

Racism in Brazilian Aquarelle – The Place of Denying

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Francisco Martins

Universidade de Brasília, Brasília

Abstract

This article examines Brazilian racism through the idea of negation. The psychoanalytical concept of denial is present and recognised in current Brazilian racist statements. It is analysed in examples which occur in Brazilian speech in everyday life that allow racist thought and words to remain in Brazilian minds and actions.

Key words

Brazilian racism; denial; negation; prejudice

Introduction

Quarrel among dwellers in a slum in Rio:

'Shut up, you are a dumb 'Pau-de-Arara' [someone from the North East of Brazil from a poor origin who migrated to the South in trucks nicknamed 'Pau-de-Arara']...'

'What are you saying, you slave born in a Senzala...'

Would it not be megalomania or *naïf* to affirm that racism does not exist in Brazil? A big contradiction is always present when we get close to Brazilian racism:

'Yes, we have racism in Brazil, but I am not racist.'

Brazilian psycho-sociological studies (Venturini & Paulino, 1995; Camino et al, 2001) have shown that 89% of Brazilians recognise the existence of racial prejudice in Brazil. However, only 10% admit that they are racist. For a psychoanalyst, the particle 'but' in this situation is an indication of conflict and defence. 'But' is a 'Yes' with a hidden active 'No' inside. It is a negation that should be analysed. As in Nietzsche (*Jenseits von Gut und Bose*, iv. 68.):

'I did this,' says my memory. 'I cannot have done this', says my pride and remains inexorable. In the end – memory yields.'

Racism is performed inside family life, in work life. It is a psychopathological matter that concerns everyone and that has once touched the hideous side of otherness. It is not a question of exceptional times or occurrences, such as brutal behaviours, oppressions, riots, necessity of law and police intervention. It is present in the Brazilian psychopathology of ordinary people and daily life. This article approaches Brazilian racism through racist speech acts. Brazilian racism has specificities related to the social, economical and cultural background. First of all, it is mandatory to conceptualise the core mechanism of Brazilian racism, usually performed by a kind of negation recognised in psychoanalysis as *Verneinung* (negation).

A universal function in racism: denial

The term 'negation', instead of the more current term 'denial', was chosen by Freud's English translator James Strachey. Negation (*Verneinung*) denotes a mental process in which the subject formulates the content of an unconscious wish in a negative form. In Freud's own words:

Thus the content of a repressed image or idea can make its way into consciousness, on condition that it is negated. Negation is a way of taking cognisance of what is repressed; indeed it is already a lifting of the repression, though not, of course, an acceptance of what is repressed. We can see how the intellectual

function is separated from the affective process in it (Freud, 1923 pp235–6).

This process constitutes the backbone of any serious look at racism in Brazil – or any other place.

National identity is a pervading pattern of beliefs, collective emotions and social behaviours that work throughout a country’s territory, affecting any single character as much as the whole nation. National identity, in order to ensure the common ground for a population’s own recognition, excludes aspects of reality that conflict head-on with its ideals and needs. Freud (1933 p72) pointed out that a child’s superego is a portion of our psyche built according not to the model of its parents, but to that of the parents’ own superego. National identity is created, and sustained, by the superego; the contents it holds are examples of the ancestors’ minds. It is the caretaker of tradition, long-term values and social practices, transmitting them to each future generation. The ever-vigilant superego takes care of moulding social behaviour to conform to the current law, as well as to the most recondite portions of national identity. Thus in countries whose legal system has ruled against racist attitudes, whenever the subject of racism comes up it triggers a response of hyperconsciousness as a warning signal about the possibility of being singled out as a racist. Hyperconsciousness implies being aware all the time, eternally scrutinising the normality of your own and everybody else’s attitudes.

Appiah (1990) asserts that racism is born inside the family, from all the experiences constructing the child’s pride in being part of that family, as an acceptance of the Kantian injunction.

we cannot accept that ‘de gustibus non est disputandum’ [...]; intrinsic racism is, at least sometimes, a metaphorical extension of the moral priority of one’s family.

