth century, discourses of race, Valerie Traub has suggested, did not depend on a stable category of biological difference, but was a “concept among parallel and overlapping concerns of lineage, civility, religion, and nation” (44). The body, particularly the color of its skin, did not become the privileged site for uncovering racial identity until the eighteenth century. That today we associate race with skin color is the result of a centuries-old process of classifying humanity according to a series of characteristics presumed to be shared by a group of people such as skin color and geographical location. The ascendancy of sight as primary human sense, the emergence of observation as *the* mechanism of scientific investigation, and the recreation of the human body as object of knowledge eventually led to the construction of human beings as intrinsically raced, that is as beings who are physically, morally, culturally different to those who do not share the same corporeal characteristics.

For natural historians of the eighteenth century, nature was made up of human, zoological, and vegetal species. Generally speaking, species were a group of beings that shared the same characteristics. Varieties, on the other hand, were those members of a single species that because of conditioning factors such as climate and geography had changed their appearance in one way or another. The idea of the fixity of the species is
the basis of the classification system for all living organisms devised by figures such as Linneaeus, Buffon, and Blumenbach.\(^1\) Although natural historians were interested in understanding and classifying human variety, they still believed that all humans descended from Adam and Eve and attributed physical and behavioral differences to religion, climate, geography, diet, and other external factors. In this environmentalist worldview, bodily differences were seen as mutable. Skin color and temperament could change if exposed to different climates, diets, and customs. This mode of theorization, however, was not without prejudice. Proximity to Europe and to temperate climates were used to generate a theoretical hierarchy that placed Europeans (along with their socio-political and economic traditions) at the top and Africans the bottom. By the eighteenth century, natural historians began to think about corporeal differences as immutable. The notion of corporeal differences as intrinsic and not affected by climatic influences was an important stepping stone toward racial theories that would come to fruition in the nineteenth century. Natural history’s contribution to modern notions of race are: 1) its understanding of humanity as divisible into hierarchical categories; 2) categorizing of difference as inherent and rooted in the body; and 3) the re-signification of skin color as the primer for uncovering and establishing biological and cultural differences. This last point is, perhaps, the most insidious. By the end of the eighteenth century, color had

\(^1\) Swedish naturalist Carl von Linneaeus (1701 – 1778) is known for his groundbreaking work on taxonomic classification. He classified human varieties into four categories: Americanus, Asiaticus, Africanus, and Europaeus. A contemporary of Linneaeus, George-Louis Leclere, Comte de Buffon (1707-1788) ascribed physical differences to climate and geography. Buffon first made systematic use of the term “race” to identify groups of human types, thus giving this word a new status in scientific nomenclature. See Nicolas Hudson’s, “From ‘Nation’ to ‘Race’: The Origin of Racial Classification in Eighteenth-Century Thought.”

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become, Robyn Weigman argues, “the primary organizing principle around which the natural historian classified human differences” (24).

In the United States as in Latin America, following a global trend, the idea of race underwent a radical shift in the nineteenth century. Race ceased to describe a difference that was traced to the influence of environmental or climatic factors, geographical origin and social standing and came to refer to a difference that was understood to be fundamentally biological. Whereas the different races of “man” were previously regarded as “tribal” or “national” varieties of an essentially unified humanity, by 1850 racial difference was considered to be both essential and immutable, and the different races came to be regarded as permanent types and the result of different stages in God’s creation of humanity.² Race, to paraphrase Robert Knox, one of the architects of this kind of thinking, became “everything” (6). And what he meant was that race—and not “fanciful causes, such as education, religion, climate etc.” (8)—is what accounts for the differences between peoples. Race—as biology—indeed became everything, now describing not only the permanent character of a people, but also their irrevocable destiny. By 1850, therefore, the “human” no longer constituted the common referent according to which race could be considered to describe one or another kind of human being. Rather, with this shift—from a “monogenist” to a “polygenist” view of racial difference—the idea of a unified humanity was shattered by the assertion that the peoples of the world constituted multiple and distinct racial “species.”

² For insightful accounts of racial theories of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see: Haller’s Outcasts from Evolution; Sander Gilman’s Difference and Pathology; and Stephen Gould’s The Mismeasure of Man.
Polygenism came into mainstream scientific and religious thought due, in part, to the work of Samuel George Morton and more prominently Louis Agassiz in the United States. Based on his study of crania, Morton claimed that each human group was a distinct species, this claim was popularized by Josiah C. Nott and George R. Gliddon. In 1854, they edited a book entitled *Types of Mankind or Ethnological Research* in which the contributors argued that the human family was divided into different “primordial” races, each one created for and destined to live in different geographical regions. Louis Agassiz, who is at the center of our inquiry, contributed an essay where he enumerated eight types or “species” that, he argued, sprung up in different zoological provinces. In that essay, he set out to demonstrate that the environment and physical condition of these provinces gave rise to distinct flora, fauna, and racial groups, which in turn, were ruled by fixed characteristics (Stepan *Picturing Tropical Nature* 85). Once the systematic division of humanity into distinct geographical zones and racial groups had been established, finding and systematizing measurable signs that could act as reliable guides to human difference, both visible (i.e. skin color, hair, texture, shape of nose, breasts or skulls) and hidden within the inner most regions of the body was the work of anatomists, anthropologists, physicians and criminologists. It was at this time that the recent invention of daguerreotypy was enlisted to promote the idea that race was a physiological and visually discernable and not the result of environmental, social, economic variable attributes. The images analyzed here are some of the earliest examples of the use of photography as a means to construct a scientific theory of race. Most importantly, these images catapulted the establishment of skin color as a categorical insignia taken for
evidence of a biologically based difference rather than a visual strategy of a discursive regime.

**Scientific Photography and the Invention of Blackness**

Convinced that photography was a “realist” technology capable of reproducing nature perfectly, scientists began to use the camera as a tool in scientific investigations. The earliest scientific photographs were of bacteria and crystals, followed closely by zoological specimens and archeological sites, but it wasn’t long before the camera’s reputed ability to impassively document the visible world saw scientific photography being extended to the human body as part of an effort to racially classify and rank people on an evolutionary scale (Rouillet 47, Rosen 385-386). In 1841, only two years after the unveiling of Daguerre’s technology, travelers, scientists, and daguerreotypists began to use the invention to document human variety. Between 1842 and 1847, Théodore Tiffereau traveled in Mexico and collected a vast amount of daguerreotypes of “natives.” In 1845, French daguerreotypist Edouard Thiesson made studies of the African population in Lisbon and members of the Sofala ethnic group of Mozambique. That same year, Antoine Etienne Reynaud Augustin Serres, a medical doctor and professor of anatomy and embryology at Le Jardin des Plantes and President of the Academy of Sciences in France, proposed the establishment of a museum of photographs of the human race to further anthropological study (Buerger 91).

Major racial thinkers and institutions of the nineteenth century used photography as a way to give “scientific” substance to their arguments about race. In 1852 the British
Association for the Advancement of Science published the *Manual of Ethnological Enquiry* in which photography was recommended as a method to “obtain an accurate record of individual likenesses” (Spencer 99). In 1869, the Ethnological Society of London published a scientific manual in which John Lamprey’s system of anthropometric photography was published and advertised as a rigorous scientific method for the depiction of the human races (Ryan 2). Lamprey’s method consisted in hanging a wooden frame with silk threads forming a grid system behind the subject to facilitate comparative measurement between subjects. The same year, professor T. H. Huxley, president of the London Ethnological Society and author of *On the Methods and Results of Ethnology*, a treatise on the classification of the human races, was asked to create a photographic archive of colonial subjects of the British Empire (Edwards *Raw Histories* 131). To create a reliable photographic racial map of the British Empire, Huxley’s instructed colonial administrators to have colonial subjects of interest photographed naked while assuming anthropometric poses, such as the ones used by Louis Agassiz. A measuring stick (Huxley used the term “anthropometer”) was to be placed on the same plane as the subject. To ensure uniformity of scale, Huxley recommended that subjects be placed at a fixed distance from the camera (ibid, 134). In 1882, three years before the unveiling of his system of criminal identification, Bertillon published *Les Races Sauvages*, which was illustrated with *cartes de visite* of French colonial subjects and included various measurements and observations supposed to be defining characteristics of the indigenous people of Polynesia.

The history broadly sketched above demonstrates that photography, understood as a form of realist registration, was immediately co-opted for the business of making
race a visual fact. This history also makes apparent the indelible nexus between colonial travel and the visual configuration of race. Anthropometric photographs were usually taken in the outposts of British or French empire and dealt overwhelmingly with colonial subjects. Louis Agassiz scientific photographic enterprise was no different than the efforts detailed above. His racial theories depended on the examination of slaves in the United States and Brazil.\(^3\) As such, his project of racial identification was elaborated in the interstices of a transnational circuit of knowledge production in which knowledge gathered elsewhere was used for the analysis of political and social situations back home.

Louis Agassiz was a pioneer in the use of photography as a means to visualize race. Before he turned his attention to the study of the physicality of race, Agassiz was a zoologist renowned for his efforts at classifying fish and his theory of the Ice Age. In 1846, he immigrated to the United States and shortly thereafter was appointed professor of Zoology and Geology at Harvard University. In the United States, Agassiz became one of the most prominent proponents of polygenism.

On October 10\(^{th}\), 1850, the journal *Tri-Weekly South Carolinian* reported the use of daguerreotypes of “individuals of various races of negroes” by Louis Agassiz during his lectures in Boston:

> We notice that Professor Agassiz is still lecturing in Boston on the origin of the human race. On Friday last, in the course of the lecture, he pointed out the many differences between the forms of the negro and the white race, a great proportion of which have not been previously remarked; and in proof of his statements he

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\(^3\) In the 1860s, Agazzis was part of a research team that measure American Union troops in order to “ascertain the most important physical dimension and personal characteristics.” Agassiz was in charge of calibrating the instruments—andrometer, spirometer, facial angle, and calipers—to get better data about black soldiers. See John Haller’s *Outcasts from Evolution*, 23-29.
exhibited a large number of daguerreotypes of individuals of various races of negroes (*Tri-Weekly South Carolinian* qtd in Rogers 45).

With these images and other anthropometric information, Agassiz was looking, Alan Trachtenberg suggests, for first-hand evidence of African American’s anatomical uniqueness. Agassiz, Trachtenberg explains, wanted to see if the distinct traits of African-born slaves survive in American-born offspring. This would prove his theory that environmental factors wrought very few changes to the type, which by and large remained stable overtime (53). The photos with which Agassiz purportedly elucidated the “differences between the forms of the negro and the white race” were taken in March of 1850 after his participation in the meetings of the Association for the Advancement of American Science. After the conference Agassiz toured the state and the plantations around Columbia, South Carolina. There he examined what he identified as African-born slaves and their first-generation offspring. He contracted J. T. Zealy to take “likenesses” of slaves who Agassiz believed possessed fundamental characteristics of a variety of African races. In the end, Zealy took fifteen photographs of seven slaves—Renty, Alfred, Drania, Delia, Jem, Fassena, Jack—which Agassiz used in his lectures to demonstrate that the human family was, in fact, a conglomeration of intrinsically different species.

According to Molly Rogers, there was no precedent in the United States for the type of photographic archive Agassiz sought to build (Rogers 45). Agassiz’s staging of the slave body as fully or partially naked helped to establish the conventions of anthropometric photography adopted by anthropologists and criminologists. Brian Wallis has suggested that these photographs were composed using physiognomic and phrenologic approaches to the study of the body. In some of the images, the subjects stand fully nude, and are photographed in front, side and rear posses. Theses images were
composed using a physiognomic approach, which focuses on body shape, proportions, and posture. The remainder set of images conform to what Wallis calls the phrenological approach, featuring heads and naked torsos under a strong harsh light to convey detailed anatomical information, a method favored by medical scientists (45-6).

David Green points out that by the 1870s, the conventions rehearsed by Agassiz in South Carolina in March 1850 had become standard practice in the photographing of colonized and incarcerated peoples (8). Green also observes that most of these codes and conventions were laid down in the period between 1860 and 1875 when photography was being routinely applied to the furtherance of European imperialism. The earliest racial type photographs were taken by anthropologists hoping to prove the physical and mental inferiority of the peoples who had been colonized by Europeans. According to Green, anthropologists had turned to anthropometric photography to help locate and define the origins of the socio-cultural differences within human populations (ibid). The term anthropometry was coined by the seventeenth century German physician Johann Sigismund Elsholtz to describe the system of measurement he had invented to investigate the correlations between body proportions and certain diseases (Spencer 106). By the mid to late nineteenth-century, James Ryan explains, the term came to refer to a system of measuring the living human body to determine its respective proportions at different ages, or of physically distinguishing the human races so as to establish their evolutionary status relative to one another (149). As Michael Frizot has remarked, it was above all photography that enabled the normative codifying of differences, which in turn led to the physical evaluation of whole populations without any other type of examination (267).
In 1865, near the end of the American Civil War, Louis Agassiz organized the Thayer Expedition from his post at Harvard University. On April 23, Agassiz together with his wife and a large contingent of assistants, illustrators, and students arrived in Rio de Janeiro ready to begin, as many scientists did in the nineteenth century, a scientific voyage of exploration and discovery of tropical nature. The basic justification for the trip was to gather a vast collection of natural specimens of Brazilian flora and fauna, as well as to observe the territory’s geology. The Brazil to which Agassiz and his cohort traveled to was still ruled by a European royal family. While the winds of nationalism, revolution, and emancipation swept over the ruins of the Spanish Empire, Brazil had remained a slavocracy led by a Hapsburg emperor. Dom Pedro II, the King of the Portuguese Empire, was a devotee of scientific study and natural history. An honorary member of European and American scientific academies, he received and supported Agassiz and the other members of the expedition. He even gave them permission to officially explore the Amazon with the hopes of starting business partnerships between American entrepreneurs and the Portuguese Crown. The emperor provided his own yacht for the expedition’s travels and recruited illustrious members of his court to help the scientific team carry out its mission. This expedition was extremely successful. Agassiz made important zoological discoveries and was able to participate in the intellectual life of the country (Stepan Picturing Tropical Nature 92).

Another important goal was to collect anthropological data about Indians, blacks and former slaves. With the data collected during this trip, Agassiz wanted to prove Darwin wrong and to demonstrate that each race was its own distinct species. During the initial stages of the expedition, Agassiz described his objectives to his students:
I am often asked what is my chief aim in this expedition to South America? No doubt in a general way is to collect materials for future study. But the conviction which draws me irresistibly, is that the combination of animals on this continent, where the fauna are so characteristic and so distinct from all others, will give me the means of showing the transmutation theory is wholly without foundation in fact (Agassiz qtd in Isaac 5).

Transmutation of the species, a concept developed by Jean Baptiste Lamarck, attempted to describe what would later be known as evolution or the belief that inherited traits of organisms are bound to improve and change progressively through time. Agassiz was in opposition to this theory and instead proposed that diversity and variation in the natural world was due to the “plurality of origin” of the human species. To defend plurality of origin and deny transmutation, Agassiz claimed that there had been “as many as a dozen separate creations” and that these separate instances of creation were a far greater proof of the greatness of the Creator (Lurie 235).

Another objective of Agassiz was to prove once and for all the immutability of race. To buttress his racial arguments, Agassiz contracted Augusto Stahl to take anthropometric photographs of blacks and Chinese workers in Rio de Janeiro. Stahl was an enterprising young photographer who in 1853 arrived in the port city of Recife aboard a ship, the Thames of the English Royal Mail. The German young man settled in Recife, the capital of the Northeastern Brazilian state of Pernambuco and opened a photographic studio there. In 1862, he moved to Rio de Janeiro. A year later, he was chosen by Dom Pedro II to be Photographo de Sua Majestade O Imperador (Photographer to His
Stahl is known today as one of the most important photographers of nineteenth century Brazil. His photographs of the Emperor’s visit to Recife and that state’s sugarcane plantations, images of landscapes and cityscapes, portraits, and the anthropometric series discussed here are considered “obras-primas” in the Brazilian photographic archive (Corrêa Augusto Stahl 43).

Agassiz’s choice of photography to document the human races was, he argues, a result of the impossibility of dedicating himself to proper study given the constraints of time. In his “Permanence of Characteristics in Different Human Races,” a treatise that appeared as Appendix V of *A Journey in Brazil* 5, Agassiz discusses his choice of photography instead of more traditional and scientific methodologies to decipher race. He states:

I could not undertake those more accurate investigations of the human races, based upon minute measurements repeated a thousand-fold, which characterize the latest researches of anthropologists. A thorough study of the different nations and cross-breeds inhabiting the Amazonian Valley would require years of observation and patient examination. I was forced…to limit myself in my study of the races to what I would call the natural history method; viz. the comparison of individuals of different kinds with one another, just as naturalist compare specimens of different

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4 Emperor Dom Pedro II was the first Monarch to concede such title to a photographer. He was also the first head of state in Latin American to own the technology to make daguerreotypes. For a history of Stahl’s photographic career, see: Bia Corrêa do Lago, *Augusto Stahl. Obra completa em Pernambuco e Rio de Janeiro*.

5 *A Journey in Brazil* was published for the first time in 1867. This book is not, however, a compilation of Agassiz’s discoveries and studies during his travels in the country. As the title suggest, it is a travel book, which was authored by Elizabeth, Agassiz’s wife, and where we can find her appreciations of the country and transcriptions of Louis’ lectures and letters. Agassiz’s scientific disquisitions are found in a series of appendixes at the end of the book. Another book, with a decidedly different tone and which was to compile scientific findings of this journey was published in 1870 as *The Thayer Expedition: Scientific Results of a Journey in Brazil*. In this dissertation, I use the 1868 edition of *A Journey in Brazil*.
species (485).

When it comes to the investigation of racial difference, Agassiz foregoes the rigors of the scientific method he painstakingly applies to his zoological studies and instead chooses to use photographic material to foreground his “natural history” of race. In so doing, Agassiz constructs and relies upon a spectacular system that depended on the visual documentation and comparison of particular body-parts.

Figures 16 and 17 are the result of Agassiz’s racial-visual enterprise. In these photographs were taken in 1865 and depict a man and a woman. Figure 16 shows a man depicted in classic anthropometric stance. He is shown alone and naked. He is standing—his ankles touch and his arms seemed glued to the rest of his body. He is pictured three times—in frontal, back and profile poses. In this particular instance of image making, the studio is emptied. Nothing, except a dark simple backdrop surrounds the black body. The image offers us no complementary objects with which it would be possible for us to contextualize this man’s existence; we cannot locate him in time, space or community. The viewer’s eyes wander and encounter nothing but his exposed body parts. Genitals, legs, lips, eyes, fingers, every inch of the body is offered shamelessly to the eye of the observer. This scientific photograph is, in short, a picture of a specimen and a rendition of lack.
Figure 14: Anthropometric photographs
Augusto Stahl (commissioned by Louis Agassiz), 1865
In scientific photographs designed to establish a hierarchy of human existence, the “fact” of blackness is first and foremost revealed through the state of being naked. In the Western visual and literary imaginary, “primitive savagery” was (and continues to be) summed up or condensed into nakedness (Levine 192). As such, this anthropometric photograph acquires its intended meaning through its positioning of this particular man in an indexical relationship to the savage natives who inhabit the Western imaginary and who do not know how to or refuse to cloak the body.
The anthropometric subject’s lack of a proper name and proper clothing encourage a ritual of visual dissection directly related to that of the anatomist and the slave auctioneer. The dissection of the body to ascertain its structure and the inspection of the corporeal to negotiate its value require a body in a state of social dispossession to make its appraisal profitable—whether it is for scientific or economic gain. In the photographic studio the body is secluded and is subject to any and all operations performed by the scientist. In the photographic studio, the man of science gains knowledge while the subject becomes an abject specimen. In the shopping block, the body is exhibited, poked, and prodded. The auctioneer brokers her price as the enslaved human being is condemned to a state of thinghood. Photographic nakedness, then, allows the viewer to perpetrate a colonial way of looking that allows him to position himself in the role of master/overseer. If the objective of the bourgeois portrait was to depict a carefully orchestrated image that inscribed and represented a subject’s incursion and rightful participation in the domains of global finance and cosmopolitan culture, the anthropometric photographs and picturesque cartes de visite analyzed in this chapter provided this same subject a comforting experience of power and control at a time when colonial regimes of bodily and political subjection were being both contested (abolition of slavery) and amplified (European expansion in Asia and Africa). The anthropometric photograph stages a scene of subjection and sells the idea that in the age of freedom and equality the black subject can be reduced to a violable body and commodity to be possessed again.