In this way racism is believing that one’s family is superior to others – an irrational thought derived from the Oedipus complex. Thoughts, dreams, ideals, metaphors and aggressive reactivity are part of it as well. Negation is the reaction of immediately cutting off all contents dealing with that embarrassing subject. It is the bleeding

heart of the racist symptom. Freud used to describe it as a struggle between a harmful memory and a proud interest. Hyperconsciousness corresponds to a projective position towards an external threat – in this case, the idea of being accused of racism. At first one will negate – ‘I am not racist’ – then one will project, replacing the pronoun ‘I’ with the furthest pronoun in the interlocution position – ‘**they** are racists’. In projection, the aggressive content remains in the predicate. Negation plus projection constitutes the ‘self’ of the everyday, ordinary man. It is important to point out two main ideologies that are as common in Brazil as racism, because they are so filled with metaphors that people believe they are the ultimate truth. The following two-fold witticism could be offered both in England and in Brazil or elsewhere. It might represent two ideologies certainly present in the Brazilians’ minds related to the theme of racism nowadays.

[Briton] Why not an English salad?	Why not a Brazilian melting pot?
The Brazilian replied immediately:	The Briton replied immediately:
Why not a Brazilian melting pot?	Why not an English salad?

Metaphors can reveal, encrypted deep inside, the stronghold of national identity. But as far as ‘the final station’ of each metaphoric chain is concerned, there is a blunting opposition. In a salad each ingredient is supposed to keep all the external indications of what they are: a tomato, carrots, cheese and so on. The melting pot in its turn implies a fusion solution that makes for a good Creole stew. The melting pot metaphor elicits an inclusive democratic problem that haunts Brazilian intelligentsia: perceiving as one’s problem the lack of opportunity for all minorities crushed along the way of Brazil’s economic and cultural Western upbringing as a country. The salad metaphor suggests a harmony where every bit and piece keeps its identity – and brings in the belly, the potential roots of apartheid and segregation, a racial conflict that is ideally solved by an aspiration of symbiosis through racialisation, namely cohabitation inside the lines of marked and ever re-affirmed social identities.

Words against racism are more present than racist statements in Brazil. Samba music and culture make mythical figures of Black and Creole women. This need to

surround Brazilian miscegenation with an apologetic speech became a policy of the Brazilian government in the 1930s, and has remained an ideal of Brazilian culture ever since. A song known throughout the world, called Brazilian Aquarelle, became a landmark of Brazil, because it boasted nationalism based on praise of miscegenation. *Brazilian Aquarelle* is a chant praising a mulatto; the whole of Brazil became literally a sly mulatto from then on. This kind of song became so popular that it received a denomination: exaltation samba. It was a reaction to old racism before 1930.

In Brazilian popular songs racism is present in *naïf* and well-accepted sambas that nonetheless express prejudice against minorities. An old samba called Nega do Cabelo Duro (Hard-Hair Blackie), asks right away: 'Hard-hair blackie. Which comb can comb you?'. Another rephrases the theme: 'Your hair can't deny it, mulattress!'. In striking contradiction, right after this harsh criticism, words of desire for the mulattress come across: 'you are my love'. A mind divided by racism and desire is therefore evident. Part of Brazil's cultural heritage, these songs are sung in carnival parties as if such aggression against Black women were not at stake – it is taken as a joke. A joke becomes a real joke only if someone other than the speaker laughs or gets pleasure. The function of this third person is always very important to accomplishing this kind of sadistic performance. As speech acts, the social effectiveness of these songs reveals a situation in which interlocution is always present, encompassing three actors. This means that racist words are always a matter for the whole society.

Hyperbole is a negation of some significant and a general formation reaction

Brazilians are very proud of their samba music and football skills. The influence of African culture in those activities is appreciated, and regarded as the best component of the Brazilian culture of music and sport. Native Brazilian origins are not so recognised, but they are there, too. Take Garrincha, for example. In football conversations Brazilians love to boast. Football has provided a lot of Brazilian identity and helped Black people and mestizos to affirm themselves as valuable people. From a psychoanalytic point of view, to boast is to

deny a failure, deny some signifiers which are rejected as part of one's identity. Carnival and football are linked to poverty and Brazilian early origins (16th–19th centuries). It is nice to see that rhetorical hyperbole is used to show up what a Brazilian can be.

Nelson Rodrigues in *Cretin Honesties* (1996) discusses Brazilian discrimination against the poor, mainly those from the North East. He fights racism with hyperbolic rhetoric. Rodrigues denounces a hypocritical attitude to poor immigrants (Martins & Porto, in press). Rodrigues questions whether or not robbing is determined by economic factors. He argues that when poor immigrants from the North East of Brazil arrive in the big cities, strangely they do not steal food. People are starving, but bakeries and markets are not being looted. And no-one cares about this ongoing catastrophe. Those people should be stealing at least one banana to feed their children. However, they will not do it. The strangeness lies in those people not robbing. Why is that? Are they any different from the Southerners in their poverty and 'flat-headedness'? Rodrigues is very straightforward in using hyperbolic sentences and irony. He is truly surprised that those people are not looters. When you read this work, you get a sensation of injustice to poor people because Rodrigues suggests that they have stronger moral qualities than those who have never been starving. From this general point of view, hyperbole is a formation reaction that tries to cope with any disgusting traits. Rodrigues succeeds in using hyperbole to put Brazilians in a paradoxical racial conundrum: 'with which group do you identify yourself more?'.

The Portuguese colonisation of Brazil was different from that of other Portuguese colonies. Brazil declared independence from Portugal in 1822 and the slave trade was still taking place at that moment. Slavery was totally forbidden in 1888. By then 70% of Black people were already free and most of them were living in poor conditions. They moved from the farms to towns and cities. In Angola (Bender, 2004) it was different; most Black people could return to their original villages. Blacks are the majority in Angola (95%). In Brazil they are not. The number of Black African slaves brought here altogether is calculated at around 4.5 million. But their number did not rise through new births during the slavery period. They were crushed by brutal slavery that kept them under

arrest and surveillance. Diseases and terrible living conditions killed great numbers. Women slaves were usually used for sex, and their mulatto children, by the middle of the 19th century, were freed from slavery.

But today the issue of Brazil's Black population is still a soaring wound. Signifiers of slavery and racism remain, and inequality is flagrant. Freyre (1933)'s *Casa Grande & Senzala* was an attempt to solve most of the conflicts and support the idea that we were really just one species, *homo sapiens*. No need for racialism; the melting pot metaphor was at that time the main slogan for political decisions. Despite the Government's short-sighted solution for racism through propaganda (or 'cultural affirmative action'), there was no solution – only hyperconsciousness as a sign of negation. As Guimarães (1995 p208) pointed out:

racism is a taboo subject in Brazil. Brazilians imagine themselves as inhabiting an anti-racist nation, a 'racial democracy'. This is one of the sources of their pride and, at the same time, conclusive proof of their status as a civilized nation.

Vinicius de Moraes, a fine and keen interpreter of the Brazilian spirit, thought the ultimate solution to racism was right at hand for everybody. In an interview with the poet Paulinho da Viola, who admired the Black Panthers movement in the United States and kept describing the Brazilian situation as gloomy, Vinicius delivers his final point of view.

I think racism is a big problem solved always in bed, you know? (Morais, 1970 p153)

Sexuality, time and history will be essential to solve this conflict of ideals and ideology. In Freud's words (1933 72-3):

The past, the tradition of a race and its people live in the superego's ideologies, and only slowly give way to the influences of the present, in the sense of operating changes; and, while it operates through the superego, it performs a powerful role in the life of the independent man and the economic conditions.