Although Agassiz was an expert at designing classificatory systems based on measurements and comprehensive descriptions of living species, he did not tell the reader
of *A Journey in Brazil* which physical characteristics enabled him to distinguish so-called racially pure Indians from Africans or from “cross-breeds.” His classificatory logic finally emerged in Appendix V of the book. In this section of the manuscript, Agassiz provides a sketchy system in which the most powerful indicators of a person’s race are the parts of the body he thought to be immutable in adulthood and impervious to racial mixing. These include the length of the arms and legs in relation to the trunk, the shape of the neck and shoulders, and in the case of women, the space separating their breast.

Agassiz states:

> What struck me at first view, in seeing Indians and Negroes together, was the marked difference in the relative proportions of the different parts of the body. Like long-armed monkeys the Negroes are generally slender, with long legs, long arms, and a comparatively long body, while the Indians are short-legged, short armed, and long-bodied, the trunk being also rather heavy in build. To continue the comparison, I may say that if the Negro by his bearing recalls the slender, active Hylobates, the Indian is more like the slow, inactive, stout Orang... So far as my observation goes, the essential difference between the Indian and the Negro races, taken as a whole, consists in the length and square build of the trunk and the shortness of limbs in the Indian as compared with the lean frame, short trunk, deep-cleft legs, and long arms of the Negro (530-1).

In this introduction to matters of racial classification, Agassiz posits photographic vision as the instrument that allows him to see what he apparently had not been able to apprehend with the naked eye, that “the Negro by his bearing *recalls* the slender, active Hylobate, the Indian is more like the slow, inactive, stout Orang” (530, emphasis added).

Agassiz establishment of a metonymic link of contiguity between the Negro and monkeys is a crucial symbolic maneuver. In Christian iconography, the monkey served as proxy for vanity, luxury, licentiousness, and the devil (Sill 16). Moreover, by linking Africans
to apes, Agassiz mobilized the long held idea that blacks were closer to monkeys first formulated in discussions of the Great Chain of Being. Thus what Agassiz subsumes under the rubric of seeing is an ideological will to create a signifying chain where the verb—recall—ensures the association between the human and animal. To turn the image of an anatomically human body into a racial document, Agassiz’s interpretative voice has to shake the photograph out of its symbolic undecidability and discursively interpret it, via centuries-old stereotypes.

Agassiz alleges that his relentless observation was made substantially easier because the “uncultivated part of the population go half-naked and are frequently seen entirely undressed” (Agassiz 529). With this comment Agassiz disrobes and at the same time authorizes his observations, narrative, and photographs of the “uncultivated” humans he sets out to study. But since nothing in a picture is what it seems, the “uncultivated” population was neither naked nor happily surrendered to the eye of the camera or the will of the scientist. William James, distinguished assistant to Agassiz, describes the photographic scene thus:

I went to the photographic establishment and was cautiously admitted by Hunnewell with his black hands. On entering the room, I found Prof. Agassiz engaged in cajoling three moças whom he called Indians, but who I thought afterwards appeared to have white blood. They were very nicely dressed in white muslin and jewelry with flowers in their hair and an excellent smell of pripioca

In this entry from his journal, William James—who would go on to become a renowned psychologist and philosopher—exposes the fallacies of Agassiz portrayal of the local population. They were neither undressed nor were they *visibly* Indians; William James could not identify them as such and curiously found phenotypical traces of “white” blood in the bodies Agassiz labored to classify as Indian. James’ comment points to instability of the body as racial document. Agassiz’s scientific narrative tries to stabilize the vicissitudes of racial interpretation by producing his own disciplining/disciplined reading of the bodies of the women he “cajoled” into disrobing:

In a front view of an Indian and a Negress the great difference is in the width between the breast of the former as compared with the close approximation in the latter...But this is not all; the form of the breast itself is very different in the two. The Indian woman has a conical breast, firm and well supported. In the Negress the breast is more cylindrical, looser, and more flaccid (530).

The anthropometric photograph does not picture a “black” body. Rather, it manufactures an abstract body; a body Agassiz must read and interpret in order to tinge it black.

Agassiz’s purportedly scientific analysis of race begins by rhetorically likening the Negro

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7 The photographs taken by Augusto Stahl and Walter Hunnewell in Rio de Janeiro and Manaos respectively are currently housed at the Peabody Museum of Archeology and Ethnology at Harvard University. The anthropometric photographs discussed in this dissertation are not, however, part of the virtual exhibit. The archive can be accessed at: [http://140.247.102.177/col/shortDisplay.cfm?StartRow=21](http://140.247.102.177/col/shortDisplay.cfm?StartRow=21)

8 In the photographs taken by Stahl for Agassiz in Rio de Janeiro, the black women portrayed are naked, in the photographs taken in Manaus and to which James refers, Indian women were first photographed fully clothed and then a second image showed them bared to the waist, their breasts in full view. In some cases a third image was made showing them completely naked. Whereas in Stahl’s images slaves stood against a plain backdrop, Agassiz posed his Amazonian subjects in the center of a small disheveled room he used for a studio. In the photographs in which breasts are shown, evidence of the struggle to expose the women’s racial innate characteristics revealed itself in the form a heap of clothing on the floor.
to an ape. Agassiz’s ekphrasis highlights the most general scientific vocabulary—width, conical, cylindrical—to decipher the signature of race. The anthropometric image becomes scientifically productive a-posteriori: it achieves its status as documentary only after the scientist devices a language or a nomenclature with which to interpret what would normally be simply an arm, a leg, a pair of breasts, or hair. In this way, anthropometric portraiture is best understood as what Susan Williams has called, a “confounding image,” an image that conjoins the visual and the verbal and transforms portraits into “literary figures that encode a variety of narrative and cultural concerns” (15). In this racializing scheme, the proof of racial difference is found in a particular narrativization of physiological traits and it is the culmination of a process of subjugation that actualizes itself by referencing long standing ideological notions of otherness. Or, in Fanonian terms, Agassiz’s ekphrasis translates a corporeal schema into a racial schema and in so doing activates a signifying chain that stitches metonymically organic details to ideological texts—long-armed monkeys, tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism, slave-ships (Fanon Black Skins White Masks 112). As we can see, the meaning of Agassiz’s anthropometric photographs is produced by recalling a reservoir of texts that generate a corpus of knowledge and associations Agassiz hopes will sustain his “scientific” claims about human diversity. The anthropometric photograph, as my analysis makes clear, is not the result of neutral vision but a social object set out to work in specific contexts, defined by specific forces, and designed for specific purposes.

Agassiz’s travel to Brazil to collect photographic data and multiple other efforts to organize photographic archives of human species reveal how deeply racial science and its visual production relied on the unequal power dynamics of the colonial enterprise to
provide evidence of its scientific veracity. Photographs, contrary to what Agassiz would have us to believe, do not evidence anything. Rather, they are, as John Tagg explains, “an activity of production of meaning” (*Burden of Representation* 99). In scientific—and, as we will see, in honorary and picturesque photography—this creative activity, however, is entirely elided (ibid). The over-exposure of the subject portrayed and the dodging of the process that makes him/her appear as photographic object are constitutive features of the logic of visual realism. Agassiz’s photographs are excruciatingly frank photographs. Their sharpness, rigidity, stillness, austerity is the sterile ground on which the “truth” of what they represent is to be apprehended. This sterile environ, however, obscures the overt kind of manipulation required to visually actualize its seemingly unmediated, clean setting of exposure. It also silences the signs and narratives on which its apparently self-evident and hermetic meaning depend.

The genres of photography considered in this chapter (scientific, honorary, and picturesque) all conform, albeit to varying degrees, to the realist operation in which through “silent quotation, a relationship is established between the realist ‘text’ and other ‘texts’ from which it differs and to which it defers” (Tagg 99). These other texts might be ideological (theories of polygenesis, savagery, individuality, modesty, and so on), literary (the realist novel, as we will see in chapter 3), or visual (the tradition of the nude).

Whatever the constellation of meaning incited by the anthropometric photograph, what is clear, is that photographs can only accrue meaningful value as members of a set, a system. In the dynamic but circumscribed signifying system in which images operate, a photograph’s significance is often ascertained by the relationship it overtly or covertly establishes with other images (Wexler 167).
The likeness and the Portrait: Locating Race in Objects

The scientific images commissioned by Louis Agassis are intimately related to the ostentatious portraits made popular by photographic technology. The portrait is the most popular, lucrative, and long-lasting product of the business of taking likenesses. In the early days of photography, sitting for a portrait was a painful process. In 1839, the required sitting time was anywhere between two and fifteen minutes in bright sunlight (Lalvani 45). Moreover, one had to be harnessed into body and neck braces in order to remain immobile for the duration of exposure. Despite the difficulties of capturing an image, for many members of the middle classes, daguerreotypy provided the first affordable means of recording their own images and of collecting representations of their loved ones; a cultural practice that until the nineteenth century had been the exclusive right of the upper echelons of monarchical societies. The rapid advances of this new technology created a variety of image products and amplified the networks in which these images circulated.

With the invention of the negative/positive, collodion/albumen process, exposure times were shortened significantly, and photographic images became mechanically reproducible. Unlike the daguerreotype, which was a single, unique, non-reproducible image, the negative/positive process enabled unlimited copying of any given image, and consequently, photographs became both easier to obtain and easier to circulate.

Mechanical reproduction combined with new business ventures served to propel new fads, and by the 1860s, people began to collect and distribute mass-reproduced cartes de visite, small photographs mounted on a paper card, of themselves, famous actors and actresses, colonial native types, city views, politicians, friends, and family members.
(Wichard 21). As the technology was perfected, other institutions of social life began to incorporate the use of photographic image.

In his influential essay, “The Body and the Archive,” Allan Sekula explains that photographic portraiture in the nineteenth century was one of the most important catalysts for the creation and sustenance of sentimental and scientific discourses about the body. For Sekula, the typical portrait, with its self-consciously and impeccably dressed bourgeois subject leaning on a fake column or pretending to read at a small table; or, the family portrait with the patriarch at the center of the composition; or similarly, photographic likenesses of famous public figures popularized the “ceremonial presentation of the bourgeois self” (6, emphasis in the original). As Sekula himself emphasizes, the symbolic work of portraiture was not limited to its memorial or emulatory functions. In the public sphere, the portrait served another purpose: it became the main tool for the identification of those who were deemed abnormal or criminal, and as discussed above, the photographic portrait was also a constitutive instrument in the construction of biological racial doctrines. The coercive utility of the photographic portrait, Sekula argues, created a culture of unmasking the “other” and it instituted a visual practice that promoted civic-legal comradeship among (presumably) law abiding and normal citizens (17). For the purposes of this chapter, which are to understand the visual grammar that makes the visualization of race possible, the importance of Sekula’s argument is that it shortens the apparent distance between the family album and the police record and between the honorary portrait and the scientific photograph by alerting us to the classificatory logic intrinsic to and shared by the sentimental, juridical, and scientific procedures of image making.
In the nineteenth century, debates over the nature of the image of a person oscillated between what was called a “likeness,” an image that represented “merely how one looks” and a portrait, an image capable of representing the subject’s personality (Smith 56). How exactly was a photographer to render the subjective objectively visible?

To capture the individual essence, manuals advised photographers that “posture of the person sitting for the portrait should be easy and unconstrained; the feet and hands neither projecting too much, nor drawn too far back; the eyes should be directed a little sideways above the camera, and fixed upon some object there, but never upon the apparatus since this would tend to impart to the face a dolorous, dissatisfied look” (W. S. Haley qtd in Trachtenberg 26-7). The first step was thus to arrange an individual’s posture and pose in order to reveal her or his personality.

Figure 18, taken by Christiano Júnior in 1862, shows a man dressed in black trousers and frock coat who leans against an ornate column, eyes and body turned slightly away from the camera. The man, who is unnamed, is positioned in the center of the picture plane, with his left hand he holds a cane, with the other hand, he holds a black top hat. A dark curtain cascades down the left side of the picture, gathering behind the man’s feet (this curtain probably hides the base of a metal or wooden stand designed to keep the head steady). The man does not acknowledge the camera, he gazes off into space as if into infinity. Looking self-assured and prosperous, this man has paid to portray himself as an ideal citizen.
Figure 16: Untitled
Cristiano Júnior, 1862
O século XIX na fotografia Brasileira, Coleção Pedro Corrêa do Lago. Rubens Fernandes and Pedro Corrêa do Lago, Eds. 2000, p. 64
In the nineteenth century, this pose was endlessly repeated in photograph after photograph. If this portrait was commissioned to represent his essence how might we interpret the contrived and repetitive nature of his pose? Repetitive and predictable, popular and commercial, the carte de visite portrait does not offer the essence of the sitter or individuality. Instead, the rehearsed and typical poses drawn from a narrow repertoire of options and their massive proliferation remit us to a different kind of social enterprise. By capturing the body enveloped in proper clothing and placing it amidst items signifying refinement—books, Greco-roman towers, painted backgrounds reminiscent of bucolic landscapes—the portrait “performed a ritual of class declaration and belonging” (Batchen 88). If we place the scientific image side by side with the honorary portrait described above and picturesque carte de visite analyzed in the following section, we realize the commodities of distinction which surround the subject portrayed are succinct markers of class and fanciful images of race, of whiteness to be precise. As discussed earlier, one of the fundamental distinctions between the “savage” and the “civilized” is how and if the body is clothed. In the nineteenth century, fashion emerged as an intrinsic element of consumerist culture that served to “constitute group identity through imitation and competition for distinction, yet simultaneously promotes an individualist ethos dedicated to relentless innovation” (Marcus 8). By presenting himself as a fashionable individual, the man in the carte de visite asserts his (real or imaginary) membership in the middle class and shows himself as an autonomous subject who participates in capitalist rituals of consumption. And, since the colonial logic of domination works within a binary logic, to be civilized is to be not black, which is to say, white.
Picturesque Blackness

Christiano Jr. participa ao respeitável público e a seus amigos e fregueses em particular, que tendo acabado de fazer algumas reformas em seu estabelecimento, ele se acha de novo aberto à concorrência pública. Ultimamente recebeu um perfeito maquinário que tira doze retratos de uma só vez, talvez o único que exista nesta capital…
Este retrato a que chamam “timbre-poste” está muito na moda na Europa para cartões de visita, de boas festas e de casamento…
Vариada колле́пия de costumes et tipos de pretos, coisa muito própria para quem se retira para a Europa (Júnior qtd in Ferrez 46).

In this advertisement of his place of business, José Christiano de Freitas Henriques Júnior better known as Christiano Júnior, boasts about the technical sophistication of his photographic studio. The “ма́quinário” he is so proud of is a system of lenses invented by André Disdéri in 1854. Through the use of a sliding plate holder and a camera with four lenses, eight negatives could be taken by Disderi’s method on a single 8” x 10” glass plate that allowed eight 2-1/2” x 4” prints to be made every time the negative was printed.
Disderi’s invention allowed photographers to produce multiple, smaller, cheaper images. By the 1860s, cartes de visite (the commercial name for Disderi’s technique) had replaced the daguerreotype as the most popular and affordable type of photograph.

Another precious item in Christiano Júnior’s shop was his collection of photographs of the types and costumes of the black population of Rio de Janeiro. In this part of the commercial narrative, these photographs are targeted to a different public: the traveler. They are also a different type of product. They are not portraits of his “respeitado público,” “amigos,” e “fregueses.” These are images of strangers who did not commission a portrait but relinquished their bodies to make profit for photographer.

Beginning in the 1860s, photographs of “types and costumes” of colonial subjects became a fashionable, widely disseminated visual commodity in Europe.
cities such as Paris, London, and Berlin, commercial photography studios catered to European curiosity about the physical appearance of Africans, South Americans, Asians, and Polynesians by selling *cartes de visite* (Poole 42). This curiosity was satisfied, in part, with the work of the most celebrated Brazilian photographers such as Christiano Júnior, Marc Ferrez, Klum, and Augusto Stahl (Bia Corrêa 24). Christiano Júnior’s photographs are the most well-known and largest visual archive of enslaved people of African descent in Brazil before 1870 (Azevedo and Lissovky xi). As in the thousands of other images (photographic and otherwise) of peasants, slaves, the working poor, and indigenous “types” produced in other parts of the globe, Christiano Júnior posed his subjects inside his studio, although usually without the addition of the elaborately painted backdrops, furniture, flowers, and books that would have served to frame his “amigos” and “fregueses.” Instead, and in keeping with realist conventions of representation of picturesque and popular “types,” Christaino Júnior chose to adorn the photographic space with tools that referred to the enslaved person’s occupation—market women with fruit, water carriers with jugs, barbers with their razors (see figures 18 and 19). This group of images is the one that concerns us here.

The slave “types” that most appear in Christiano Júnior’s oeuvre are *escravos de ganho*, slaves who perambulated the streets of Rio de Janeiro selling agricultural products, sweets, coffee or providing services such as garbage disposal and hair cuts (Corrêa, *Fotógrafos do Império* 140). Figure 19 taken in 1865 is typical of Christiano Junior’s photographic scenes. It depicts a woman, a child, and a fruit stand.
Figure 17: Untitled
Christiano Júnior, 1865
Courtesy of Fundação Nacional de Artes (FUNARTES), Rio de Janeiro
The seated woman wears a long and very wide checkered skirt and a dark-colored jacket. A piece of cloth is tied around her waist. Her head is crowned by a carefully twisted cloth, which was probably used to balance her product as she walked around the city. Earrings dangle from her ears and, as with almost all slaves, she sports no shoes. Her face shows traditional tribal markings. She holds one of the fruits she is selling with her left hand while she stares blankly into space. A boy stands to her right and is dressed in a white outfit too big for his size. His shirt is tattered; he is barefoot and carries a small basket that contains fruits and vegetables. He extends his hand towards the woman but she seems to be barely aware of his presence. There is a stand on which fruit has been carefully arranged.

This *carte de visite*, as many of the other ones in which Christiano Júnior portrays black people achieves its realist effect by portraying (and establishing) connotative details, or, elements that fill up the surface and contribute to recognition of a visual theme. In this case, the naked feet, the head wrap and the fruit containers introduce the quotidian into the photographic frame and code the woman pictured as a fruit vendor. The quotidian lends veracity and verisimilitude to the image. It is this assumption of veracity that anchors the equivalence between Christiano Júnior’s image and a “real” *escrava de ganho* and street seller. Yet in this image, as well as the anthropometric and honorary photographs discussed above, everything is orchestrated. The customary messiness and movement of the marketplace is replaced with the harmonious arrangement of fruit. There is no discarded product, no rotten fruit or leaves are strewn about. There are no customers. There are no other vendors. As such, the realist effect of this photograph is not ensured by the replication of a lived context or event. Rather, these
images are successful as realist depictions because they call forth an accepted lexicon of signs wherein the presence of fruit equals fruit vendor. The coherence that characterizes this image neutralizes the chaos of the street and the marketplace and frames a new (aesthetically pleasing) version of selling fruit. As commercial objects or souvenirs, Christiano Júnior’s images offer what Malcolm Andrews has called a “controlled aesthetic experience” that allows the armchair traveler the opportunity to safely consume and assimilate encounters and places that might otherwise be dangerous, forbidden, or unattainable (7). These images encourage the viewer to see not where, what, and how, but merely who.