Jumping into the melting pot: an overview of Brazil's demographic backbone

As a result of widespread miscegenation, racism in Brazil not only lies in racialisation, but also is linked to and caused by economic forces and social class. However, the 'racial democracy' myth has played its role in Brazilian minds. It is not an ideology written in books. Miscegenation is a fact, and families largely share the ideal that it is important to think that 'there is only one race: the human race'. Today, Brazil has a population of about 184 million. Its White population is estimated at 55%, mixed White, Black and Amerindian at 38% and Blacks at 6%. The remainder includes Japanese, Syrian and Lebanese descendents, among other smaller groups.

At first, Brazil had a great contingency of native Amerindians, who gradually got mixed with the Portuguese and the Blacks. A rough estimation of Amerindians all along history is five million, now reduced to 100,000 (Ribeiro, 2006 p209). Amerindians and Blacks were crushed throughout Brazilian history, by cruel slavery and genocide. Amerindian women were the first mothers of the Brazilian population. Then Black women become mothers (not Black spouses) of offspring who were not recognised by Brazilians. Portugal had a smaller population than other countries, and to mingle with the local people was usual. Not many European women came to Brazil in the beginning of the colonisation process. It was not like in North America, where families migrated seeking a new life and/or escaping from religious persecution. The adventurers, explorers and so on ended up mingling with the native Brazilians at first, and later with the Africans brought to Brazil as slaves. Moral standards were not as rigid as those of the Puritans in the US, and did not stop men from frequently having both spouses and concubines, usually slaves.

Later, from 1851 to 1960 (Ribeiro, 2006 p222), there was a flux of non-Black immigration: 1,732,000 Portuguese, 1,619,000 Italians, 694,000 Spaniards, 229,000 Japanese and 250,000 Germans. During this time, bringing slaves from Africa was forbidden. The Brazilian economy needed new workers urgently, and they were provided mainly by political and economic turmoil in Europe. Then the contingent of Blacks in the Brazilian population was proportionally decreased from

35% in the early 19th century to 6% now. This decrease was due to miscegenation of Black women with other Brazilians, and to violence. Unlike Black people, the other immigrants have succeeded in joining the Brazilian class system. These people received government incentives to work here, especially in agriculture. Each of those groups had its own peculiarities concerning adaptation and establishment in Brazil. But one thing is common to them; unlike the Blacks, Amerindians and Mulattos, they are not objects of discrimination and have had great possibilities for economic and social ascension. European migration was so important in the South East of Brazil that in 1923, during the Brazilian modern art movement called Anthropophagic, inside the main motto 'Tupi or not Tupi' (note the assonance between Tupi and 'to be') there was an interpellation to our identity. **Are you going to deny we are made of different races and cultures mixed?** To affirm one's identity or deny it was at stake. The Anthropophagic movement recognised Brazil as a mestizo's country and not as a European's.

There was also a great mass of poor people coming from the North East of the country and going to big cities in the South East and South of Brazil after the 1950s. Those people were, and still are, regarded as a cheap workforce, and whenever they migrate they end up taking the least qualified positions in the job market. These North Easterners were already the product of previous miscegenation among Blacks, Amerindians and Whites. Tupi is a matter of fact, present in the genotype, even though Tupi culture had been crushed. They usually claim to be white, since the perception of race in Brazil is based largely on skin colour. Due to miscegenation, we can see darker-skinned and whiter people in the same family. And people have prejudices against the darker ones, despite having the same origin. Once again the great contradiction is present in Brazilian society. In the big cities from the South where they sought work, they were discriminated against, not only because of their colour, but also because they were poor and uneducated, and had a different accent.

Racism in Brazil is anchored in external characteristics. Not only does the colour of the skin act as a determinant of racism, but so do illiteracy, accent, cultural background and so on. And it is closely linked to poverty. According to data from Datafolha, even though

the majority of Blacks are employed, more than half of them receive less than two minimum wages (US\$200) a month. In the shanty towns, white North Easterners are largely present, and are poor as well. Then poverty superposes racism in a lot of ways, including origins. Spoken in private, whispered or uttered in a friendly joke, racism persists. Somehow people create jokes to signal racism in an easy way. That is the way to deepen racism in Brazilian minds when, for example, a young man revealed his general prejudice by saying that:

'in Brazil racism always starts with four Ps: preto (black), pobre (poor), pederasta (homosexual), preso (prisoner).'