The insatiable thirst on the part of nineteenth century photographers and the consuming public for supposedly “real” images of “elsewhere” is, as Deborah Poole has argued, a manifestation of a larger cultural paradigm in which the world, like its images, are subjugated to European and North American military, cultural, and economic expansionism (Type Photographs 44). The photographs of Christiano Júnior are part and parcel of global trade in images that as Jens Andermann has shown “rather than radically recharting the social field of vision,” these images revived “the circuit of colonial imagery (portraiture, monumental landscapes, social and ethnic typification) and made it available in commodified form, both on a national scale and overseas” (Andermann 203).

In the remainder of this chapter, I am interested in deciphering the kind of work these images do at home. If in Europe, these images serve to bring the strange, the far away, and the exotic into the home, what desires do these images satisfy when they stay where they were produced, when they don’t travel? If as travel souvenir the picturesque type photograph represents an effort to manufacture intimacy where none is possible,
what does this image do when it is not dislodged from the material preconditions of its existence? In other words, what could this representation of an all-too familiar scene mean for its local bourgeois Brazilian consumers?

Christiano Júnior’s images almost always represent black slaves doing what makes them legible as slaves: work. If we take seriously the reference to the enslaved person’s working life, we will have to argue that in the context of the Brazilian mid-nineteenth century, the first task these images are called to perform is to create a visual demarcation of the spaces different bodies will occupy and types of labor these bodies will engage in.

In 1866, the year Christiano Júnior published the announcement cited above, there were about 80,000 enslaved people in Rio de Janeiro. As Mary Karasch has noted the business of slavery was lucrative in many respects:

Do seu ponto de vista, os senhores de escravos haviam desenvolvido um sistema ideal no Rio, no qual, em troca de um mínimo de roupas, alimento e abrigo, seus cativos lhes proporcionavam benefícios incalculáveis: riqueza, em termos do que geravam em rendimentos e bens; uma família extensa, em termos das mulheres e filhos que se incorporavam a ela; segurança, em termos de estabilidade monetária e garantias rápidas em emergências econômicas; um pequeno exército para protegê-los nas rixas e conflitos do período; e, por fim, uma rica herança para deixar aos filhos (260).

Most of these “beneficios incalculaveis” were the result of enslaved women’s domestic work. Forty one percent of Rio de Janeiro’s slave population worked in various forms of domestic service, with only 15 percent of that total being men (Graham 16, 209). The term serviços domésticos encompassed the work provided by servisais or criados (servants or maids), including coachmen, blacksmiths, laundresses, butlers, cleaning women, nursemaids, seamstresses, maids, water carriers, and inn attendants. Services could be performed by the householder’s own slaves, by other people’s slaves for wages
(escravos de ganho), or by free women and men, not to mention children. The urban home was, therefore, a space inhabited by women of varying kinds of social and legal status. The source of the elite home’s economic well-being was these women’s labor. In a country where the institution of slavery was widespread and long-lived and where slave labor was inevitably and unquestionably linked to the master’s household, why do picturesque photographs invariably picture black subjects outside the master’s home?

Christiano Júnior’s images are perfectly aligned with a colonial ideology that posited manual labor as a source of denigration. I argue that to imbue the black body with the signs of an occupation is to allow the white individual to continue to live out a fantasy of a life of leisure:

A brasileira põe o maior empecilho em não ser vista nunca em ocupação qualquer. Entretanto, quem for admitido à intimidade acha-la-á, pela manhã, de tamancas, sem meias, com um penteador de caça por vestido, presidindo a fabricação de doces, cocadas, arrumando-os nos tabuleiros de pretos ou pretas, que os levam a vender pela cidade, qual doces, qual frutas, qual outro os legumes da horta (Adele Toussaint-Sanson qtd in Leite, 63).

By circumscribing the body of the black person and the experience of blackness to the world of work, Christiano Júnior’s photographs provide the (white) brasileira with a imaginary world in which she is set free from the constraints of labor. She is also set free from her history as mistress or her history of inflicting pain.
Figure 18: Untitled
Christiano Júnior, 1865
Courtesy of Fundação Nacional de Artes (FUNARTES), Rio de Janeiro
Figure 19: Untitled
Christiano Júnior, 1865
Courtesy of Funadação Nacional de Artes (FUNARTES), Rio de Janeiro
A striking feature of figures 20 and 21, both taken by Christiano Júnior in 1865, is the austerity of the photographic space. Although we might surmise that the women pictured represent street vendors, we cannot locate them in any particular street corner or market place. Christiano Júnior does not provide a single clue as to where women like the ones he photographed might be found selling their wares. Herein lies the tension of the picturesque and anthropometric photographs: they offer the visual specificity of a particularized human subject as they eradicate that specificity through the excision of any referent the sitter’s identity and social context. We cannot even situate this woman in the place where her daily work routine begins and ends: the master’s house. As such, the work of the picturesque “type” photograph at home for a national audience is to de-familiarize the familiar. In other words, in the nineteenth century new visual technologies and genres facilitated the re-organization of the social and juridical boundaries against which the new social identity of an urban bourgeoisie could be drawn. In disaggregating the enslaved person from master’s household and placing her in a non-descript sterile space, Christiano Júnior’s images mask the brutal intimacy of racial and economic subjection. Christiano Júnior’s commercial visualization of black people releases the master from his role as oppressor and discharge the enslaved person into the oblivion of an informal capitalism where s/he used and spent by many.

The Obscure Fact of Blackness

In an article entitled “The Diversity of Origin of the Human Species,” Louis Agassiz suggests to his readers that when matters of racial detection are concerned, his eye can never be fooled. He tells the readers of the *Christian Examiner and Religious Miscellany* that the “African type” was a heterogeneous assortment of many different
species. The plantations of South Carolina provided, Agassiz contends, the context and opportunity for him to become adept at deciphering blackness:

The writer has of late devoted special attention to this subject, and has examined closely many native Africans belonging to different tribes, and has learned readily to distinguish their nations, without being told whence they came; and even when they attempted to deceive him, he could determine their origin from their physical features (Agassiz qtd in Rogers 43).

In this passage, Agassiz presents the black body as always and already in a state of disclosure. For Agassiz, black bodies will always betray their primal biography and his all discerning eye will always be able to decode this primordial identity. Although he construes his eye as the ultimate detection machine, this infallible eye needed the camera and the photograph to provide a visual ruse that ultimately allows him to classify race as anatomical discernible difference. We now know that the supposed decipherability of the black body is the most basic statement of modern discourses of race and we can also identify Louis Agassiz as one of the main engineers of this discourse.

Agassiz tells the readers of *A Journey in Brazil* that what most “strongly impressed” him while traveling in the “Upper Amazons” was:

[T]he necessity, in the first place, of a larger population, and, secondly, of a better class of whites, before any fair beginning can be made in developing the resources of the country; and, as an inducement to this, the importance of taking off all restraint on the navigation of the Amazons and its tributaries, opening them to the ambition and competition of other nations. Not only is the white population too small for the task before it, but it is no less poor in quality than meager in numbers. It presents the singular spectacle of a higher race receiving the impress of a lower one, of an educated class adopting the habits and sinking to the level of the savage (247).

The “task” of the white population in Brazil seems related to the task Agassiz might project on to the population of the United States as the Civil War ended. He posits the white race as an antidote to the savagery of lower races, and he looks to economic development—railroad expansion, agriculture, steam navigation, mining, forestry,
international trade—as a civilizing process in Brazil. In a subsequent footnote, Agassiz becomes more emphatic as he directly addresses his U.S. audience: “Let any one who doubts the evil of this mixture of races, and is inclined from a mistaken philanthropy, to break down all barriers between them, come to Brazil. He cannot deny the deterioration consequent upon an amalgamation of races,” which effaces “the best qualities of the white man, the Negro, and the Indian, leaving a mongrel nondescript type, deficient in physical and mental energy.” He concludes: “[R]espect the law of nature, and let all our dealings with the black man tend to preserve, as far as possible, the distinctness of his national characteristics, and the integrity of our own” (293). At stake, then, in Agassiz's journey to Brazil was more than a vast collection of "faunae" or photographs but also the conceptual frameworks of race, culture, and human potential through which U.S. citizenship would be imagined after the Civil War.

The abolition of slavery materialized, if partially, the concept of the free and equal individual bearer of political rights. It also signaled the redefinition of the nation as a community of individuals that were, in theory, free and equal to each other. The anthropometric photograph can be seen as a cultural commodity or fetish object whose function is to shield the white subject from the loss of his status as absolute master. The violence portrayed in these images assuages the anxiety produced by the impending lack and reduces, even if temporarily, the black body into something that can be possessed again. This photographic archive signals an anxiety about loss and a desire to visually manufacture new languages of differentiation and dominance. With images of Brazilian escravos de ganho Agassiz was to instruct (white) North Americans on how talk about and to visualize blackness, how to see in the musculature and physiognomy of enslaved
bodies essential differences that rendered them both distinct from and inferior to the
observer, his pupil, the (white) American. Thus Agassiz’s images function to educate
Anglo Americans about themselves by showing them how different they were from black
slaves. Anthropometric photography allows the symbolic fracture of equality and marks
once again the (black) body as fleshy site ripe for exploitation.

In Brazil, as in the rest of Latin America, visual genres such as the picturesque
have dominated the representation of black people. Historically, the iconographic
program has been to fix particular populations to particular geographies and socio-
juridical identities. Perhaps the most important feature of Christiano Júnior’s cartes de
visite is that they reduced a community of men and women into an indistinguishable and
commodifiable mass of washer women, nursemaids, coachmen, blacksmiths, butlers,
cleaning women, seamstresses, maids, water sellers, etc. As a consequence, in this visual
universe, black existence becomes reducible to and interchangeable with anonymous and
generic work on the streets. The serial fixation of the black body as labor force also
signals or can be read as a response to the dramatic changes in Brazilian labor and social
relations. The official abolition of the slave trade instigated, if not a crisis, then certainly
anxieties about embodiment.

The mass circulation of images of blacks did not furnish them the opportunity for
capricious self-fashioning. For at least the first one hundred years photographic visibility
was a trap for African and African descendents. They did not enter the studio to be
dressed up as individuals. They entered the studio and became scientific specimens and
urban marginalia. As scientific evidence, the anthropometric photograph enables the
construction and identification of racial polarities based on corporeal schemas. The
picturesque image, on the other had, treats the body as a function of labor and vice-versa. As such, it provides local elites with a clear identification of the bodies that work and the bodies that do not. It also allows them to imagine a world in which the spaces in which one lives (the home) and where one works (the street) are racially segregated. In so doing, the history of the labor relations that structured the master’s house was erased from the picture. Both visual genres mark the slaves as outsiders within: they are exiled from the master’s family and from the (white) family of humankind.

As many critics have argued, realism’s belief in its power to paint the world “as it is” is a delusional fantasy sustained by certain conventions such as linear narratives, omniscient narrators, and a barrage of sometimes trivial detail. In *Fiction in the Age of Photography*, Nancy Armstrong argues that realist fiction’s mimetic impulse or the genre’s illustrative and descriptive project, for which it is infamous, was heavily influenced by the advent of photographic technology. For Armstrong, realism is not, as many critics have argued, a “mode of writing that strives to document actual social conditions by means of visual description” (3). Instead, Armstrong maintains that photography elaborated “the social classifications that novelists had to confirm, adjust, criticize, or update if they wished to hold the readership’s attention” (ibid). My work in the following chapter takes Armstrong’s argument as a starting point to show that it was literary realism’s engagement with visual culture, experimental science, and the conventions it devised that made it possible for this particular genre to provide an account of race as innate biological characteristic of human beings. In particular, I will be detailing how the Brazilian novel *O Cortiço*, much like scientific and picturesque
photography, worked to re-evaluate the legacy of slavery, the slave body, and the slave’s role in the emerging Brazilian nation-state.
Chapter 3: Amigas andProstitutas: The Problem of Race and Reproduction in O Cortiço by Aluísio Azevedo

In the previous chapter, I revealed the tactics and conventions by which the manner in which photography was enlisted as a visual and ideological supplement for theorizations of race. I argued that photographic conventions of representation developed by anthropologists and natural historians made it possible to legitimize theories of racial superiority and inferiority by visually posing, framing, freezing, and isolating colonized and metropolitan subjects in particular ways. In that chapter, I also provided a reading of picturesque photography as a symbolic tool through which elites in Brazil and Colombia could consecrate their power in the face of radical social transformations, mainly the abolition of slavery and the establishment of the nation-state. In this chapter, I shift from a visual analysis of strategies of racialization to a literary inquiry into the status of the slave and reproduction in Brazilian naturalism.

The rise of photography and the realist novel—out of which naturalism develops—occur simultaneously at a time when the belief in observation takes center stage in the sciences as well as the arts. The representation of ordinary people and events instead of heroic and mythical ones and detailed descriptions of every daily life, especially of the middle classes, which have come to be associated with literary realism, had their visual analogues in Dutch genre painting of the seventeenth century (Bernard 7). By the middle of the nineteenth century the photographic image, argues Nancy Armstrong, had become the authoritative referent against which other forms of representation were measured, as well as the means by which the world was categorized and known (8). Moreover, photographic visual culture came to determine how things and people were seen (77). Writing about Brazilian naturalist literature in particular, Nelson Werneck Sodré explains that the reliance of naturalist literature on verbs such as “retratar” (to portray), “ver,” (to see), and “olhar” (to look) position the naturalist novel in the field of vision and photography. It is
the analogy between literature and seeing, he continues, that “permite ao naturalismo a obtenção de um efeito ótico e ideologico de identidade” (99, emphasis in the original). In literature this emphasis on the visual, inaugurated through the use of techniques and technologies that approximated the ideology of the disembodied all seeing eye, is first and foremost expressed through narrative point of view. Critics such as Mieke Bal maintain that the objective point of view of realism is directly correlated to geometric perspective invented during the Renaissance. Like the Cartesian perspectivalism identified by Martin Jay, realism assumes a mastering point of view through an external, invisible third-person omniscient narrator who offers an authoritative view of characters and events (Bal 170-171). Another important point of convergence between nineteenth century photographic visual culture and realist literature is a fundamental conviction that art should deal in un-affected representations of everyday life, in contrast to the mystifying enterprise of historical painting and romantic literature.

Nineteenth century literary realism found its classic expression in the works of Honoré de Balzac and Gustave Flaubert in France and George Eliot in England. In Spain, this movement was spear-headed by Fernán Caballero and its most famous works are those written by Benito Pérez Galdós and Leopoldo Alas Clarín. In Latin America this movement is associated with the work of authors such as Cirilio Villaverde, Alberto Blest Gana, Esteban Echeverría, Machado de Assis, Raul Pompéia. Generally speaking, realist writers had as their objective the production of literary works that showed reality as it was without embellishments. Closeness between reality

1 The dawn of the visible, or in Martin Jay’s words, the emergence of Cartesian perspectivalism, is characterized by the “lone eye looking through a peephole at the scene in front of it…static, unblinking, and fixated” (6, 7). Photography made it possible for the reader to locate herself as “disincarnated” and “absolute” observer (8). Martin Jay, “Scopic Regimes of Modernity.”
and the text was achieved, realist writers believed, through painstakingly describing the world around them. Just as the camera captured what lay in front of it in minute detail, realist writers offered their readers and founded their narratives on a thick web of verbal descriptions of the material world. The carefully crafted descriptive abundance that characterizes realist novels served to convince the reader that the picture being verbally painted was true to life. For realists, no event was too insignificant or no person too menial to be included in the portrayal of reality. In this respect, realism—in its effort to bring to light previously unseen or disregarded—is often associated with democratizing movements of the nineteenth century (Bowlby xiii). The subjects, spaces, and behaviors that came into focus—verbally and visually—were those who had rarely entered the dominant realm of representation—criminals, dilapidated buildings, prostitutes, insects, state officials, the crazed and deformed, slaves, dead babies, coal miners, books, (vanquished) Indians, spirits, and waterfalls. The realist writer guides the reader on a tour of experience where what is known is known because it is seen.

While realism was promoted as an artistic practice which was the result of impartial and neutral, naturalism advocated the use of an invested and methodological eye. Although naturalism is often associated with realism, which seeks to accurately represent human existence, the two movements are differentiated by the fact that naturalism is connected to the doctrine of biological, economic, and social determinism.

Rejecting complexity and arresting the ambiguity of human experience, naturalism stabilizes the irreducible potentiality of human experience into an explanatory system of inherited pathologies. To perform this ordering act, naturalist writers applied to literature the methods and discoveries of nineteenth century science. Naturalist writers took as their starting point Darwin’s theory of evolution—as theorized in the *Origin of Species* and *Descent of Man*—which broadly
speaking placed human life barely above the animal kingdom and portrayed life as a continuous struggle for survival. Theories of heredity, especially the works of Hippolyte Taine were likewise crucial for the development of naturalist literature. Taine argued that human behavior is determined by heredity, environment, and historical and social conditions (Brum Lemos 44, Gnuztman 22). Just as scientific and honorary portraits posed the subject in a carefully arranged environment where the presence (or absence) of particular objects—clothing, books, work tools, tables—denoted something essential about the person or specimen (re)presented, naturalist writers tested scientific theories by positioning biologically defective characters in particular environments and narrating the fulfillment of a biologically determined demise. In Èmile Zola’s first pronouncement on naturalism, published as a Preface to his 1868 novel Thérèse Raquin, he likens human beings to beasts who “devoid of free will” live and die under the “sovereign dominion of their nerves and their blood” and the “inescapable prompting of their flesh” (Zola qtd in Ledger 71). In 1880, Zola published Le Roman Expérimentale, his most forceful and influential statement advocating the appropriation of scientific principles by the novel. Drawing on Claude Bernard’s theory of experimental medicine and Taine’s writings on heredity, Zola suggested that methods used in chemistry and physics could be applied in literature and used ultimately to understand the way humans interacted with their environment. In his series of novels entitled Les Rougon-Macquart: historie naturelle el sociale d’une famille sous le Second Empire, Zola sets out to detail the workings, manifestations, and transformations of hereditary traits through the multiple generations of a family, the Rougon-Macquarts (Schor 137-139). In this series, Zola presents a saga of faulty reproduction in which the characters born of neurotic and adulterous Adélaïde Fouque who begets children by her legitimate husband, Rougon and her alcoholic and contrabandist lover, Macquart struggle to survive in a hostile environment. The
mother’s moral and physical deficiency are passed on to her progeny and each is characterized by a predisposition to murder, alcoholism, prostitution, poverty, and physical deformity, greed, and excess. Susie Hennessy has noted that although the mother is at the root of the characters’ degeneracy, she figures as an absent presence in Zola’s novels (2). It is this omnipresent and dangerous mother that, as Carol Mossman has argued, catalyzes Zola’s real concern—the biological and political reproduction of the body politic (186). As we will see, the obliteration of the female slave and the violent curtailment of her capacity for biological reproduction is, I argue, fundamental for our understanding of O Cortiço as a literary text concerned with viability of the emerging Brazilian nation-state.

Naturalism thrived by representing the poor and the places where they lived to middle and upper class audiences. Writers following Zola’s call for the realistic and scientific depiction of human behavior addressed themes considered taboo, such as unchecked sexuality, unencumbered greed, abject poverty, and disease. In these novels, characters struggle, often un成功fully, to overcome their physical constitutions and social conditions in typically urban and disease-ridden environments. Following Georg Luckás many critics see naturalism’s focus on description of the most reviled aspects of urban life reifying rather than properly narrating the historical crisis ushered by capitalism in the nineteenth century. For Luckás and the theorists of naturalism that followed his model, naturalism “debases characters to the level of inanimate objects,” the reader is not engaged politically but rather becomes a voyeur enjoying the bestial degeneracy of the characters portrayed instead of being enraged at the bestial system—capitalism—that churns out such characters (Fleissner 65). Post-structuralist approaches to realism, influenced by the work of Roland Barthes, Fredric Jameson, June Howard, and Amy Kaplan among others define naturalism as a suspect mode of culturally determined, ideological
discourse.² In these appraisals, realism is treated as a genre characterized by deception. In these critical appraisals, the genre’s long-held transparency and accessibility were now—in a twist on realism’s own rhetoric of discovery and disclosure—revealed as seductive and ideological misty cover which peddled an illusory, coherent bourgeois worldview.

My treatment of naturalism in this chapter builds on the work of critics who are suspicious of realism’s claim to clarity and objectivity such as Fredric Jameson, Toni Morrison, Alys Weinbaum, and Gabriela Nouzeilles. For Jameson, literary texts provide imaginary formal solutions to real social and ideological conundrums of the modern capitalist system. In The Political Unconscious, Jameson explains that, “[I]deology is not something that informs or invests symbolic production; rather the aesthetic act itself is ideological, and the production of aesthetic or narrative form is to be seen as an ideological act in its own right, with the function of inventing imaginary or formal ‘solutions’ to unresolvable social contradictions” (79). In this chapter, I will be arguing that the ideological function of Brazilian naturalism is to obscure and to ultimately purge the black woman from the aesthetic as well as the political and social realms of the emerging liberal nation-state. In Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination, Toni Morrison argues that the literary canon of the United States is haunted by and organized around what it signifies as a disturbing African presence. For Morrison, literary blackness is a “metaphorical” structure that demarcates not only ancestry or ethnic background but instead “a way of referring to and disguising forces, events, classes, and expressions of social decay and economic division far more threatening to the body politic than biological ‘race’ ever was” (63).

² For critical appraisals of realism, see: Fredric Jameson’s “Beyond the Cage: Demystifying the Ideology of Modernism;” June Howard’s Form and History in American Realism; and Amy Kaplan’s The Social Construction of American Realism.
For Morrison, textual strategies such as stereotyping, displacement, condensation, fetishization, and allegory (67-69) construct the black character as a surrogate for meditations on problems of human freedom, its lure and its elusiveness (38). In *O Cortiço*\(^3\), the conspicuous silence of the black female slave stands in for that which cannot be spoken about but that constitutes the national community—the fact that the penetration of her body was required for the success of the colonial enterprise and that her desecration will continue to be necessary for the foundation of a national community of free individuals. Following Morrison’s line of analysis, the mute presence of the black female slave in *O Cortiço* can be interpreted, even as the novel tries to deny it, as limiting the promise of liberalism or, better stated, her silence reveals that the dream of modernity as political utopia founded on colonialism and slavery can never be realized. Yet, in order to fuel the dream of a free and autonomous male subject, and thus an independent nation state, the novel must silence the slave both at the level of speech—Bertoleza never speaks—and at the level of reproduction—she terminates her pregnancies. By making her and her progeny disappear, the novel activates a “reproductive logic” that inaugurates a new historical time in which “the racial formation of the nation” can be cast as purified of the detrimental sediments of the colonial era. In her book, *Ficciones sómáticas*, Gabriela Nouzeilles takes up the question of the reproduction of the nation and argues that Latin American naturalist fiction fuses with state politics to create a language and grammar that disciplines incongruent bodies residing in the territory of the nation—immigrants, gauchos, prostitutes and so forth (27). Naturalism’s reliance of medical knowledge, Nouzeilles contends, crafts a direct link between the individual body, family heritage, and the

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\(^3\) In this dissertation, I am using the 1959 edition of *O Cortiço* published by Livraria Martins Editora.
nation (77), which at the end of the nineteenth century is understood not as a fraternal community as Benedict Anderson would have it but as a conglomeration of bodies that may or may not share linguistic and racial affinities (19).

Using the analytical categories mobilized by these critics, I argue that whereas in Zola, the members of the Rougon-Macquart family tainted with alcoholism and mental instability were to intermarry, proliferate and pass on their inherited weaknesses to subsequent generations, Azevedo’s project proposed instead a reversal of Zola’s pathological reproductions. *O Cortiço*, like *Les Rougon-Macquart*, was envisioned as part of a literary family saga. In 1885, Azevedo published an article in the *Revista Semana* in which he announced his project to produce a literary history of Brazil since the time of Independence (1822) until 1887. This study of Brazilian history was to be entitled *Brasileiros antigos e modernos* comprising five novels—*O Cortiço, A família Brasil, O Felizardo, A Loureira, and A Bola Preta*—that had as their objective “pintar cinco épocas distintas, durante as quais o Brasil vai se transformando até chegar ou a um completo desmoronamento político e social, ou a uma completa regeneração de costumes impostos pela revolução” (Azevedo qtd in Mérian 570). Influenced by Zola’s project in *Les Rougon-Macquart*, Azevedo wanted to portray the development of a Brazilian family through five generations. The first novel—*O Cortiço*—would tell the story of an illiterate Portuguese settler, his wife and their two-year old daughter and their life in Brazil. The novel would be driven by the story of the man’s work as a shopkeeper and his illicit sexual relationship with an enslaved black woman. The saga would continue in the second book—*A Família Brasil*—with the Portuguese settler’s affair with a *mulata* who introduces him to Brazilian culture. The third novel—*A Loureira*—would be dedicated to the Portuguese immigrant’s second marriage and would portray the lives of his *mestiço* children (Felizardo and Loureir). In the fourth novel, *O Felizardo*, Azevedo planned to
show Felizardo’s and Loureira’s social ascension through education and social contact with bourgeois culture and society. The fifth and final book, *Bola Preta*, was to focus on the marriages between these *mestiço* characters to distinguished members of the Brazilian bourgeoisie and was to lay out the development of a distinctly Brazilian family cleansed of its African past and closer to its patriarchal European ancestry.

Azevedo never finished the five volumes he set out to write. The novel he did publish condenses and reworks the themes described above. His work plan (and the published novel) clearly show his equation of Brazilian history with familial genealogy. In this novel, a Portuguese immigrant (João Romão) becomes the patriarch who, in a new land, transforms his work into wealth, in part by establishing sexual relations with black women. In Azevedo’s literary history of Brazil, sexual intercourse with the supposedly biologically inferior black female is posited not as act that ensures the transmission of atavistic degenerate traits, as it does in Zola, but as a necessary step for the founding of the Brazilian nation.

**O Cortiço**

Published serially in 1890, *O Cortiço* is often touted as Brazil’s premier naturalist novel. Azevedo adopted the strategies of the Emile’s Zola’s “roman experimental” and the precepts of determinism, and set out to write his novels based on intent observation and methodical deliberation (Mérien 572). Following Zola’s method, Azevedo hypothesizes about the intricate connection between human behavior, environment, and biology by illuminating their effects on each of his characters. The novel’s setting in a slum is representative of naturalism’s focus on urban life and nineteenth century concerns about overcrowding and public hygiene. Likewise, the detailed and sometimes overly explicit or gratuitous description of sex and poverty are characteristic of the literary genre spear-headed by Zola. Azevedo, in keeping with the belief in
biological and social determinism, writes a novel in which characters succumb to uncontrollable
desires fueled by their physical constitution, their atrocious surroundings, and their comingling
with other similarly corrupted characters.

In *O Cortiço*, enslaved workers, an emergent urban proletariat, Portuguese and Italian
modern settlers, lesbians, children, prostitutes, alcoholics, policemen, stonemasons, and witches
co-mingle in the tenement: they party, fight, have sex, eat, and empty their bowels together. The
word *cortiço* (or beehive) was coined in the eighteenth century to designate a series of small
rooms along a corridor or around a patio that serve as shelter for multiple families and
individuals. *O Cortiço* is also a story about a place that in the imagination of many fin-de-siècle
Brazilians, signified sordid behavior and hiding cavern for all sorts of deviants, from run away
slaves, to murderers, pickpockets, and prostitutes. Because of its overcrowded environs, its
unclean and physically defective inhabitants, and the unsavory behavior that supposedly took
place there, *cortiços* were imagined as places where disease-causing miasmas brewed (Chalhoub
*Cidade Febril* 20-28). On June 18, 1876, a reporter from the prominent Rio de Janeiro
newspaper, the *Gazeta de Noticias*, describes tenements thus:

Dentro desta cidade em que estamos, há outras pequenas cidades que ninguém vê, a não
serem os moradores. No meio de uma quadra de casas, há um pequeno portão, com um
largo corredor, e no fim uma população. É aí o cortiço. Fechado por todos os lados, só
penetra dentro dele o ar que nenhuma brisa altera nem agita, o ar preso ao solo pelos
miasmas que dele sobem (*Gazeta de Noticias* 2).

In the words of the first mayor of Rio de Janeiro, Cândido Barata Ribeiro, infamous for
championing a hygienic campaign that included the demolition of *cortiços*, tenements were:

Todos sabem o que é o cortiço...é a mina aurífera e inesgotável a saciar os sentimentos
vorazes destes corpos sem coração! Alimenta-os a lubricidade do vício, que se ostenta
impudonorosa (sic), ferindo os olhos e os ouvidos da sociedade séria que deles se
aproxima, e a miséria andrajosa e repugnante, que faz da ociosidade um trono, e por um
contraste filhos das circunstâncias peculiaridades à vida das grandes cidades, ao lado [...] do
vício e do lodaçal impuro do aviltamento moral, está também leito do trabalhador.
honesto, que respira a noite a atmosfera deletária destes esterquilínio de fezes (Barata Ribeiro qtd in Chalhoub Cidade Febril 51).

What Barata Ribeiro fails to tell the reader is that what he deems as repugnant spaces were actually homes to about 15,000 people in 1867. These overcrowded rooming houses served as shelter for free and captive African decedents and European immigrants and constituted a social phenomenon similar to the loathed favelas of our contemporary epoch. Azevedo’s depiction of tenement life is no different from journalistic, political or scientific tracts that described cortiços as the sources of moral depravity and physical disease. His version of tenement life, however, has been canonized as authentic depiction of life in the fringes of capitalism found in the belly of the city of Rio de Janeiro.

The very first critical readings of O Cortiço were framed by a discussion of truth and the tools one uses to achieve a fictional likeness of reality. In his series of reflections on naturalism published in the journal Novidades, Araripe Júnior (1848-1911), one of the most important literary critics of late nineteenth century Brazil, defined O Cortiço as a “psicologia do tumulto” and praised Aluísio Azevedo for his observational talents (90). By branding the novel as a psychology of the tumultuous, that is, a methodological observation and diagnosis of a disorderly, noisy, unsettling human collective the critic locates the novel in the realm of social science (it is not a fictional account but a scientific appraisal). In the twentieth century, the famed sociologist and ethnographer Gilberto Freyre extols the novel as sociological documentation of the first

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4 During the last decade of the nineteenth century, Rio de Janeiro saw a demographic explosion which added almost 170,000 people to the city, who engrossed the urban proletariat, and who put further strain in an already taxed housing market. Gilberto Freyre, in Sobrados e Mucambos notes that in 1869 there were 642 cortiços, with 9,671 rooms in which 21,929 people lived. Almost a decade after the publication of O Cortiço this number had more than doubled, there were 1330 tenements housing 46,000 people (300-302).
moments of the formation of the Brazilian nation: “Deixou Aluíso Azevedo no seu Cortiço um retrato disfarçado em romance que é menos ficção literária que sociológica de uma fase e de um aspecto característico da formação da nação brasileira” (607). Azevedo’s biographer, Jean-Yves Mérian, maintains that O Cortiço is the best example of literary documentation of life among Rio de Janeiro’s laboring and middle classes (572). Nelson Werneck Sodré who recognizes the ideological and sociological battlefield in which naturalism developed in Brazil still contends that “O Cortiço pinta o cenário urbano do final do século XIX e nele está perfeitamente fotografada a sociedade desse tempo, com as suas mazelas e as suas chagas. O autor desse livro não se propõe a solucionar os problemas da sociedade, mas sabe colocá-los em suas verdadeiras dimensões” (391).5

All of the commentators above use visual language (to portray, to photograph, to paint) to validate their assertion that O Cortiço somehow documents tenement life in Rio de Janeiro. The insistence on reading O Cortiço as mimetic literary staging of reality is due, in part, to the triumph of empiricism, an ideology whose objective is to deliberate about observable phenomena to ascertain the truth. Azevedo indeed quotes liberally from the everyday—he describes buildings, physiques, dress, and speech—to plant his narrative in the ground of truth. These fictional-real details carry out their mission of masking the fantastic subterfuge that undergirds the novel. In claiming that the novel is a perfect photograph of nineteenth century Brazilian society, critics such as Araripe Júnior, Silvio Romero, Gilberto Freyre, Werneck Sodré, and

5 At the time of O Cortiço’s publication, there was a heated controversy amongst critics regarding realism as a literary genre and its place in Brazilian letters. Machado de Assis, for example, describes realism as style that places too much emphasis “no excesivo, no tedioso, no obsceno, e até no ridículo.” See Assis’ “Os defeitos de O Primo Basílo” in Maria Ribeiro and Carlos Reis’ História Crítica da Literatura Portuguesa (40-45).
others succumb to the enchanting premise of realism: that there is no mediation between what is observed and how it is expressed. Consequently, they fail to take account of the dynamism between facts and fiction that characterizes naturalism.

In the 1980s, critical appreciations of this novel began to scrutinize the fictional-real pillars of Azevedo’s oeuvre. This new wave of critics analyze how the Azevedo represents women, racial groups, and the poor. In this vein, Antônio Cândido pointed out how the novel was a pioneer in depicting primitive modes of capital accumulation in fin-de-siècle Brazil (105-129). Affonso Romano de Sant’Anna, using a structural mode of analysis, highlights how the novel erects parallel universes—the cortiço and the sobrado— in which the characters act according to specific determining factors such as instinct in the first case and rationality in the latter (97-115). Flora Sussekind argues that naturalism’s narrative conventions are inspired by journalistic writing, and that Brazilian naturalism’s reliance on scientific language and precepts served to stifle complex treatments of the deep-seated divisions in Brazilian society. Mariza Corrêa describes the manner in which Azevedo’s novel helped to constitute the myth of the mulata femme fatale in Brazilian letters and popular culture. Notwithstanding these revisionary projects, there have been few notable examples of critical projects that seek to convey how race operates in this novel or how the racialized character—specially the slave woman—is constructed in the narrative.7

6 A sobrado usually refers to a middle class house consisting of two or more floors but occupied by a single family.
7 For works that take up the issue of race in Brazilian literature, see: Flora Sussekind’s O negro como arlequim: teatro e discriminação, Teófilo Queiroz’s Preconceito de cor e a mulata na Literatura Brasileira; David Haberly’s Three Sad Races: Racial Identity and National Consciousness in Brazilian Literature, David Brookshaw’s Race and Color in Brazilian
Azevedo followed the intellectual trend that put forward the idea that the worst legacy of colonialism and slavery was the emergence of a black and *mestiço* population plagued by all sorts of social and biological ailments. He disagreed, however, on how to rebuild the nation’s racial “stock.” In this chapter, I argue that *O Cortiço* is an indictment against proponents of *mestiçagem* (social and biological mixture) as a way to restore Brazil to its rightful path toward civilization and whiteness. For Azevedo, sexual and social liaisons between members of different racial, cultural, and economic groups leads not to an ever-whiter population and civilized manners but to degeneration and death. In Azevedo’s narrative, whiteness and civilization are not obtainable by shacking up with the racially inferior, as contemporary social scientists argued, but by severing relations with them.

In this chapter, I engage in an exclusive and in-depth analysis of *O Cortiço* because it is the most notable Brazilian naturalist novel to grapple with the role of women in Brazilian society. *O Cortiço* is a novel about transformation and it is the women, not the men, who catalyze the deep changes that drive the plot. Betoleza’s work allows João Romão, the owner of the tenement, to accumulate capital. Rita Baiana lures the ideal immigrant, Jerônimo, into her arms and causes his fall from grace: from dedicated worker he devolves into a lazy, irresponsible, sex-crazed drunkard. Finally, Leonie seduces the educated and well-mannered young women of the **cortiço** into a life of lesbian affairs and sex for sale. In *O Cortiço*, unlike his other novels, Azevedo’s primary characters are women who embody and helped to cement a number of racially and sexually charged stereotypes. Because so much of *O Cortiço*’s narrative energy is spent detailing

*Literature*, James Branche’s *Colonialism and Race in Luso-hispanic Literature*, Jean-Paul Tardieu’s *Del Diablo mandinga al muntu mesiânico*. 

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the wreckage women’s unbound behavior can cause, the novel moves between scientific and
cultural supported ideas about female problems and metaphors of national growth and
degeneration.

In the nineteenth century, as well as today, to talk about the family is to talk about
women. In this way, this novel is as much a story about the race as it is about gender relations and
how to cultivate sexual relations that lead to productive families. As Irene Gammel has shown,
naturalist fiction presents “male authors, narrators, and characters looking at, inspecting, and
framing female sexuality and the female body” (2). O Cortiço scrutinizes female behavior and
offers a pessimistic view of what happens when women’s sexual behavior is not properly
monitored. Indeed O Cortiço shows us households shattered by poverty and characters driven to
alcoholism and social perversion due to a dreadful environment. Yet, what I will be advocating
for in this chapter is that we need to see the peculiar way in which reproduction—which is to say
gender and race—enter into these classically naturalist representations of the forces of
determinism. O Cortiço engages a crucial moment in post-colonial Brazilian history when
nationalist discourse constitutes female and raced bodies as privileged sites where various
struggles are waged over the meaning and ownership of those bodies. Those struggles, as I shall
try to demonstrate, open up an important avenue toward our understanding of the vexed nature of
postcolonial national formations.

The Black Problem

The crisis of white male power brought about by the abolition of slavery, catalyzed the
construction of a new language of difference in Brazil. On the eve of abolition, Brazilian elites
faced a most perplexing conundrum: at least sixty-five percent of the population of Rio de Janeiro
was black or racially mixed, and therefore were, they believed, unprepared for government,
unruly, and above all doomed to degeneration. The question for Brazilian ruling classes was: how were hundreds of thousands of former black slaves to be integrated into the fabric of the nation state? The answer did not yield easy answers.

Brazilian intellectuals proposed *branqueamento* (whitening) as a strategy to solve social problems they associated with the legacy of slavery. Lethargy, lasciviousness, ignorance, and physical infirmness were all attributed to blacks. Aureliano Cândido de Tavares Bastos, a respected member of parliament, founder of the *Sociedade Internacional de Imigração*, and early proponent of the racial inferiority of blacks, helped to propagate the idea that blacks needed to be extricated from Brazilian society on the basis of their deleterious influence on the culture and biological composition of the population. For Tavares Bastos, blacks,

…além de afugentar o emigrante europeo, era, em vez de um obreiro do futuro, um instrumento cego, o embaraço, o elemento de regresso das nossas indústrias. O seu papel no teatro da civilização era o mesmo do bárbaro devastador das florestas virgens (Tavares Bastos qtd in Azevedo 64).