After a breath, he finished with a fifth 'P': *puta* (prostitute). These statements reveal how a lot of Brazilians minorities are seen: with prejudice, intolerance and racism. They are Black (person defined by colour), poor (person defined by possessions), homosexuals (person defined by sexuality), prisoners (not a person because an outlaw) or prostitutes (not tolerated as a person in speech, but present everywhere in the cities). But this kind of assertion is not usual. You will find racism and prejudice more often beneath the surface of jokes, wits, songs, etc.

Racism, uncanniness, negation and unconsciousness

An old and well-known Brazilian metaphor is produced whenever somebody expresses racist ideas. As a matter of fact, in face of the scope of miscegenation process there is nothing as silly as trying to uphold the existence of pure race among Brazilians. Immediately you may receive a fierce and powerful recall pointing out someone's origins: 'Don't forget you have a foot in the kitchen!'. Kitchen, here, is a mark of slave labour; it means the manual, non-specialised, hard labour slaves had to perform, in contrast with the intellectual work of their old masters.

A feeling of familiarity and foreignness is present when we stumble on a negated unconscious portion of ourselves in a situation of everyday life – when it is recognised outside ourselves, while being denied inside. Abroad, for instance, it is quite easy to notice differences, absences and absurdities that we do not usually see in Brazil. When someone is in an uncanny (*unheimlich*)

situation, mind is split. There is a gap caused by the defence process – and that is the reason that weirdness is a subject that concerns strangeness. It concerns agreeable and disagreeable feelings as well. Racism pertains to the last dimension for those subject to it, and to the first dimension for those who get pleasure in sadist acts such as racist utterances.

There are two kinds of negation, from the linguistic point of view. The first is discordant negation: ‘no’, ‘not’, ‘but’, ‘even though’. There is a conflict inside this first kind of negation; it makes an acceptance of a previous judgment. The second negation is called in French *forclusion*: ‘never’, ‘not ever’, ‘nevermore’, ‘no time’, ‘nobody’ and ‘nowhere’. Freud’s main discussion of the topic appears in *Negation* (1923), where he sets forth a theory of negation that is close to being a theory of forms of language or a theory of judgment. Freud posits two distinct processes of negation: one involving rejection of a thought, the other acknowledgment of a disappointed expectation.

Uncanniness emerges from negation; the content of the wish finds expression in consciousness, yet the subject continues to disown it. The divided mind is obliged to re-unite such a split. Confusion between familiarity and strangeness appears. When negation of racism is lifted, ambivalence must be solved. It is good when it goes against racist pride; it is not so bad when denial is used, although conflict remains, taking up a lot of energy. It is very bad when the process of denying becomes a disavowal (*Verleugnung*) or a repudiation (*Verwerfung*) that can disorganise someone’s personality to a paranoid or psychotic-like mental operation.

Let us examine what is more usual: denying racism. It is not a very bad solution, where conflict remains. Three structural examples of this kind of negation may be put forward.

- ‘I had not thought this’, says the everyday man who is not concerned about racist statements, but whose family includes mestizos.
- ‘I know, but in spite of it...’ says the man who has his mind in a conflict. For instance: ‘Your hair doesn’t deny you are Black, but in spite of it, I want you [Blackie]’.

- ‘I should have never thought this’, says the mad racist, denying his origins and identity. For instance, ‘We have never been Black in our family; it is for sure, son’.

Certainly the second answer is the main one used in Brazil nowadays. In the past, before *Casa Grande* and *Senzala* interpretation, it was the first statement. The third statement is very difficult to sustain in Brazil. It holds two kinds of knowledge, likewise a obsessional neurosis; at the same time:

it is just as reasonable to hold that the patient knows his traumas as that he does not know them (Freud, 1909 p196).