Faced with the dilemma of a population that, according to political and biological theories of the time was physically defective and forestalled the country’s march toward civilization, Brazilian scientists embraced social evolutionary schemas that according to them would ensure the nation’s biological and social survival. Sílvio Romero, lauded for inaugurating the field of literary criticism in Brazil, advanced *branqueamento* as biological imperative if Brazil wanted to achieve a glorious future. In this respect, he asserted that,

A minha tese, pois, é que a vitória na luta pela vida, entre nós, pertencerá no porvir ao branco, mas que este, para essa mesma vitória, atenta as agruras do clima, tem necessidade de aproveitar-se do que útil às outras duas raças lhe podem fornecer, máxime a preta, com que tem mais cruzado. Pela seleção natural, todavia, depois de prestado o auxílio de que necessita, o tipo branco irá tomando a preponderância até mostrar-se puro e belo como no velho mundo. Será quando já estiver de todo aclimatado no continente. Dois fatos contribuirão largamente para tal resultado: de um lado a extinção do tráfico africano e o desaparecimento constante dos índios, e de outro a emigração europeia! (Romero qtd in Azevedo 71).
For Romero as well as other prominent intellectuals of the time, the presence of blacks was to be mitigated through sexual intercourse with “superior” races and the adoption of a neo-Lamarckian regenerative program of sanitary, educational and medical intervention by which the advancement of civilization, progress, and national health would be ensured (Stepan *The Hour of Eugenics* 186-191). The most notable Brazilian naturalist novels of the time, *O Mulato, Casa de Pensão, O Cortiço*, (Aluísio Azevedo, 1881, 1884, 1890) and *Bom Crioulo* (Adolpho Caminha, 1895), explicitly challenged the optimistic view of Brazilian intellectuals who promoted the idea that progress and civilization could be obtained through fraternization among disparate racial and social groups. If the “foundational fictions” of the Romantic era posited intimacy and sexual intercourse between individuals of different racial, class, and political backgrounds legitimated in matrimony as the solution to social and political strife in newly constituted nation-states, the novels produced during the naturalist period promoted a vision of degeneration and collapse in which the coupling of protagonists of racially distinct groups and socio-economic classes was neither productive nor entirely heterosexual. Novels such the aforementioned—written and published in the lead up to the aftermath of abolition—discredit and condemn miscegenation, mixture, and/or fraternity as a way to neutralize racial and social conflict and achieve a bright white future.

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8 It is important to note that for intellectuals such as Romero, blacks as well as whites needed to undergo the process of “miscegenation.” Blacks needed to mate with whites to achieve a higher mental and social state. Whites, on the other hand, needed to mix with blacks to achieve the physical endurance required for living in the tropics. Because the white race was inherently superior, the process of natural selection would, in the end, produce a superior Arian species acclimated to the American environ.
Naturalist Erasure: The Literary Purging of the Black Woman’s Body

In Chapter Two, I discussed how nineteenth century conceptions of race privileged visual inspection of the surface of the body to promote theories of innate racial superiority and inferiority. Racial theorists using visual technologies, I argued, surveyed the body’s surface and labored to ground racial meaning in anatomical characteristics such as skin color. As the body began to be charted in the name of racial classification, aesthetics and concepts such as beauty and ugliness began to be used as classificatory schema to further anchor the differentiation of human beings along racial categories. In this aesthetic assessment of race, physical beauty became associated with proportion, symmetry, and fair white skin (Lyengar 50). These racial discourses constituted black bodies as unsightly, deformed, and diseased (Gilman 216). Black women in particular came to represent extreme examples of otherness as is evidenced by the voyeuristic fascination with their physical features, their buttocks and their genitals (Shapley-Whiting 23). In O Cortiço, the black woman’s body is shown as ugly and deformed or as a site where animal qualities intermingle with human attributes to enliven a grotesque being. Azevedo is unrelenting in his description of Bertoleza, she usually appears as a gross pile of parts:

Mas a bôlha de seu desvanecimento engelhou logo à vista de Bertoleza que, estendida na cama, roncava, de papo para o ar, com a bôca aberta, a camisa erguida sôbre o ventre, deixando ver o negrume das pernas gordas e lustrosas. E tinha de estirar-se ali, ao lado daquela preta fedenta a cozinha e bodum de peixe! Pois, tão cheiroso e radiante como se sentia, havia de pôr a cabeça naquele mesmo travesseiro sujo em que se enterrava a hedionda carapinha da crioula? (170).

In Azevedo’s this schema, blackness is constituted as hideous sight/site. Bertoleza’s fat, shinny legs and her fishy smell turn her into gross matter: a liminal body that is neither human nor animal but both at the same time. In her body, fish qualities (particularly, its pungent smell) and human attributes (snoring and fatty tissue) intermingle to create a monstrous being. Bertoleza’s body, in its reeking ugliness becomes the antithesis of desire. This characterization of her body
yanks Bertoleza away from the world of sexuality and intimacy and invisibilizes the sexual and affective bonds between her and João Romão. In a novel brimming with explicit descriptions of sexual encounters, Bertoleza’s and João Romão’s intimate life is never described. Instead, what we get is a portrait of their relationship as work partners.

The narrative silence that veils their activities in the bedroom, coupled with Bertoleza’s grotesqueness is an effort on Azevedo’s part to reinforce the idea that despite Bertoleza’s intimate relationship with João Romão she exists not to excite his affection or passion but to augment his wealth. In this period of transition to capitalism, João Romaõ’s transforms Bertoleza’s labor into the currency that purchases his cortiço, keeps his store stocked with imported goods, and ultimately catalyzes his climb (through proper marriage) into the upper class. By obscuring the libidinal economy that undergirds João Romão’s rise to prestige and power, Azevedo effectively erases the history of a colonial economy fortified by the sexual exploitation of black women by white men.

The significance of black women’s sexual and manual labor is further attenuated when Azevedo acknowledges, summarily, Bertoleza’s sexuality. Because he couches her sexuality in biological determinist rhetoric, her sexual agency and the system that fueled her sexual exploitation are, once again, obscured. In O Cortiço, determinism is dramatized, first and foremost, by creating characters devoid of what in the nineteenth century became the hallmarks of personhood: freedom, rationality, self-regulation. In this novel, lack of self-control and the prevalence of instinctual impulses are best exemplified by the sexual “choices” of the black women in the novel. Bertoleza and Rita Baiana engage in intimate relationships with white men not out of love or desire but as a biological compulsion that drives them into the arms of white men. At the beginning of the novel, the narrator informs us that Bertoleza disdained black men.
and refused to form intimate relationships with them. She prefers illicit relations with white immigrant men instead of marrying black men. Bertoleza is described as neither single nor married: she is “amigada.” In other words, she is involved in an illicit sexual relationship with a Portuguese immigrant whose name is not given and who is dead by the third paragraph of the novel. Not long after his death, she becomes João Romão’s “amiga”: “[João Romão] propôs-lhe morarem juntos, e ela concordou de braços abertos, feliz em meter-se de novo com um português, porque, como tôda a cafuza, Bertoleza não queria sujeitar-se a negros e procurava instintivamente o homem numa raça superior à sua” (20). Similarly, Rita Baiana cannot contain herself in the presence of a white man: “o sangue da mestiça reclamou os seus direitos de apuração, e Rita preferiu no europeu o macho de raça superior” (87). In a curious rhetorical move, the narrator ascribes legal (and biological) rights to blood and makes Rita’s sanguineous stream responsible for her sexual desire. Both Bertoleza’s and Rita Baiana’s sexuality is a manifestation of the body’s search for a more perfect state, which in Brazilian social theories of the time, could only be achieved through miscegenation. By re-writing black women’s sexuality as an evolutionary biological imperative Azevedo re-writes a colonial policy in which the rampant rape of black women was a colonial strategy to ensure the continual reproduction or the multiplication of white men’s property and power.

In O Cortiço, Bertoleza is described as João Romão’s “caixeiro”, “criada”, and “amante” (21). She becomes nothing else and nothing more. In her triple role as employee, domestic servant, and lover Bertoleza exists to augment her lover’s fortune. The kitchen is the primary site of her labor. In her triple role, the narrator tells us, she worked tirelessly and happily from dawn to dusk:

Mourejava a valer, mas de cara alegre; às quatro da madrugada estava já na faina de todos os dias, aviando o café para os fregueses e depois preparando o almôço para os
trabalhadores de uma pedreira que havia para além de um grande capinzal aos fundos da venda. Varria a casa, cozinhava, vendia ao balcão na taverna quando o amigo andava ocupado lá por fora; fazia a sua quitanda durante o dia no intervalo de outros serviços, e à noite passava-se para a porta da venda, e, defronte de um fôgareiro de barro, fritava figado e frigia sardinhas, que Romão ia pela manhã, em mangas de camisa, de tamancos e sem meias, compra à praia do Peixe. E o demônio da mulher ainda encontrava tempo para lavar e consertar, além da sua a roupa do seu homem, que esta, valha a verdade, não era tanta e nunca passava em todo o mês de alguns pares de calças de zuarte e outras tantas camisas de riscado (22).

Bertoleza is the ideal servant—productive force and invisible subject. Bertoleza’s conspicuous (in)visibility and her unobtrusive existence is essential for the nourishment of others—she cooks for everyone in the cortiço. Bertoleza prepares and is food; she/it is the ever-smiling source of sustenance for her white master, his employees and his tenants. If size is usually identified with strength, then Bertoleza’s vastness subverts this stereotype. Her largeness is not an indicator of power, it is rather, the metaphor of her oppression. Although she is fat and she reeks, she does not inhabit or even overtake any space in the novel. She never engages in conversation with anybody (not even her “amigo”) nor does she participate in the cortiço’s Sunday parties. We do not even see her interacting with her customers at her fried fish stand. The writer does not care to create a textual life for this character. She appears rarely and when she does, she is usually alone and working. Aside from these fleeting appearances, Bertoleza is virtually invisible. This absence contrasts with the larger-than-life presence ascribed to her nauseating body. Bertoleza emerges, then, as an anomalous figure: she is spectacularly visible but she is also a barely-seen-and-barely-heard subservient body.

Bertoleza’s silent but productive body becomes João Romao’s best tool of accumulation. As soon as he consummated his sexual union with her, he embezzled her savings—money she had saved to buy her freedom—and purchased a piece of land beside his tavern. A year after his, as the narrator puts it, “aquisição da crioula” he bought even more land and built “três casinhas de
This act of buying land, which was made possible by his “acquisition” of Bertoleza, initiates João Romão’s trajectory as a capitalist subject whose continuous source of revenue is guaranteed by Bertoleza’s untiring labor. Like the colonial master, João Romão’s course of accumulation of wealth depends on the conquest of land and the work of gangs of workers. João Romão’s rise to power and economic solvency was both distinct and similar to the colonial settlers who came before him. Unlike his colonial predecessors, João Romão’s system of capital accumulation was not based on agriculture; it was engineered through a scheme of money lending, manufacturing, the selling of commodities and slaveholding. Like his colonial forefathers, he used sexual relations with his subordinates as a strategy of capital accumulation. João Romão’s acquisition of Bertoleza, which he secures through subterfuge (he tricks Bertoleza into thinking he has negotiated her freedom) and, especially, concubinage proves to be his “get out of poverty” card.

Set during slavery but written two years after its formal abolition, *O Cortiço* negotiates the legally sanctioned political inclusion of Africans and their descendants in the emerging nation-state. The novel, however, refuses to accept the new liberal order of the nation. Instead, it perpetuates a legacy of envisioning the place of blackness as the place of servitude and hard labor. During colonial times, the African body became both laborer and legal instrument, acquiring a form of commodity status. In this system, the black woman’s body was particularly valued. Maternity constituted the basis of slavery: the status of the mother determined if an individual was deemed free or enslaved at the moment of birth. This matrilineal logic of descent violated the fundamental principles of patriarchal society and European common law in which legal status and economic inheritance was bequeathed from father to son. The objective of this legal reversal was clear: it was designed to accumulate wealth through the potential child bearing
capacity of African woman’s womb and to enable the commoditication of African people through sexuality deployed in the interest of capital accumulation. The abolition of slavery dismantled the colonial system of birthright. With the adoption of liberal precepts of citizenship, freedom, and equality, a new blueprint for the transmission of power and property would have to be elaborated. The function of the happy black woman domestic servant can be connected to the realization that capitalism and “progress” would, just as in colonial times, need exploitable cheap labor. Black women’s reproductive and work capacities were as critical for the emerging nation as they had been during colonial times. Given Brazil’s colonial legacy, Bertoleza’s silence, her happiness in servitude, and her undesirable (yet needed) body contribute to the ideological work of making the exploitation of black women in Brazil seem natural, normal, inevitable part of everyday life and as the invisible yet constitutive foundation of the nation-state. Bertoleza’s invisibility signals the novel’s colonial impulse to keep her closely exploited and safely at bay. The novel’s end, however, dramatizes the concern over racial purification expounded by theories of branqueamento. Bertoleza’s violent end points to the underlying ideological bent of the novel: to establish an endogamic sexual regime, which is to say, a program of biological and political reproduction founded on the excision of blacks from both the familial structure and kinship relations and therefore from the national scene.

Although Bertoleza’s labor drives capital accumulation and literally and figuratively feeds those around her, she ultimately becomes a hindrance to João Romão’s ascension to a higher realm of social existence:

Bertoleza devia ser esmagada, devia ser suprimida, porque era tudo que havia de mau na vida dêle! …Ela era o torpe balcão da primitiva bodega… era o peixe trazido da praia e vendido à noite ao lado do fogareiro à porta da taverna…era o sono roncado num colchão fétido, cheio de bichos; ela era a sua cúmplice e era todo seu mal—devia, pois, extinguir-se! (233).
João Romão’s campaign of extermination begins.

With the help of Botelho, the ex-slave driver, João Romão conspires to inform Bertoleza’s old master’s son of her whereabouts. João Romão will make her disappear by returning her to her legal and rightful owner. His other tactic of elimination is to remove himself from the story he tells of Bertoleza’s life, in the process cleansing himself of his working class background and his role in her enslavement. It was, after all in his tavern that she worked. A tavern he acquired after long perilous years of work for a dead Portuguese man who owned the tavern before him. What João Romão fails to recall in this pernicious instance of deliberation is that the mattress, which he now describes as fetid and infested with bugs, was the first one he ever slept on. Before he shared Bertoleza’s bed, he used to lay his tired body on the cold surface of the tavern’s counter. His first possessions were the ones he acquired when he became Bertoleza’s master. By making himself disappear from his version of Bertoleza’s life, João Romão erases his own history of hard labor and negates his role in the enslavement of his sexual and work partner.

Azevedo’s program for Bertoleza’s eradication begins by stripping her of her humanity and replacing it with a state of thingness (she was the countertop of the primitive tavern) and animality (she was the fish brought from the beach). He then proceeds to divest Bertoleza of her name (the only sign of the little subjectivity he afforded her throughout the novel) to refer to her as simply “a negra.” Finally, he orchestrates her death as a scene of self-inflicted butchery:

A negra, imóvel, cercada de escamas e tripas de peixe, com uma das mãos espalmada no chão e com a outra segurando a faca de cozinhar... recuou de um salto, e antes que alguém conseguisse alcançá-la, já de um só golpe certeiro e fundo rasgara o ventre de lado a lado (254).

Bertoleza’s final act completes the cycle the writer has laid out for her: commodification, consumption, and finally, annihilation. What is most vexing about Bertoleza’s predicament is that João Romão, in his haste to get rid of her so that he can continue to climb the socio-economic
ladder through marriage to a “proper” lady, can only imagine getting rid of her through murder or by returning her to slavery. At no point in the narrative does he consider the possibility of either buying her freedom or simply severing his relationship with her. By killing her, Azevedo brings forth the symbolic and juridical “law” that ensured the productivity of the colonial system—the social death of the slave—into the new political configuration of the liberal nation-state. As Orlando Patterson has demonstrated, all slave societies integrated slaves as “socially dead” beings, that is, as beings who had no de facto and, more importantly no de jure access to the civil and political structures of society (1982). Defined as property and treated as animals, the existence of the slave was overdetermined by an impossible “choice”: she could either “choose” the “social death” of slavery, which stripped her of social, political and legal rights within the master’s society; or, she could opt for “actual death,” which freed her from slavery but at the cost of her material and social existence. Faced with the prospect of re-enslavement, Bertoleza “chooses” suicide. This final act of self-effacement is the only vestige of agency the author allows her. This spectacular act erases her existence and concludes her role in João Romão’s life. By sacrificing Bertoleza, João Romão wields a form of colonial power that institutes a radical demarcation and denial of kinship between himself and his former lover and beast of burden.

In the colony, the black woman’s body was valuable to the extent that it enabled the reproduction of a theoretically endless supply of unpaid labor and served as literal and figurative nourishment (physical, emotional, sexual) for the master’s class. In the post-colonial moment, the productivity of black women’s bodies must be re-assessed and re-figured and O Cortiço engages in that project. By foreclosing the possibility of black women’s (or their progeny’s) survival, the novel institutes a violent mode of racial cleansing as a way to secure the utopia of a future whiteness. In Wayward Reproductions: Genealogies of Race and Nation in Transatlantic Modern
Thought, Alys Weinbaum—building on the work of feminist scholars of nationalism—reminds us that human reproduction and kinship structures function as tangled mechanisms that orchestrate inclusion and exclusion in both colonial and post-colonial societies. The racial cleansing Azevedo seeks to institute depends on a notion of nationalism as genealogical purity which, as Weinbaum points out, can only be generated by disavowing or repressing the complex history of reproduction in the centuries before the abolition of slavery (59). As such, Bertoleza’s violent death articulates Azevedo’s sexual and racial anxieties about the nation’s inhabitants and the nation’s future. At the same time, Bertoleza’s death effectively silences the sexual politics of colonial patriarchy.

In the nineteenth century, the Brazilian intelligentsia based their recipe for national progress on the concept of branqueamento, or as I understand it, a politics of managed reproduction. In their view, controlled mestiçagem was the way to decant the national body of its impure bloodstreams. What these men of science and letters were proposing was, in fact, a re-signification of white men’s sexual access to the body of women of color as a national imperative. For these social scientists, proper sexual relations were the first step in a program of hereditary regeneration that would eventually produce a healthy population and ensure the nation’s triumphal march into the future. Contrary to the basic tenets of biological branqueamento, which is based on white men’s unhindered sexual relations with the racially inferior in order to produce an ever whiter progeny, none of the inter-racial couples in O Cortiço bear children. Bertoleza offò herself and her children—she has had two abortions, João Romão informs us in passing—and there is no news about Rita’s future motherhood. The process of depuration proposed by Azevedo is achieved not by the fulfillment of male sexual desire evidenced by ever-whitening offspring but by the practice of maximum exploitation and
subsequent annihilation of black women and their progeny. The foreclosure of black reproduction in *O Cortiço* signals Azevedo’s refutation of a liberal program that postulated sex between white men and women of color as a point of departure for the constitution of an invigorated (and eventually white) national body. This refutation confirms contemporary theories, such as those championed by Louis Agassiz and Nina Rodrigues that argued against racial mixture and prescribed the absolute and conclusive removal of blacks from the national body.

The violent argumentative logic of Azevedo’s *O Cortiço* reveals that the fictional figuring of the nation is connected to a tension between two opposing forces: a liberal understanding of community that incorporates (even if differentially) individuals under the banner of freedom and equality and a disciplinary program that expels from the circle of the chosen few all those that are recast as constitutionally different. This anxious ambivalence turns the foundational utopia of the liberal nation against itself, by revealing at its very core a basic impossibility: the incorporation of the black female subject into the realm of communal relations.

While the colonial state was organized on the basis of a patriarchal household sustained by polygamy and whose ethics made all sexual relations possible and desirable for the white man (Almeida 55), *O Cortiço* proposes a new sexual order. In *O Cortiço*, white men’s unbridled sexuality of colonial pasts is critiqued and sanctioned. The novel suggests that the post-colonial family must be based on an understanding that sexual relationships with black women in particular are productive but poisonous and thus no longer sustainable. The sexual prohibition for men, instituted by the novel, guarantees the passage from a patriarchal slave family where the biological future of the population and the master’s wealth were augmented by master’s sexual freedom and coupling with black women to a bourgeois nuclear family where endogamy is instituted as a norm. Endogamous coupling along with hygienic intervention of white women’s
bodies would produce a family capable of forming individual citizens who were biologically enhanced and made productive for the nation-state.⁹

**Bad Women and the Problem of the Nation**

In the nineteenth century, the family, matrimony, and virtuous womanhood became, the fundamental pillars in discourses and imaginings of the new Latin American nation-states.¹⁰ In their study of medical thought in Rio de Janeiro, Espírito Santo et al. note the abundance of medical theses about women and female disorders in nineteenth century Brazil (19). Female maladies such as irregular menstruation, unhealthy gestation, frigidity, prostitution and dangerous practices such as sexual intercourse across racial boundaries became a constant preoccupation of medical students. The proliferation of investigations concerned with female “diseases,” the authors argue, indicates the degree to which women’s bodies became the contested site of biological and political discourses about the reproduction of Brazilian citizens. Women, in general, proved problematic for these learned men. Although upper class white women were defined as superior biologically and socially, they had weak psychological and physical constitutions that made them inadequate to bear children. Black women, in contradistinction, were imagined to bear children easily, painlessly, and shamelessly, often while carrying out difficult physical tasks (Morgan 31). Moreover, poor and women of color were often represented as sex-crazed, irresponsible, and the source of multiple physical and social diseases (Espírito

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⁹ For studies of the Brazilian family, see: Maritza Corrêa’s “Repensando a família patrialcal brasileira;” Roberto DaMatta’s *A casa e a rua*; and Dain Borges’ *The Family in Bahia, Brazil 1870-1945*.

¹⁰ For analyses of the intersection of medicine, race and gender, see Juandir Freire Costa’s *Ordem Medica e Norma Familiar* and Roberto Machado et al., *Danação da norma: medicina social e constituição da psiquiatria no Brasil*. 
In *O Cortiço*, women’s sexuality is a complicated matter. When the narrator reports that: “o sangue da mestiça reclamou os seus direitos de apuração, e Rita preferiu no europeu o macho de raça superior” (87), he is expressing the view that what drives black women’s sexual choices is a instinctive need and organic impulse to purify bloodstreams through sexual relations with white men. Black women’s sexuality is always, the text suggests, prescribed by the body itself. In other words, the body, in self-preservation mode, scans its surroundings to find its best suitable partner, the one that will jumpstart its upward mobility toward whiteness. In this way, black women’s sexuality is placed in the realm of predictable and perfectible biology. And, although their choices may create havoc in legitimately constituted families (as Rita Baiana’s did), black women’s desire is delimited by inevitable biological stimuli and not free will or love. White women’s sexuality, on the other hand, is presented as erratic and willful and therefore dangerous to the delicate fabric of the family and the nation-state. In *O Cortiço*, white women trade sex for money, turn motherhood into a profitable business, and, in some cases, abandon heterosexual sex altogether. In this regard, Azevedo is no trailblazer. His novel, like many other naturalist narratives, scientific studies, and social commentaries published at the time is concerned with women who don’t conform to and disrupt societal norms of chastity, submission, and domesticity. By focusing on the behavior of bad women and illegitimate family structures, *O Cortiço* articulates sexual and political anxieties about Brazilian society that depended on racial and gender-specific tropes. If the black woman must be killed off, the white woman, Azevedo

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11 For a thoughtful discussion of Rita Baiana’s character, see Leonardo Pinto Mendes’ “Rita Baiana: nação e sexualidade em *O Cortiço,*” in *O Retrato do Emperador.*
suggest, must be brought within the fold of heterosexual matrimony. Otherwise, they will give in to immoral and physical impulses that will threaten the stability of the family and therefore the nation-state.

Women who live and work outside the regulated environment of the home and who engage in morally reprehensible behavior populate the *cortiço*. The novel’s central concern with female sexual deviancy is clear from the start and begins with the depiction of the first woman that appears in the novel, Bertoleza. Against the backdrop of Bertoleza’s life of sexual misconduct, Azevedo portrays every woman in the novel is a sexual deviant. Dona Estela, the wife of the prosperous Portuguese immigrant Miranda does not respect the rules of matrimony and often engages in adulterous liaisons with her husband’s employees. Leandra, a laundress, has three children fathered by different men. Rita Baiana, a mulata who hardly works, enjoys the company of men but disdains marriage. She is ultimately responsible for the downfall of the only honorable family in the *cortiço*. Piedade de Jesus, wife of Jerônimo falls to alcoholism and prostitution after her marriage to Jêronimo ends due to the sexual enticement of Rita Baiana. Florinda, another mulata, gets pregnant out of wedlock, has an abortion and in the course of a month exchanges sex for housing and food with three different men. Finally, Léonie, is a lesbian prostitute who initiates Pombinha, a teenager and the “flor do cortiço”, into a life of deviant sexual behavior as a call-girl and as her sexual partner.

In the nineteenth century, working women such as the ones portrayed in *O Cortiço* were regarded with suspicion. In Rio de Janeiro, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, most working class women of all colors and nationalities worked as domestics (Leite da Silva 26-25). They cleaned houses and commercial establishments, cooked food, washed clothes, and nursed upper class babies. Some others were street vendors and seamstresses. As factories replaced
plantations as a source of employment, women found jobs in manufacturing. Slightly better educated white women worked as salesclerks, teachers, and nannies (Graham 3-22). Another source of employment for young women was prostitution. During the colonial period, sex work had been mostly practiced by black woman slaves. By mid-century and with the intensification of female immigration to Brazil, European women became part of Rio’s commercial sex scene. High-class French coquettes, paid concubines, and elegant bordellos were a prominent feature of upper-class men’s social and political life in nineteenth century Brazil (Esteves 43-54). The great majority of prostitutes, however, were not French but Jewish, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese immigrant women who frequented saloons and the theater. In the late nineteenth century, prostitutes working in Rio de Janeiro were, most often, poor working class immigrant white and black women. These poor women who often found their customers on the streets and lived in tenements were seen as an agent of degeneration:

As prostitutas tornaram-se inimigas dos higienistas principalmente pelo papel que supostamente tinham na degradação física e moral do homem e, por extensão, na destruição das crianças e da família. Contaminando os libertinos com suas doenças venéreas, induziam a produção de filhos doentes e votados à mortalidade precoce. Seduzindo os incautos com suas sensualidades depravadas, levavam a miséria e a infelicidade de famílias inteiras (Costa Ordem médica 265).

In his pioneering 1845 study of prostitution in Rio de Janeiro, Dr. Herculano Augusto Lassance Cunha defined prostitution “uma forma de mediocridade, uma torpe lascivíaa, uma revoluntante imoralidade, uma cilada do vicio (17-8)”12 In the same study, Lassance Cunha established a classificatory system for prostitution. Perfumed European coquettes who introduced upper class Brazilian men to the pleasures of the flesh belonged to the group that Dr. Lassance

12 For an analysis of the construction of prostitution and medical discourses, see Magali Engel’s Meretrizes e doutores.
Cunha denominated as prostitutes de “primeira ordem.” These higher order prostitutes were usually European immigrants who serviced rich men and who lived “em casas de sobrado decentes.” The other ones, and perhaps the most menacing were said to practice “clandestine” prostitution. They were women (especially slaves) who practiced their profession in “casas tenebrosas” and who catered to lower class men (17-24).13

In Azevedo’s portrayal, Léonie—the prostitute and benefactor of young women in O Cortiço—is not the tragic woman who populates naturalist, journalistic, and medical literature. In fact, Léonie could be interpreted as the most liberated woman of O Cortiço. She is a white French immigrant woman who is financially independent and who can freely transit between the world of the theater, salons, and wealthy suitors and the space of the tenement. She is not, like most of her literary counterparts, ravaged by illness or alcoholism. On the contrary, she is popular, prosperous and free of venereal disease. In Azevedo’s account, Léonie is above all a desiring and desired body whose lasciviousness and excess fascinates all around her:

E aquelas mulheres …não se fartavam de olhar para ela, de admirá-la; chegavam a examinar-lhe a roupa, revistar-lhe as saias, apalpar-lhe as meias, levantando-lhe o vestido, com exclamações de assombro à vista de tanto luxo de rendas e bordados (89).

The women’s reaction to Léonie’s presence is enthralment. Her extravagant couture leaves them breathless. Her interminable amount of clothes and adornments introduce the poor women of the cortiço to soft and brilliant opulence. Through Léonie’s lavishness these women recognized that access to pleasure, leisure and luxury was the key to another kind of existence. It is not surprising

13 For a discussion of slavery and prostitution, see Luiz Carlos Soares’ O "povo de cam" na capital do Brasil: a escravidão urbana no Rio de Janeiro do Século XIX.
that Rita Baiana translates the women’s sensory devouring of Léonie into words. Apropos the bottle blonde’s radiance, Rita Baiana tells us:

…A verdade é que ela passa muito bem de bôca e nada lhe falta: sua boa casa; seu bom carro para passear à tarde; teatro tôda a noite; bailer quando quer e, aos domingos corridas, regattas, pagodes for a da cidade e dinheirama grossa para gasta à farta! Enfim, só o que afianço é que esta não está sujeita, como Leocádia e outras, a pontapês e caçações de um bruto de marido! É dona das suas ações! Livre como o lindo amor! Senhora do seu corpinho, que ela só entrega a quem muito gem lhe der na veneta! (119)

Rita Baiana understands Léonie’s beauty and *joie de vivre* as an effect of economics. By peddling sex to rich men, the French coquette with bleached blond has achieved a level of wealth that allows her to consume luxury goods (house, clothing, cars, jewelry, food) and thus, ascend to a different class status and social experience. In Rita Baiana’s eyes, this woman who knows about money and the pleasures it can acquire becomes the counter-image to the bourgeois feminine ideal of devoted wife and mother *and* the working class common women of the *cortiço* who toiled and lived under the power of a master, husband, or “amigo.” Léonie’s economic and bodily self-determination set her apart in a world in which working women could not readily generate wealth. In the literary world, Léonie suggests a new kind of capitalist subject who is able to transform men’s lust into a successful economic enterprise without perishing in the process. At the close of *O Cortiço*, she wants for none of the basic human necessities, continues to live a life of excess, and seems to have reached a level of economic stability and independence lacked by all of the female characters in the novel.

In Azevedo’s depiction, Léonie is a creature of material desires who transforms male sexual attention into cash for perfumes, jewels, and hair dye. In line with his nineteenth century peers, Azevedo portrays the sexual entrepreneur as consumer rather than producer. Her desire for wealth is not one rooted in accumulation and succession but on vanity and immediate expenditure. Léonie’s attitude towards money turns her into a dangerous economic and moral
subject. At a time when the economic progress of the nation was linked to industriousness, hard
and long hours of work, and austereness, Léonie’s behavior offends because it offered easy
luxury in violation of the value of work. Moreover, either by active promotion of her lifestyle or
by example, the prostitute caused others, especially young women, to become similarly indolent
and given to lewd sexual behavior. Léonie’s power to lead women astray is, perhaps, her greatest
danger. For as her relationship with Pombinha proves, Léonie’s misguided passion destroys even
the possibility of moral sexual relations, legitimate marriage, and social climbing through
matrimony. If black women propagate defective offspring and lure white men into licentious
abandon, prostitutes may lure other women into forming communities, alliances, and erotic
attachments with one another that have little to do with men, and indeed might coax other women
away from the domestic sphere of home, husband, and children.

What turns Azevedo’s characterization of Léonie into a complex portray of female desire is
her sexual interest in women. In the medical and social literature of the time, prostitutes were
described as creatures predisposed to “tribadismo” or lesbianism. Léonie was no different. In his
1872 medical thesis entitled, Da prostituição em geral e em particular em relação ao Rio de
Janeiro, Francisco Ferraz de Macedo observed that homoeroticism was a behavioral pattern of
those who practiced clandestine prostitution (37-39). But prostitutes were not the only ones given
to enjoyment of another woman’s body. Young women of marrying age and spinsters were at risk
of becoming “tribades” if they engaged in inappropriate intimacies with their female friends
(Pires et al. 300). To the prominent doctor José Viveiros de Castro, author of Atentados ao pudor:
estudos sobre as aberrações do instinto sexual (1894) and who popularized the word
“tribadismo” as synonym of an affective and sexual relationship between women, and “lésbica”
for the practioner of this “aberração sexual,” tribadismo was more dangerous than male
pervasions because women developed more intense affective relationships and could therefore become permanent lesbians (Viveiros de Castro qtd. in Torrão 251).

For years, Léonie had been harboring sexual feelings for Pombinha, the “flower” of the cortiço. Pombinha was “bonita, posto que enfermiça e nervosa ao último ponto (48). Pombinha was the only character in this novel poised to leave the poverty of the tenement behind. Her mother worked hard to educate her, she knew how to read and write and could even speak French. Most importantly, she already looked the part of a middle class woman: “tinha as suas joiazinhas para sair à rua, e, os domingos, quem a encontrasse à missa na Igreja de São João Batista, não seria capaz de desconfiar que ela morava em cortiço (49). Pombinha was to guarantee her ascension into the middle class by marrying João da Costa, a young man “com muito futuro” (48). Although they had been engaged for a long time, the marriage could not be consummated because Pombinha at eighteen had not yet menstruated. Everyone was invested in this marriage. It would return Pombinha and her mother to their rightful place in the middle class from which they had descended after the death of Dona Isabel’s husband.

After years of gentle coaxing with gifts and during an afternoon filled with delicacies such as foie-gras, ham, cheese, seltzer water, and champagne, Léonie initiated her campaign to seduce Pombinha. Her strategy was to behave, in the words of the narrator, as a passionate suitor: “leva-lhe a comida à boca, bebia de seu copo, apertava-lhe os dedos por debaixo da mesa” (147). After tremulous refusals and fearful tears, Pombinha succumbs to the sexual advances of the coquette:

Agora, [Pombinha] espolinhava-se tôda, cerrando os dentes, fremindo-lhe a carne em crispções de espasmo; ao passo que a outra, por cima, doida de luxúria, irracional, feroz, revolteava, em corcovos de égua, bufando e relinchando (148-9).

The next day, Pombinha found herself in a state of feverish lubrication. On the one hand, she felt ashamed about what transpired between her and Léonie. On the other, the memory of that
afternoon filled with wet tongues and interlocking body parts brought about a jubilation she had thought unattainable with a woman:

Pungia-lhe na brancura da alma virgem um arrependimento incisivo e negro das torpezas da antevéspera; mas, lubrificada por essa recordação, tôda a sua carne ria e jubilava-se, pressentindo delicias que lhe pareciam reservadas para mais tarde, junto de um homem amado (151).

Pombinha partly rejoiced in the fact that she had been introduced to a world of passion she thought could only be experienced with a man. Léonie showed her that female erotic desire could be directed and satisfied, not by men but by women. Léonie performance of a masculine role—sexual initiation of young women—sets off a series of events that unmask the novel's (and the period's) anxieties about how improper female relationships can lead women to usurp the positions of men resulting in confused gender and sexual boundaries and expectations and the future of the family.

Women who attempt to usurp the position of men are not just inappropriate but dangerous influences for young ladies hoping to marry well. After the sexual encounter with Léonie, Pombinha begins to question her role as a wife. Her sexual awakening has affected her adversely, her soul is now diseased, and the innocent girl who in former times dreamed of getting married now has a “presentiment” that she will not be a “faithful” and “dedicated” espouse (161). By seducing young women into taking up alternative and “immoral” sexual behavior, Léonie literally suborns them away from procreative normalcy, ideal womanhood, and patriarchy. After two years of marriage Pombinha gives-in to extra-marital pleasures and cheats on her husband. He returns her to her mother and she runs away to be with the woman who has caused her derailment. “A serpente vencia afinal: Pombinha foi pelo seu próprio pé, atraída, meter-se-lhe na bôca” (246). The transformation (or shall we say degeneration?) of Pombinha is complete. In the span of two years, Pombinha goes from innocent flower to insatiable vampire who drains men of
their decency and wealth: “fizera-se tão perfeita no ofício como a outra … seus lábios não
tocaram em ninguém sem tirar sangue; sabia beber, gôta a gôta, pela boca do homem mais
avarento, todo o dinheiro que a vítima pudesse dar de si” (247).

In this chapter, I have been arguing that the management of sexual relations is a crucial
political and social concern for Azevedo. Sex guarantees the accumulation of capital, as in the
case of the relationship between João Romão and Bertolza, but it also leads, as we saw in the case
of Léonie and Pombinha, to the destruction of bourgeois nuclear family and female morality.
Azevedo’s portrayal of the lesbian relationship underscores the anxieties produced by the
simultaneous necessity and impossibility of policing the sexual boundaries between women.
Female intimacy, in the case of O Cortiço results in dangerous female autonomy from men. This
autonomy forecloses the possibility of biological reproduction and the establishment of the
bourgeois nuclear family. The novel suggests that both men and women must be sexually
controlled. If men are to achieve financial success and social recognition they must, like João
Romão refuse the sexual enticement of the Rita Baianas of the world. Jerônimo who could not
resist the charms of the mulatta traded “o espírito da economia e da ordem” for constant sexual
enjoyment of Rita Baina’s body (216). In the words of the narrator, Jerônimo “abrasileirou-se
para sempre.” João Romão’s Brazilianization, on the other hand, is guaranteed by his denial of
sex for enjoyment and reproduction and his conceptualization of marriage as an economic
transaction. Instead of letting himself be mesmerized by the sexuality of black women, he
transformed it into unsightly ugliness. In this way, he was able to safely garnish profit from sex
with a black woman without destroying his economic project. As such, the black woman emerges
as indispensable for the success of the Portuguese settler but she is, at the same time, fungible.
What Azevedo seems to propose is that the black woman must be erased from the realm of
kinship relations if João Romão, and by extension the nation, is to continue its upwardly mobile path toward clean whiteness. Léonie’s and Pombinha’s sexual freedom (coded as aberration) must be understood as a reprehensible consequence of social mixture and inappropriate sexual relationships engendered in the corroding environment of the *cortiço*. Pombinha and Léonie belong to an underclass that corrodes the efforts of bringing about social order and progress.

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, Brazilian social scientists, medical doctors, jurists, and fiction writers created a discursive universe in which the future of the nation was made to coincide with the biological constitution of the human body. Polygenism, as we saw in chapter two, argued that humans did not belong to a single original family. As I have shown, naturalism was a literary genre that sought to restore social order based on endogamic biological filiations. The argumentative architecture of Azevedo’s *O Cortiço* questioned, refuted even, conciliatory erotic utopias of “foundational romances” in which national cohesion was imagined as the sexual and matrimonial union between unequal partners (Sommer 42-50). Love and fraternity are not the sentimental impulses driving the argumentative architecture of the naturalist novel. Rather, naturalist narration of the nation is organized around the purification of blood ties through the institution of compulsory endogamy. In this biological logic of social arrangement, the survival of the nation depends on the efficacy of the mechanisms of exclusion and expulsion of subjects whose physiological defectiveness could jeopardize the eugenic future of the national family (Nouzeilles 27). Naturalist writers such Aluídio Azevedo appropriated the authority of medical science to fabricate fictional strategies of identification and classification to mark certain bodies as constitutionally flawed. Azevedo then proceeded to establish ways to exclude from the fictional nation those bodies marked by the stigma of racial, social, and sexual difference. As such, the disciplinary function of Azevedo’s naturalism is evidenced by his literary drive to purge
the national body from its biological impurities.