Negation of a perception

In the sixties Sartre visited Rio de Janeiro. At the start of a lecture in the city’s most prestigious university, he suddenly uttered in astonishment: ‘Where are all the Black people?’. He noticed the absence of Black people in the stands. It is quite easy for a foreigner to perceive differences and problems in another culture or society. For a moment, he lifted the negation about unequal access to universities in Brazil. It would be interesting to remember that Brazilian ‘racial democracy’ was quite present in Brazilian’s minds. Sartre risked being called a racist by Brazilians. Hate could come over him.

The way this reactivity comes across is through hyperconsciousness. This is present mainly in racism concerning Black people (Vargas, 2004). A symptom like this is an index of an unsolved conflict.

You have to be very aware all the time, in order to be able to avoid any contact with signs of reality that could bring to consciousness negated contents.

This hyperactivity is linked to adherence to an ideal, ‘racial democracy’. Moreover, Kant’s categorical imperative is present in this ideal. Kant’s concept is present in Freud’s conception of superego. The superego is made of ideals and moral. The ideal we have pointed out. The moral aspect is in the hard core of any racist assertion. From a moral point of view, racism is generally a failure to apply the Kantian injunction to universalise our moral judgments. After centuries of acceptance,

public racist speech acts have been disavowed throughout the social fabric. As far as the public eye is concerned, almost everybody is against racism. Nevertheless, racism against Black people and against social minorities undoubtedly persists.

Why does someone behave in this way – saying Brazil has racism but not him or herself – when he/she has not committed any error concerning it? Here we should say that anybody concerned with a racist idea **will always** find in his mental life another idea which will sustain and nourish the necessity for the use of negation. For example, a Brazilian racist who knows about laws against racism can act as a genuine racial democratic citizen. Freud teaches that the act of negation is accompanied by self-reproaches sustained by a secret pleasure in punishing oneself.

‘I know, but in spite of it...’: denial as a joke in intersubjectivity

Once racist words are uttered, there are at least three interlocutors – one who utters the aggression, the one against whom it is performed and a third party, usually excluded, often the audience. A fourth element is the law. Let us understand these elements in action. This statement was uttered as a joke in a supposedly white middle class family:

‘In Brazil we do not have racism – because around here Black people do know their place.’

‘Place’ here is a social role and work position as well. It pushes racism to be put on social and economic inequalities. The offended – Blacks, ‘they’ – are the excluded object of aggression in the joke. The aggressor is in a racist speech act at that moment. The audience is essential to the aggressor, because the audience must take pleasure in the aggression. If identification does not exist, then the joke does not work. When the audience takes the racist prompt and laughs, then you have a problem for the offended – there will be no line of defence for him. The whole statement will work as gossip that destroys somebody else’s reputation and qualities.

The first part of the statement – ‘In Brazil, we don’t have racism’ – provides a joke’s potentiality by its

absurdity. It is denial, but only in the enunciation, in the phrase isolated from the whole statement. The tone of the voice and contraction present in the whole provide affirmation that racism does exist in Brazil. Identification works when someone listens to the words and identifies his own thoughts and life experiences – and takes pleasure in the recognition. Moreover, the offender accepts that he is racist. The denial is then the source for a joke that is performed through contradiction between the terms of the sentence. In order to utter such an aggressive joke, denial in all its forms, contexts and interlocution is supposed to be shared by the listeners.

Denying denial by using a contradiction is only one of the rhetorical manoeuvres present in the Brazilian psychopathology of everyday life. If this kind of denial is performed with fierce belief, it is an open, explosive situation. Maybe that is the reason why denial is so important in Brazilian life. Whenever an act of racism occurs, society looks at it solely as a matter of criminal law to be dealt with by the constituted powers, whose assumed responsibility frees us from exploring this kind of situation as linked to a perverse structure in action within oneself.