The disintegration of slavery and other formal hereditary privileges had important consequences for the reorganization of Latin American societies. Anxious about the loss power, elites tried to manufacture, as I have been arguing throughout the dissertation, visual and literary strategies to re-introduce radical difference into a political system—liberalism—that dismantled legally sanctioned distinctions of birthright. In the chapter that follows, I return to a discussion of the visual field to ascertain how photography and identification documents were used to distribute the national population along a deeply hierarchical racial and economic grid. Whereas in the previous chapters my analysis was centered on the work of individual scientific and cultural workers, the following discussion investigates the role of the state in manufacturing systems of racial and class differentiation.
Chapter Four: Identifying the Racial Subjects of the Nation, Brazil 1903 - 1907

Reflections on photography have often associated the photograph with death, or at the very least, an epistemological violence. Roland Barthes describes the photograph as “a figuration of the motionless and made-up face beneath which we see the dead” (Camera Lucida 32). Elaborating Walter Benjamin’s theory, Eduardo Cadava writes: “Rather than reproducing, faithfully and perfectly, the photographed as such, the photographic image conjures up its death” (3). Paul Virilio associates shooting the gun and pressing the shutter: “the pilot’s hand automatically trips the camera shutter with the same gesture that releases his weapon. For men at war, the function of the weapon is the function of the eye” (20, emphasis in the original). In a context where the technology of the photography is used to make race visible and to expand the ideological “civilizing” mission of empire and where the distinction between the colonizer and colonized usually translate to distinctions between those who have technology and those who lack everything, historical contextualization must be brought into discussions that associate the photographic act of representation and death. Analyses of death and representation must be based on the following questions: What is the purpose of the representation? What are the historical preconditions of the photographic act? And, what is ultimately at stake in a given representation? Such questions relocate the purported violence of the camera in an uncanny and symbiotic relation among the photographer, the technology of representation, the represented and subjugated subject, the viewer of that representation, and history rather than simply between the camera and its subject. This re-contextualization of the issue of death and photography allows us account for a history of colonial forms of violence that inform the development of the conventions of photography and the pleasure (and pain) which it engenders.

In this chapter I propose that state initiatives to identify citizens with the aid of identification documents is a salient example of how death is related to photography. I, however,
localize this “death” in the systems of slave surveillance that I will argue underwrite bureaucratic attempts at representing the citizen. In the genealogy of the visualization of blackness I have been pursuing in this dissertation, I establish a relation between the tactics and technologies deployed to identify and arrest runaway slaves and state-generated identification cards by paying attention to the ways in which the black body is, to revisit Diana Taylor’s term, “given-to-be-seen.” In the colonial era, public spectacles of punishment were moments during which the black body was beaten into absolute submission; this was the definitive act that transformed the black body into an enslaved being. This was also the moment during which the colonizer anchored himself in the position of master. Visual public spectacles asserted and affirmed the body as central to the political and juridical practices in colonial space: not only were the rights and privileges of white masters undergirded by public spectacle of subjugating blacks, but moreover, this scene in turn defined the meaning of colonial subjection. The paradigmatic condition of the slave, to given-to-be-seen in a state of injury is, I argue, at the root of the opposition that politicians such as Barata Ribeiro mounted against state identification campaigns.

In this chapter, I examine the emergent practice of citizen identification in early twentieth century Brazil as a mode of realist representation derived from colonial strategies for controlling the movement of enslaved people. Two central questions in this inquiry are how the “carteira de identidade” (identity card) functioned as a means of representation and surveillance and how the identity document signals the appropriation of realist modes of visualization by the emerging Brazilian nation state. As I argued in Chapter One, geography proved a key science in the formation of nineteenth century Colombian state and had an intimate relationship with the technical and regulatory needs of those in power. As I explained in that chapter, the corographic mapping campaign wielded both iconographic and instrumental power. It served to find, circumscribe, and name the space within a newly independent state where the elite could assert
the power and legitimate their rights to rule and represent the nation. In this chapter, I consider another project of mapping and naming. In what follows, I endeavor to demonstrate the identification card as a colonial strategy of population control and governance designed for the post-colonial moment. In what follows I argue that the logic of the identification card is to render the “suspect” and the “citizen” visible to the state and draws heavily from an earlier experiment in colonial surveillance—the identification of enslaved peoples.

Newspaper announcements and broadsheets about the fugitive enslaved people drew attention to scars, skin color, hair, height, build, breast and buttocks (in the case of women), facial features, and tribal markings, among other “telling” signs (Freyre *O escravo nos anúncios* 23-37). As discussed in chapter two, the scientific photograph is part of a project of racial (and criminal) codification in which body parts—breast, limbs, lips—are inspected and described in order to reveal a presupposed immutable essence or condition. Advertisements of fugitive slaves whether in the form of broadsheets or as newspaper wanted ads perform the same symbolic operation. These written and visual products reduced the slave body to the sum of (some) of her parts. The anthropometric photograph as well as the slave wanted ad depend on corporeal details—the arched back, the club foot, the shape of the lip—to make identification possible. Stated differently, both the runaway poster and anthropometric portraiture rely on a realist logic that highly values shape, form, and external appearance to anchor their ideological message: that the person pictured is inferior, someone’s possession, a thing. Moreover, the scientific photograph and the slave wanted ad constituted communities of looking in which the white master class was encouraged to position every one of its members as custodians of property and guarantors of the law. By empowering any and all members of this community to visually and physically inspect and arrest the wayward slave, runaway announcements composed the fugitive as being subject to all. Made to perform a similar visual maneuver, the racial photograph created looking relations
based on the scrutiny of the body in order to recreate, simultaneously, the racially inferior subject of the gaze and the racially superior beholder of the image. Both systems of identification relied on a pedagogical logic of demonstration designed to teach the public how to “objectively” look at particular bodies and how to regard those who were the topic of the wanted poster or who stood in front of the lens.

The chorographic image, the slave wanted ad, the anthropometric photograph, and the identification card all ground their claims to truth on the visual inspection of the body’s surface as such they bespeak their commitment to Enlightenment values of sight and knowledge and underscore the reliance of colonial and post-colonial systems of control on the public display of the black body as dispossessed.

**Identification: The Colonial Path Toward Modern Citizenship**

In the Americas, systems of slave identification began to develop since at least the early sixteenth century and were introduced by Spanish and Portuguese colonists who faced constant and costly slave flight (Hadden 10). Attempting to curtail the escape of their property, slave masters “develop[ed] not just methods of terror but also a haphazard system of identification and routine surveillance” (Parenti 14). These efforts began in Cuba, where by the 1530s slave owners were organizing themselves into groups to hunt fugitive bondsmen (Hadden ibid). By the early seventeenth century, various Brazilian providences began to recruit soldiers as *caçadores do mato* (bush hunters) to track down and capture runaway slaves (Dantas par 2). The procedures developed to identify enslaved people who escaped coerced labor were more systematic and included three “information technologies: the slave pass, organized slave patrols, and wanted
posters for runaways” (Parenti 15). Slave identification took many forms, among the most popular were: marking the body with a hot branding iron or the requiring enslaved people to wear placards around the neck stamped with the master’s name.

In colonial Brazil, the juridical apparatus of the state functioned as a supplement to the master’s power to rule and punish his subordinates for infractions in the colonial household or for running away (Costa “Estratégias” 469-471). In Rio de Janeiro, the state-run penitentiary known as Calabouço served a space away from the plantation enclave for the enslaved person to be punished for fleeing or for damaging master’s property. Through the institution of the Calabouço, the state increasingly assumed the role in an urban environment of the whip-wielding overseer in the rural plantation. This private-public administration of disobedient slaves was a lucrative business for the imperial state—it charged the fees for the lodging and punishment of those slave whom while there were forced to remain shackled at all times in extremely small cells and horrible hygienic conditions (Soares 209-211). In Rio de Janeiro, as Thomas Holloway has demonstrated, the police and juridical apparatus of the imperial state were used first and foremost to punish and control slaves and free people of color (Holloway 93). With the change from imperial to republican state, the police continued to focus their attention on what were now free citizens but disparaged members of the national community. The legal system, on the other hand, created a series of laws, animated legal figures such as the vagrant, and appropriated visual technologies in order to classify and exert control over the population.

In the wake of Rio de Janeiro’s mid-nineteenth century economic growth fueled by a

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1 Nancy Kang has argued that the slave pass was “as a potentially subversive artifact of American antebellum plantation culture” (433). By learning how to write and how to forge the permission slip, enslaved people were able to write themselves into freedom. See her essay entitled “As if I had Entered Paradise”: Fugitive Slave Narratives and Cross-Border Literary History.”
boom in coffee production and mining, the city’s population expanded rapidly. Slaves, freedmen, and landless rural peasants came to the city in search of better opportunities. Migrants from Portugal, Italy, Spain and the Middle East contributed to the city’s population growth. At the same time, the steady emancipation of enslaved people in the city—and the practice of allowing enslaved people to live and work outside the household—radically transformed and loosened patterns of social control (Chalhoub 1990). By the 1870s, Rio de Janeiro was a city where the majority of the population was black but not necessarily enslaved.² Sydney Chalhoub writes that the mixture of freedmen, enslaved people, Brazilian and foreign migrants posed great challenges to a colonial structure founded on the strict vigilance and identification of the oppressed. To Chalhoub, mid-nineteenth century Rio de Janeiro was:

...um meio urbano que escondia cada vez mais a condição social dos negros, dificultando a distinção entre escravos, libertos e pretos livres e diluindo paulatinamente uma política de domínio onde as redes de relações pessoais entre senhores e escravos, ou amos e criados, ou patrões e dependentes, podiam identificar prontamente as pessoas e seus movimentos (Chalhoub “Medo” 91).

In a city like Rio de Janeiro, the master’s feeling of insecurity was directly correlated to the “aumento crescente da população e principalmente […] de uma população flutuante, que não se pode conhecer e que se renova de momento a momento” (Secretário de Justiça Siqueira Campos qtd in Apaud 35). For juridical institutions that sought to restore hierarchical positions of power

² In 1849, the number of subjugated men and women was 110,000 out of a population of 205,000. According to Luiz Felipe Alencastro, between 1849 and 1872, the capital of the Portuguese empire was home to the largest concentration of urban slaves since the end of the Roman empire (25). The census of 1872, the last one before the abolition of slavery, found that only 17 percent (or 46,580) of Rio’s population (274,000) was enslaved, down from 41 percent in 1849. The drastic decline of the subjugated population was not seen a favorable historical event by all sectors of the population. The reduction of the bonded labor created deep seated anxiety for the members of the upper classes who saw in this decline the root of their potential impoverishment.
and that would eventually claim for the state the right to punish and control the population, one of the most vexing problems was how to identify, how to recognize the legal status of the majority of the population. The concatenation of undecipherable faces provoked fear, fear of the unknown, of that which could not be controlled or identified.

In the post-colonial moment, identification, ordering, maintenance and control of black bodies became to be the focal point of juridical institutions of new nation-states. The most pressing issue for Brazilian national elites was how to continue to extract labor from blacks once the formal abolition of slavery was instituted (Chalhoub Cidade Febril 23). As Sidney Chalhoub has argued, the substitution coerced for wage for slave labor required two simultaneous processes: “the construction of a new ideology of work” and the institution of new systems of “vigilance and repression” to safeguard the power of the upper classes (Trabalho, lar e botequim 28). According to Chalhoub, in the aftermath of abolition, former masters wrestled to regain their authority using a new a form of violence yielded by a new legal code and a re-vamped state institution, the police.

A few months after the official abolition of slavery, legislators feared that without the right to use punitive methods to force ex-slaves to work, they would simply abandon the coffee plantations, mines, and households that depended on their labor and succumb to what they called “vagabondage.” To prevent what they saw as inevitable, legislators began to campaign against “ociosidade” and passed laws to curtail non-productive existence. In this regard, a salient aspect of Brazil’s entrance into the capitalist system was the symbolic transfiguration of work from social stigma, which in colonial times branded a person as a slave or at the very least a servant, to the highest social virtue, which guaranteed a person’s entrance into the community of desirable citizens. Equally important in this ideological maneuvering was the transformation of work into an activity to be regulated by the state. In a speech delivered in the Senate, the politician
Rodrigues Texeira defines work as:

Em todos os tempos o trabalho foi considerado o primeiro elemento de uma sociedade bem organizada. Cada membro da comunidade deve a este uma parte de seu tempo e de seu esforço no interesse geral, cuja inobservância apresenta gravidade, o que autoriza de certo modo a intervenção do Estado. (...) é preciso que tenham todos uma ocupação porque V. Exa. sabe que, desde que o individuo respira, contrai uma dívida com a sociedade, a qual só pagará com o trabalho. (Texeira quoted in Chalhoub Trabalho, lar e botequim 282).

The vagrant, in Rodrigues Texeira’s words was the one who refused to pay his debt to society with proper work and, in so doing, contributed nothing to the common good. For legislators, such as Rodrigues Texeira quoted above, the objective was to elaborate a punitive and pedagogical culture of work to be monitored and enforced by the police. Rodrigues Texeira’s ardent celebration of work is a manifestation of the pedagogical impulse of the Projeto de Repressão à Ociosidade (1888) which he sponsored and passionately defended. This decree, by way of punishment, sought to “educar o liberto,” that is, to instill in him “a noção de que o trabalho é o valor supremo da vida em sociedade” (Chalhoub Trabalho 14). The lash was abolished and jail took its place. Two years later, vadiagem appeared in the Código Penal da República as a contravenção defined as follows:

deixar de exercitar profissão, ofício, ou qualquer mister em que ganhe a vida, não possuindo meio de subsistência e domicílio certo em que habite, prover à subsistência por meio de ocupação proibida por lei e manifestamente ofensiva da moral e dos bons costumes (Código Penal da República, chapter XIII, art. 399).

3 In Brazil, the Código Penal of 1890 was the first official and universal document of the Republic. The Constitution, or the funding text which defines the fundamental political principles of the nation, was not ratified until a year later. The fact that the symbolic or narrative birth of the nation is rooted in the need to define crime and punishment reveals the underlying principles of the new polity: surveillance and control. In addition to placing crime and punishment at the heart of government, the Penal Code of 1890 expanded the realm of punishable deviant behavior. Under the heading of contravenções (minor misdemeanors) the new republican criminal code condemned a host of practices including capoeira, itinerant vending without a license, drunkenness, gambling and vagrancy and proceeded to code these social, cultural, and economic behaviors as punishable offences. Contravenções codified political and economic judgment
Teresa Meade has noted that high levels of casual employment, labor mobility, and instability characterized the period between 1888 and 1920. In this period, a “worker might be a servant sometimes, a textile worker at other times, idle or “self-employed” the rest of the time” (50). In this context, how were “profissão, ofício, ou qualquer mister” to be defined in a city where the occupations reserved for the working poor were extremely unstable, unskilled, and usually carried out in domestic spaces? Or, how was “domicilio certo” to be verified when urban reforms destroyed affordable housing or when employees lived in their employers’ quarters certain days of the week as was usually the case with domestic servants and wet-nurses? In this historical context, contravenções were a nebulous legal proposition designed to control a population seen as surplus and unruly. The inchoate definition of these new criminal behaviors and a history of using the police force to control the working poor and former slaves gave policemen increasing power to set and administer policy on the streets. In 1890, sixty percent of those housed in the Casa de Detenção were accused of and arrested for contravenções and the majority of those arrested were black (Chazkel 703). And to be captured by the police meant also to be captured by the camera. Once in the police station, law enforcement agents—police officer, scrivener, district police chief, photographer, and technicians—detailed the offense, fingerprinted, photographed, and examined the contraventor. The information compiled would become part of an individual’s criminal record (Regulamento do Gabinete de Identificação e Estatística March 30, 1907). Even if the suspect was never formally charged and dismissed from custody, her record or ficha would be kept in the

4 Historians Leila Mezan Algranti and Thomas Holloway have observed that the police in nineteenth century Rio de Janeiro was endowed with the function of “urban overseer.” Policemen were to ensure that slaves, and in the republican period, employees, worked assiduously and that they did not violate the law. See Algranti’s O feitor ausente: Estudo sobre a escravidão urbana no Rio de Janeiro and Holloway’s “Punishment in Nineteenth Century Rio de Janeiro.”
police archive.

From the final decades of the nineteenth century, identification became a fundamental ritual in the specification of criminal identity and a constitutive event in the self-making of the state. To be caught “wondering aimlessly” or “loitering in a state of idleness” became an instance during which the state’s authority to restrain movement and freedom was intimated and corroborated. The figure of the vagrant, along with realist methods of juridical identification (such as the anthropometric photograph and fingerprinting), and the repetitive ideological articulations that produced blackness as nakedness, dispossession, incompetence, unbound sexuality, aggression, political madness also served to introduce hierarchical differentiation into the radical horizon of equality and citizenship in the emerging nation state. As such, identification is “one element of a ritual complex, performed in a legal-scientific language, aimed at revealing to society a single physical-moral image of an individual” (Gomes 305).

The Debates about Identification

The photograph was quickly added to the repertoire of social control. Beginning in the 1870s, a person arrested in Rio de Janeiro had to submit to a myriad of forensic and bureaucratic procedures. In 1870, the financial records of the Casa de Detenção da Corte do Rio de Janeiro (the first modern prison in Brazil) register the purchase of a “machina para photographar.” A year later, the director of the penal institution, Luiz Vianna de Almeida Valle, writes in his yearly report that the photographer is, paradoxically, a prisoner and that he hopes to have, by the end of that year, a completed “galeria de photografias” of every convicted criminal in the Casa de Detenção da Corte. Twenty years later, the authors of the Brazilian Penal Code of 1890 instituted the use of Bertillonage for the identification of detained suspects. Bertillonage—as Alphonse Bertillon’s system came to be known—was the first widely used system of “scientific” criminal identification. It consisted in creating a systematized system of cards containing information such as body measurements; front and profile photographic views of the face; and short notations about regional linguistic accents and family history in order to confirm the identity of individuals suspected or condemned of criminal activity. In 1903, the Brazilian penal system adopted the system of “comparative dactyloscopy” developed in Argentina by Juan Vucetich. For a history of the police in Brazil see: Thomas Holloway, Policing Rio de Janeiro; Rosa Casanova and Oliver Debroeise discuss the role of judiciary photography in Mexico, see “Fotógrafo de cárcel: Usos de la fotografía en las cárcel de la ciudad de Mexico en el siglo XIX.” For a history of criminology in Argentina see Julia Rodríguez, Civilizing Argentina.

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Outraged at the juridical practice of anthropometric identification for all individuals in police custody, Senator Barata Ribeiro took the floor on July 27, 1903 to demand a moratorium on the law (Annaes 492). Ribeiro began his invective against juridical identification by implying that the “torture” endured by individuals whose body was measured and photographed at the police station was a remainder of the “tyranny” that characterized the “shameful” period of slavery (Annaes 488). In 1903 the Senator, who years before had ordered the destruction of cortiços or poor people’s homes, was in many ways making the same argument I have been developing throughout the dissertation. To Ribeiro and me, to be photographically exposed in the public sphere without shoes, socks, and most importantly without “clothing above the belt” was to be rendered in a state of complete vulnerability where a stranger is compelled to inspect the photographic subject’s body, in order to, in the words of Ribeiro:

Verificar no corpo, por sobre a pelle, signaes que resultem de differencias de côr, da collocação de cicatrizes e manchas com que porventura tenha vindo ao mundo ou haja adquirido nos tramites da vida…accidentes da conformação do corpo, a extensão dos cabellos, dos dedos… (Annaes 393-4)

To be submitted to the public gaze in such a state of dispossession was, for Barata Ribeiro, the branding iron (“ferrete ignominioso”) that seared the subject with the ignominious mark of criminality. That the suspect’s juridical portrait was likely to end up in the morning or afternoon newspapers, or more succinctly, that once photographed the individual had no say as to how, when, and where her image circulated was at the root of the devastating effect Barata Ribeiro attributed to the juridical photographic act. In the words the Senator—former mayor of the city of Rio de Janeiro, orthopedic pediatrician, lawyer, and novelist—the unscrupulous use of anthropometric identification constituted a serious violation of civil rights, an example of the abuse of power perpetrated by the police, and an offense to the dignity of the citizen (Annaes 494).