Rhetorical manoeuvres sustain racism

Language is not only a system of representation; it does things. It performs racism as well as violent behaviour. The racist rhetoric is to be taken here as ongoing racism. As we saw, negation is usually at the core of Brazilian racist utterances. Denied racism helps to constitute chameleon-like discourses. If rhetoric enunciation is the colour of chameleon discourse, unconscious enunciation is the act of secreting colour. The chameleon discourse is not only at the surface. It is produced deep inside the skin. In the same way, rhetorical speech is created inside the family and culture. But it cannot be uttered aloud. It is not usual in Brazilian speech to find an apophasis out today. But in an analysis situation, when a secret is assured, an allusion to something by denying that it will be mentioned is often heard, as in ‘I will not bring you; you are a poor and ignorant *cabeça-chata*’ (having a flat head). Intolerance and discrimination are attenuated by apophasis, but it remains a disqualification.

A lot of people who migrate from the North East to the South East of the country were mestizos, White-Indian-Black. It is quite impossible to racialise them. They categorise themselves as Whites. Everybody accepts this, even though sometimes they have a flat head, heritage from Tupi Indian dolichocephalousness – a characteristic that has been discriminated against (Stepan, 1982) almost all over the world. But in Brazil they are discriminated against for their origin and absence of education. Perhaps half the population of Brazilian biggest city – São Paulo – has this origin. In Freyre's theory they were not considered in the polarisation between Masters and Slaves. But they existed, and exist. There are a lot of White and mestizo people and there is no way to racialise them. Notwithstanding, the significance of their origins and tradition remains in the unconscious mind.

In this way, a patient of mine, a very pious man, told me once about his experience as a child in the fifties of the last century. He asked his father, while they were crossing a very poor neighbourhood in a North East village:

'Who is that pregnant, small woman, with a child in her hands?'
'She is a cunbã...'

This word remained for many years on his mind. One day he looked up *cunbã* in a dictionary. The meanings were a young woman, a Tupi-Guarani word for woman, *cabocla* (a Brazilian of Indian or mixed Indian and White ancestry) and a prostitute. He suddenly noticed that *cunbã* meant 'whore' to his father. That poor woman was in a terrible situation, where her cultural values, father and mother, were without pride or land, as usually happens in the acculturation process suffered by indigenous people. He understood that woman's tragedy, and that of other descendents of the Tabajaras tribes throughout Brazilian history. They do not exist as preserved culture today, but genotype is always present.

With a lot of emotion this man realised that he had married a woman similar to that one. He succeeded in racialising once in his life as a Brazilian man. This Brazilian white man was in a state of conflict about marrying someone who had an old Indian origin linked to the Tabajaras. She considered herself a White woman, like

everybody else, he thought. But now he realised that his love choice was linked to a feeling of pity. Then he became very aggressive against a TV show he had seen the night before his discovery. This humorous programme used to make fun of the Tabajaras ethnicity, naming a preposterous organisation after it. They would advertise horrible, stupid products manufactured by the Tabajaras Organisations. For him, the comedy show joke now evoked a forgotten national tragedy; it was Tabajaras assimilation and disappearance as a culture for centuries that were at stake. The Tabajaras, once known for their bravery, were now ridiculed.

Brazilian aftermath – poverty embracing racism: inequality

There is a kind of negation present in ironic sentences. In a statement there is inequality contrasted with wealth. A well-known psychoanalyst, a left-wing Marxist from the upper middle-class, was having his office renovated by workers getting a low payment for the service. He said in a lamenting tone:

'Black people only enter my office when there is cleaning and painting to be done!'

We say 'irony' because he was not satisfied by this social situation, but he was getting the benefit from the bad social situation of Blacks. The irony allowed recognising a paradox: someone who was fighting against racism and inequality was benefiting from the situation.

Another interesting example given by Brazilian author Nelson Rodrigues (Castro, 1992 p368) shows the hidden dynamics of racism in Brazil. One day in the early 1950s, near Copacabana beach, he noticed a beautiful girl coming out of the water in her bikini. The girl walks towards a Black man who sells beverages on the beach. She orders a Grapete, an old soft black drink. Although the woman was something to look at, one of those objects that one cannot refuse to see, the poor Black man does not even bother to look up in her direction. He does not give her the slightest glance. He would only look towards the ocean with infinite boredom and indifference. This apathy really touched Rodrigues, who could not believe what his eyes had seen. It was offensive to him. Nelson Rodrigues resented not having seen that poor man exert his right to look at the woman.