If in the injurious process of disrobing, measuring, framing, and exposing, the subject is
robbed of her political and social rights, what type of being does the space of the juridical photographic studio produce? Ribeiro does not ask these questions. What he dared to say—at a point in Brazilian history when positivist thinking and methodologies had taken a hold of social and juridical institutions—was that anthropometric identification was a process that instantly and indelibly altered the social status and the public image of individuals in custody. This, for Barata (as well as me) is an act of violence that locates the subject at the fringes of the liberal society he was advocating for.

Where Barata Ribeiro and I part ways is the point at which we begin to formulate explanations or a genealogy for this particular form of violence. Barata Ribeiro urges his colleagues to admit that the law is in place because they know that it will only affect “os fracos e oprimidos” (*Annaes* 497); and, that this tripartite assault on the political, social, and even moral, well being of the individual was an inherited (to use his words) vestige of slavery. Yet, Barata Ribeiro does not at any point in his vehement plead for the abolition of anthropometric identification refers, even in passing, to the slave who was, in actuality, the target of the violent excess of power enacted by the master against his “property” and a system that prescribed her erasure in the legal sphere. What Barata Ribeiro could not quite articulate, and what I have been arguing in this chapter, is that the identification of citizen reintroduces the tactics and discourses of branding first developed in the colonial era to control the slave and furthered developed the racial projects that used the precepts of realism to manufacture black subjects.

The photographic studio—where the identification document begins its ideological life—can be defined as what Diana Taylor calls a “scenario”: a “system of visibility” that “makes visible, yet again, what is already there: the ghosts, the images, the stereotypes” (*The Archive and the Repertoire* 54, 28). Scenarios, Taylor argues, “demand that we also pay attention to milieux and corporeal behaviors such as gestures, attitudes, and tones not reducible to language” (28).
Following Taylor, I understand the photographic studio that produces the criminal suspect as a creative visual space wherein subjects are produced as they touch and focus on each other. The juridical photographic scenario is, then, a kinetic industry that produces raced subjects, duplicitous workers, and sparkling and respectable citizens.

In 1906, Senator Barata Ribeiro took the floor to denounce again compulsory anthropometric identification of those accused but not yet convicted of a crime. This time, the Senator was particularly worried about the public and commercial use of police photographs that were, by law to be kept secret and circulate only within juridical institutions. What ignited Ribeiro’s tirade this time around was an item that had recently appeared in the newspaper Jornal do Commercio describing the visit of a group of forensic medicine students to the Gabinete de Identificação of the woman’s wing of the Casa de Detenção da Corte (Annaes 1906, 399). To demonstrate the wonders of the “Sistema Anthropométrico de Bertillon e do Sistema Dactiloscópico de Vucetich,” two women in custody for unspecified crimes were used as subjects to show off identification procedures. During his intervention in the Senate, Ribeiro tried to prove again that the procedures of anthropometric identification permanently stigmatized those who were submitted to it. This time, Ribeiro urges his colleagues to imagine “uma scena dolorissima” in which:

nossas mulheres ou nossas filhas, que na defesa da própria honra…chegar ao extremo de cometer um crime e foi recolhida á Casa de Detenção.
Imagine o Senado a cena dolorissima e altamente imoral que se passará no dia seguinte da entrada na Casa. Ela será talvez mulher ou filha de um cidadão altamente colocado na hierarchia social…
Filha, imagem de pureza que Deus baixou á terra…será obrigada a despir-se expondo aos olhos de um estranho o corpo que o pudor oculta…Como doe pensal-o! (Annaes 497).

For Barata Ribeiro, the stigmatizing process of photography is a kind of branding that immediately “catalogs” the photographed subject “entre os criminosos, e, ainda mais entre…os criminosos obsedados pela paixão do crime” (Annaes 392). But the metonymic relationships
engendered by the juridical photograph do not end with the criminal. I relate Barata Ribeiro’s vehement opposition to anthropometrics to what he dares not speak about or describe—slavery. Barata Ribeiro, like he had done three years before, elides an analysis of the photographs that would have been taken and instead invites fellow Senators to embark on a flight of fancy where it was their daughters and wives who would have been the victims of what he designates as a torturous process. He, of course, does not mention black women, whom as I discussed in chapter two, since the invention of photographic technology, had been subjected to the kind of photographic scrutiny Barata Ribeiro decries and who would have been most likely to end up in the photographic chamber at the Casa de Detenção. What Barata Ribeiro calls the “stigma of desonra,” is in my view, a term that veils the violence on which the juridical photographic act is founded—the subjection of the black person’s body and the misappropriation and circulation of the image of the black body in pain. For Barata Ribeiro, an individual’s “retrato” or photographic likeness was “um patrimônio inviolável,” therefore, the commodification a person’s photographic image amounted to a violation of civil rights (Annaes 397). In Barata Ribeiro’s schema owning one’s image is a fundamental right of the citizen. What Barata Ribeiro could not fully was that to be photographical exposed and circulated in public in a state of dispossession was to be reduced to the status of a slave, a being who held no rights over his image or how no say as to how s/he was to be presented in public.

**Controlling Intimate Strangers: Photography, the State, and Vigilance of the Home**

In January of 1907, the Conselho Municipal of Rio de Janeiro adopted a bill that required “a matrícula para as pessoas que se destinarem ao emprego de serviço doméstico” and established “a exigência da carteira de identidade para os maquinistas, foguistas e eletricistas dos estabelecimentos industriais” (Leis do Conselho 1907). News of this decree spread like wildfire and angry “mobs,” as the Jornal do Comercio described them, gathered in the fashionable Rua do
Ouvidor for five consecutive days to protest the passage of the law. An anonymous writer in the Jornal do Comercio extols the merits of the legislation. According to the journalist, the objective of the law was to create a “documento civil” that would benefit “o próprio criado, que muitas vezes se encontra em embaraços para comprovar que não tem mãos antecedentes e que pode ser empregado em qualquer casa” (3). The writer of the Jornal do Comercio posed ID cards as “garantia contra a criminalidade ancillar, que tanto se tem desenvolvido no Rio de Janeiro.” The carteira de trabalho would, on one hand, testify to the domestic’s good behavior, that she was not a thief, an alcoholic or a prostitute. And, as a voucher of good behavior, the “matricula do pessoal de serviço domestico” guaranteed the safety of property. Fraudulent or thieving domestics were frequent characters in popular lore, newspapers, and crime reports of the era. The writer’s support for the carteira de trabalho is based on his belief that the domestic worker is always and already suspect. As such, s/he must provide officially sanctioned proof that she is free of “mãos antecedentes” but in order to furnish proof of her innocence, she must be legally recognized as a non-criminal.

Not everyone saw the carteira de trabalho as a means to prevent crimes. Another anonymous writer condemns the law as a “lei absurda e iniqua.” Writing in the Jornal A Noticia, this reporter is concerned not with how to safeguard the master’s home and property but with the immense power the ID card endows on the employer. The proponents of the law envisioned an identification document similar to today’s passport. It would contain a photo, fingerprints, and extra sheets of paper where employers would describe the worker’s history of service. For the writer of this editorial, this identification devise does not give testimony about trustworthiness of

According to the first edition of the Boletim Policial do Rio de Janeiro, the most common crime in domestic settings was thievery (26).
an employee. Instead, it amplifies the power of “patrões” by giving them the right “escrever o que quizessem” and thereby determining the future working prospects of his former servant (2-3).

This is the moment at which the relationship between the branding of the slave, the criminal record and the carteira de trabalho is fully revealed. Once elaborated, the criminal file was kept in the state’s archive even if the person to which it was related was never tried, declared innocent or never entered the precinct again. Branding the slave, on the other hand, scarred the body and the scar became an insignia of ownership and subjugation. The scar, the anthropometric image disdained by Barata Ribeiro, the criminal fiche branded the body as “slave” or “criminal.” The indelible signature of slavery (the scar) or the criminal paper trail became the master text through which the body was valued and interpreted by the institutions of the state. By denouncing the power of employers (or masters) to write (on skin or paper) whatever they wanted, this author decries the omnipotence of the employer’s voice in its capacity to forever mark the body and character of the document’s bearer. Both the criminal record and the employer’s testimony were validated precisely because they acted as relay mechanisms that created a constant loop between the state and the individual.

In 1907 when the idea of the carteira was materialized into law, women in general and black women in particular continued to be a constant presence in other people’s homes. Seventy-six percent of working women were employed as domestic workers (Graham House and Street 6). Domestic work was a fluid and diverse category: it included a wide range of skills and occupations. Wet-nurses, laundresses, cooks, housekeepers, chambermaids inhabited the domestic sphere. And although they were paid to keep the domestic space in order, they were
often considered a “demonio familiar,” or a disturbing interior presence. In her study of domestic work in Brazil, Sandra Lauderdale Graham has shown that in late nineteenth century Rio de Janeiro, conceptions about domestic service changed dramatically. To start with, as the nineteenth century closed, domestic servants were no longer part of the bourgeois household. In the decades preceding the formal abolition of forced labor, slaves began to abandon the colonial domestic enclave, which meant that masters gradually lost power to survey and reign-in their subordinates’ behavior. The abolition of slavery overturned, at least in theory, the right of some to govern the lives of the many. This crisis of power that emancipation engendered along with the emergence of bio-social theories of race and behavior, the growth of cities and a constant wave of epidemics, intensified feelings of mistrust felt by employers about their domestic help. Because domestic workers were now able to negotiate and transit between the private and public spheres, the belief in the damaging effect of their presence in the upper class home intensified. Washerwomen and “amas de leite” (wet nurses) were particularly scorned by doctors, who by the end of century, considered them to be a source of physical illness. *Amas de leite* for example, were charged with transmitting syphilis and causing the premature death of infants in their care (Conrad *Children of God’s Fire* 138).

The *carteira de empregado domestico*, complete with fingerprints and photographs, was a legal manifestation of the ambivalence felt by carioca employers about their legion of domestic workers. Proof of good behavior and an employment history, such as the one proposed with the *carteira de empregado*, was not a new policy of labor control. During colonial times, free (black) people who hired themselves out as day laborers were required to obtain a license of good

7 This is a reference to José Alencar’s play *O demonio familiar* which deals with conniving slaves who steal, cheat, and lie to their masters.
behavior and to supply a sponsor (Graham 110). The drive to identify domestics grew out of the fear of contagion and death that, for centuries, permeated the relationship between masters and their subordinates. The carteira legitimized these feelings and validated the imaginative worlds from which these sentiments emerged. This first step in the incursion of state strategies of manufacturing identity into the “civil” realm reveals that techniques devised to detect actual criminals and criminals in potentia were always highly selective “rituals of social branding” in which centuries-old prejudices, physiological characteristics, and scientific discourse combined to ascribe value to bodies and locate them in a shifty political and economic grid that began and ended with the bandit and/or citizen (Gomes 299).

For Afrânio Peixoto, medical doctor, writer, and director of the Serviço Medico-Legal (1907-1910), identification was the best strategy to achieve “tranquilidade social,”

…a identificação tende a um desenvolvimento que sobre e excederá de muito as preocupações perícias e criminais. Com efeito, os exames de locais, marcas e impressões, fotografias métricas, identificação de reincidentes serão pouco, comparados à identificação civil, profissional, militar, operaria, doméstica, itinerante, eleitoral, que acabará, para a segurança pública e privada, por identificar a sociedade inteira […] Não é preciso encarecer o mérito social dessa expansão. Os de utilidade pública e particular ressaltam às vistas menos perspicazes: com o trânsito livre pelos passaportes idôneos; com a percepção fácil e certa de quantias nos bancos e repartições públicas; com a tranquilidade doméstica, que os serviçais são honestos por estarem identificados; com o operariado, o profissionalismo autêntico e reconhecido por honesto, e não lobos entre ovelhas (causa de desordens, greves, rebeliões); como a autenticidade eleitoral do voto, que é o fundamento, mesmo, da democracia…(Peixoto qtd in Carrara 88).

For Afrânio Peixoto, identification was a prophylactic measure that tears off the mask of those who pose as domestic workers but who are, in reality, troublemakers who incite strikes and rebellions. As such, Afrânio Peixoto’s objective was to curtail duality and multiplicity from people’s accounts of themselves. For what was most threatening about criminals was that they were craftsmen of diverse and forever mutable disguises passed for identities. Afrânio Peixoto’s identificatory project was particularly expansive and it would prove, in his words, to be even more beneficial in the civil realm. That everyone—professionals, soldiers, domestic and factory
workers, vagrants—was to be transformed into a readily legible entity confirmed the “fact” that the physical specifics of the human body could, indeed, be read.

As Director of the Gabinete de Identificação e Estatística Criminal, Elysio Carvalho’s objective was to train a legion of policing professionals (or identificadores) equaling “em perspicacia e em intelligencia ao mais astuto e habil dos criminosos” (71). He advises his readers, presumably police officers and bureaucrats, that the “ladrão de nossos dias é um typo como qualquer de nós, vestindo-se com apurada elegancia, frequentando gente boa e com as melhores relações no mundo da bolsa, com todas as apparencias de um verdadeiro gentleman, e, aind mais, possuindo dotes excepcionaes como a astucia e a ousadia” (68). The camera would arrest the criminal as s/he was. For Elysio Carvalho, photography allowed for the creation of a “documento de identificação” that individualized and fixed “identidade” (“A função da fotografia” 13). In Carvalho’s discourse, photography was infallible. No amount of deceit could fool the camera since it was a mechanical and omnipotent device that sees and fixes everything (“tudo vê e tudo fixa”) (15). With this statement Carvalho echoes the belief in the camera as an apparatus that registers (unerringly) even the minutest of details and that this instrument definitely established the identity of what it captured and returned as an “identical” image. In short, Carvalho was part of to a group of intellectuals who believed that the photograph abolished the distance between an object and its representation and, that, because of this epistemological obliteraion, the camera was foolproof. As a brainchild of racial thought and legal medicine, identification would, by means of photographically exposing recalcitrant traits (or in Lombrosian terms, atavistic signs), create a language or a map of the body that could not be mutated.

Criminologist’s faith in systems of identification such as Bertillonage was demolished, however, by its futility in the judicial field. Four years after the adoption of Bertillon’s system, only one successful identification had taken place in Rio de Janeiro (L. Ribeiro 3). The
duplicitous criminal proves, then, that there is nothing permanent about the body—neither its physical constitution nor the ways it is read. The fraudulent criminal revealed that the science of identification was, perhaps, nothing more than hopeful divination. The constant recalling of this figure alerts us to the fact that rather than being an effective method in the arrest and capture of criminals, Bertillonage was, in fact, a tactic of governance and population control that had as its objective not so much the detection of the criminal but the construction of a symbolic order or a legal weapon with which to brand the body of those unfortunate Brazilians who were apprehended by the agents of the state.

At the same time that the law-makers were telling domestic workers, “you’re always suspect therefore you must forever proof your innocence,” they also began to encourage those who were never tainted by suspicion to become legible to the state. In September 1907, Hermeto Lima,\(^8\) distinguished member of the Conselho Investigador do Gabinete de Identificação, published an article entitled “A identidade do homem.” The purpose of this article was to convince a reluctant Brazilian upper class of the benefits of legal-civic identification of all individuals. According to Lima, civil identification was imperative especially in urban settings where “a necessidade de provar que nós somos o próprio” was essential in financial transactions and business contracts (23). Lima believed that the only effective way to achieve the goal of creating a standardized system of identification for all was to convince the population to submit to being photographed, fingerprinted, and measured:

Urge, pois, propagar sem trégua a necessidade da identificação. E para isso, conseguir, basta apenas que se mostre que ela não humilha, não avilta porque não é somente destinada aos criminosos; que se faça mesmo, para evitar esse pseudo

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\(^8\) Hermeto Lima was a social reformer and author who specialized in police matters, and published, among other technical works, *A identidade do homem pela impressão digital; A infâmia alcoolatra*; and *Os crimes célebres do Rio de Janeiro.*
vexame, dois gabinetes, um civil e outro criminal e, uma vez posta em pratica pouco a pouco a identidade por parte de todos, em pouco tempo se conseguiria a meta desejada (25).

By the time Hermeto Lima wrote “A identidade do homen” photography was an established cultural practice among Rio de Janeiro’s well to do. Photography provided rich cariocas the first affordable means of recording their own images, and of collecting representations of their loved ones, a cultural practice that until the nineteenth century had been the exclusive right of the upper echelons of colonial and, later, monarchical Brazil. Moreover, for the bourgeoisie, photography was experienced as luxurious adventure into self-representation. As John Tagg has noted, photography was a “sign whose purpose [was] both the description of an individual and the transformation of social identity” (Burden 37). The inscription of social identity was achieved through a playful art of masquerade that included the alteration of outward appearance (use of sumptuous clothing), a visit to a magic space of mirrors and exotic artifacts (the studio) and the adoption of particular bodily poses.

What was humiliating about Lima’s proposition was that the photographic experience he wanted to subject honorable members of society was uncannily similar to the legal enterprise of photographing criminals. What Lima was proposing was that the well-to-do strip rather than invest their bodies with the accoutrements of distinction. Juridical procedures applied to civil identification would perform the same act: both systems of identification reduced the sitter’s appearance to a compendium of body measurements, the characterization of facial features (“long” nose, “small” lips, “big” ears), and the notation of short commentaries on linguistic accent, occupation and family history in a fiche. This experience did not produce allegories of sophistication, self-possession, or ownership. Rather it produced a person that caught by the sight of the institution is made to feel that he is always, everywhere, and every time transparent and decipherable. It also created a person who could no longer rely on his relationships and signatures
of distinction to prove his condition of “honorable” member of society. The identification card transformed the state into the ultimate guarantor of the citizen’s honesty and trustworthiness. In addition to the humiliating rituals—disrobing, exposure of the body to strangers—of the criminal photographic ritual, in the police station respectable human beings came into close contact with those being photographed as punishment for their unlawful and unsightly behavior. For those apprehended by the police, photography became a visual sentence that made it possible to be banished from the realm of communal relations. For the upper class to submit to civic identification was, as Barata Ribeiro had argued, to be branded as a criminal or worse, a slave.

The state’s visualizing practices manly concerned with the movement of capital and the surveillance of workers was intent on zooming into and discovering the duplicitous worker who was in reality a criminal *in potentia* and legitimating those who were seen as the motor of the economy. In order to obtain an identity card, which Lima argued would have to become a requirement for business activities thereby providing state recognition to entrepreneurs, citizens were asked to place a request at the police precinct, including their date of birth, parentage, place of residence, occupation, civil status, skin color, facial hair, and were required to provide fingerprints and photographs. Citizens whose civil rights were not fully recognized were denied the legal right to an identity card: thus women and children could only request a card with the authorization of their husband, father, or guardian (Gomes 311). In contrast, to receive a criminal identity one needed only to have been the object of a policeman’s suspicion and to have entered the juridical space of the jailhouse. In the early decades of the twentieth century, civil identity became a civil right and a sign of distinction while criminal identity became a stigmatizing legal obligation. The process of bodily and social branding, which as I have shown was an inheritance of the colonial period, ensured that regardless of the police technique (bertillonage or fingerprinting) used in the process, the experience of juridical identification became synonymous
with public humiliation. Moreover, the visual products the state created to galvanize bonds between individual citizens and the nation-state were consolidated using mechanisms of racial subjection that it formally abjured. Indeed, the belief in the legibility of the body was, in fact, part of a political strategy to debunk the liberal notion of equality and as we have seen in the previous chapters the result of ascendancy of seeing and realism as preferred methodologies for representing blacks and other citizens.
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Biography

Beatriz E. Rodriguez-Balanta was born in Puerto Tejada, Cauca (Colombia). At age 14, she emigrated to the United States. In 1999, she graduated from Boston College with a B.A. in Sociology. In August 2002, she enrolled in the Spanish and Latin American Cultural Studies Department at Duke University.