This certainly is one of the results of inter-racial relations in Brazil. Praise for the mulatto or Black woman has always been reinforced in Brazilian history. Yet the Black man treats the gorgeous woman as though she did not exist, as if she were a lamp pole, a palm tree or something similar. Some previous self-coercion must be evident in the formation of the beverage salesman, as shown by Fanon (1967), in a psychoanalytical view. It is true that in recent years this has been changing, and we now see Black men getting married to White women. In Brazil, when a Black man gets rich and famous, he is no longer considered Black. This statement from a man who was poor and found some financial success illustrates this better. He consoles a fellow Black man who complained about discrimination.

'I know what it is to be a Black in Brazil. In the past I was one.'

Nowadays, affirmative actions for Black people are present in Brazil. It has become government policy. But even policies of this kind face obstacles in Brazil, because of the large miscegenation we have had. A policy created in some states to favour the access of Black people to public university was to set a number of vacancies (quotas) only for this group. This has created great controversy over the selection procedures. In a famous recent case, two identical twins applied for the same college and stated that they were Black. One was accepted, but the other was not. How can that be? In fact, they were not very dark-skinned. In the application, you have to state whether or not you are Black. Then a commission will analyse a picture taken. It is not clear what 'Black' means, and this is the result of miscegenation. What we mean is that miscegenation is always present in Brazilian minds, even in racial affirmations. So it is impossible to adopt the American model of affirmative actions for all situations in Brazil, since we do not have clear criteria to determine whether one is truly Black or not. The 'one drop' rule does not apply here.

Even though we have presented some examples of racism against poor and illiterate people among others, racism in Brazil is much more frequent against Black people. Still, let us suggest a situation also present, and that might be a common one in the future. Let us look at

a scene in a restaurant. A blue-eyed white man, speaking with a heavy Southern 'gaucho' accent (usually associated with European origins), was having an argument with a brunette. She was complaining about his work and then suddenly she burst out:

'You are too German for my taste! You peeled cockroach! Whitish, colorless.'

Maybe in a near future this kind of assertion will be less repressed, and other kinds of racism and social conflict will emerge.

Conclusion

Ongoing racism in Brazil is marked by denial and by an array of psychopathological phenomena and ways of realising it. Whenever we study racism's denial, we realise that there is a lot of mimesis. It defrauds explicit racism. We have presented examples of denial speech acts and shown that there are many ways to express discrimination, both in language and in culture. Brazilian racism is to be compared with other racisms. Differences will be brought up, but similarities will be presented as well. American literature, in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*, shows us brutal discrimination. In a moment of climax, Mister taunts Celie:

'Look at you. You're black, you're poor, you're ugly, and you're a woman. Goddam it... You're nothing at all.'

Celie retorts:

'I'm poor, I'm black, I may be ugly and can't cook... But I'm here.'

Christian (1985) makes an analysis in the same way as we would like to, pointing out that:

Celie's affirmation of her own existence does not deny his categories of powerlessness; rather she insists that nonetheless she exists.

Why should it be so different in Brazil? Certainly we have healthy reactions against prejudice as well. We think of a poor child who came from the North East of Brazil and was brought up in the suburbs of S. Paulo. He had to

overcome the idea he was ‘nothing at all’. He was obliged to cope with the prejudice of not being as good as the ideal of success in the Brazilian modern way of life: beautiful, rich, White, well-off, living in a big city in the South of the country. So this native from the North East of Brazil, who is now an adult of short height, son to a broken family, fatherless, has insisted and persisted in life, as is shown in his biography (Paraná, 2002), and became the President of Brazil, in spite of being a ‘flat-headed’ short man.

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