

RACE AND THE STATE IN COLONIAL BRAZIL *

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PRECONCEITO RACIAL NO BRASIL-COLONIA: OS CRISTÃOS NOVOS. By MARIA LUIZA TUCCI CARNEIRO. (São Paulo: Editôra Brasiliense, 1983. Pp. 264.)

SER ESCRAVO NO BRASIL. By KATIA DE QUEIROS MATTOSO. (São Paulo: Editôra Brasiliense, 1982. Pp. 267.)

DECLASSIFICADOS DO OURO: A POBREZA MINEIRA NO SECULO XVIII. By LAURA DE MELLO E SOUZA. (Rio de Janeiro: Edições Graal, 1982. Pp. 237.)

THE BLACK MAN IN SLAVERY AND FREEDOM IN COLONIAL BRAZIL. By A. J. R. RUSSELL-WOOD. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982. Pp. 295. \$27.50.)

Where does racism come from? This question is implicit in each of these examinations of Brazil during its colonial period and is at least partially answered by the information and analysis that each work provides. That answer focuses on the role of the state and its exploitation of race for policy ends.

Discussing the colonial state immediately raises the issue of Brazil's relationship to its metropolis. Let us therefore begin with the work by Maria Luiza Tucci Carneiro, which, despite its title, actually devotes most of its attention to Portugal. The story it tells is not a new one, but nevertheless it is good for us to be reminded that slavery and black-white relations in the New World trace their statutory antecedents back to the first codifications of racism in the modern Western world, the "purity of blood" laws enacted in Spain and Portugal during the 1400s (Carneiro 1983, 4; Sanders 1978, 65-74). Initially directed against Iberians of Jewish and Arab ancestry, the statutes provided a legal framework that was later broadened to include other groups of "unclean blood": gypsies and Indians in the early 1500s, and blacks and mulattoes a century later.

Carneiro finds the explanation for these laws, and the anti-Jewish

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pogroms that erupted periodically in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Iberia, in class conflicts and the pressures created by a centralizing state bent on expanding its authority. Although most Jews in Spain and Portugal lived lives of poverty that were indistinguishable (save in religious matters) from their Gentile compatriots, select groups of Jews and New Christian converts attained positions of visibility and influence. Both the Portuguese and the Castilian monarchies made extensive use of Jewish and New Christian advisors and bureaucrats in the process of state-building. One area in particular where civil servants of Jewish ancestry predominated was taxation, that indispensable arm of modern governments. The more effectively Jewish tax collectors met their governments' revenue requirements (which were considerable during the period of the Spanish Reconquista and the first years of Portuguese empire-building), the greater public resentment of their role at court became. Because taxes affected all levels of society from peasant to nobility, this resentment was correspondingly widespread, although nobles perhaps had greater cause than peasants to be aggrieved in that any extension of monarchical power came largely at their expense.

The activities of Jewish and New Christian merchants and money-lenders also won them few friends among the Gentiles (except at court, where their expertise and capital could be exploited on behalf of the state). These activities were particularly vexatious to the Old Christian merchant bourgeoisie, a class that was marginal in Spain but influential in Portugal. By making common cause with the nobility and promoting the superiority of Old Christian ancestry, these businessmen sought to reduce or eliminate Jewish and New Christian competition for control of Portugal's commerce as well as to create socially elevating alliances with the nobility.

The anti-Jewish pressures brought to bear on the Iberian monarchs ultimately prevailed, but it is instructive to note the difference in the Spanish and Portuguese states' reactions to those pressures. When Ferdinand and Isabella expelled the Jews in 1492, Spain's loss became Portugal's gain. Recognizing the opportunity to add Jewish financial and technical resources to his kingdom, and responding to hefty payments from Spain's Jewish communities, King John II opened Portugal's borders to more than one hundred thousand fleeing Jews and New Christians. Spanish pressure on Portugal resulted in the mass forced conversion of those Jews to Christianity in 1497, but even at this point the Portuguese monarch took pains to enact antidiscrimination decrees that remained in effect until 1534. Two years later, Portugal's long nightmare of state-supported anti-Semitism began when the Inquisition initiated operations.

In abandoning its earlier policy of toleration, the Portuguese monarchy appeared to be bowing to pressure from the Old Christian nobles

and merchants; thus, the rise of officially sanctioned anti-Semitism in the country could be interpreted as an indication of the weakness of the Portuguese state. An alternative interpretation is possible, however. The crown's actions against its citizens of Jewish ancestry served the same motive that initially had led it to welcome them into its service: the desire to strengthen the power of the national state. By inviting the Inquisition into Portugal—indeed, by lobbying ceaselessly at Rome for the establishment of the Holy Office in Lisbon—the crown hoped to add yet another institution of social control to the state bureaucracy. Moreover, because the Inquisition's inquiries into the ancestry of wealthy New Christians rendered their property subject to confiscation, this institution served fiscal as well as political ends. As a further revenue-raising device, the crown also imposed a special tax, the *finca*, on Portuguese citizens of Jewish descent and forbade New Christians to leave the kingdom without the payment of sizable fees.

Given these reasons for the rise of anti-Semitic law and practice in Portugal, it is hardly surprising that the campaign against the New Christians should have produced contradictory results. The extortion of wealth and services from the New Christians—indeed, the very existence of the Inquisition—depended on their continued existence as a separate caste. Thus, as one Portuguese historian has argued, the Inquisition's mission became not to extinguish the ghetto but to maintain it (Oliveira Marques 1972, 1: 288; also Carneiro 1983, 102–4). Constantly seeking additional victims and sources of revenue, the Inquisition cast a broadening net that pulled more and more of the Portuguese into its folds, inspiring a climate of terror that is only slightly exaggerated in Voltaire's *Candide*. Ironically, as the Holy Office rooted out more and more Portuguese whom it accused of “Judaizing,” the belief spread throughout Europe that being Portuguese was synonymous with being a Jew (Boxer 1969b, 271–72; Carneiro 1983, 143–53). Far from purifying the kingdom, the anti-Jewish crusade served to deepen the stain of Portugal's “infected” heritage.

From the state's point of view as well, the experiment had mixed results. Instead of acquiring a new instrument of control, the crown found that it had fostered “a state within a state”; the Inquisition's bureaucracy eventually outnumbered the crown's, and its voracious appetite led to increasingly hard-fought contests between church and state over the distribution of confiscated property (Oliveira Marques 1972, 1: 288). At the same time, the government gradually learned that expropriation of goods is not a terribly efficient means of raising revenue. The short-term rewards can be substantial, but over the long term, such practices provide a powerful disincentive to the production of new wealth. During the 1500s and 1600s, more and more New Christians liquidated whatever assets they could and fled to France, the Nether-

lands, England, and the Hanseatic cities. This flight was just what the Old Christian bourgeoisie had been hoping for, but having vanquished their domestic competition, the Old Christians in turn were defeated by more efficient and competitive Dutch and English traders, who in some cases were relatives and descendants of those families forced into exile. The profits of Portugal's commerce thus fueled growth in the core countries rather than in this increasingly peripheral metropolis, a trend that led Padre Antônio Vieira to observe in 1644 that foreign merchants served only to take money out of Portugal, while the New Christians had at least kept it at home (Carneiro 1983, 142). By the 1700s, the economic damage done by the harassment of the New Christians was only too clear, and in 1773, that paladin of enlightened despotism, the Marquis de Pombal, abrogated the statutes on *limpeza de sangue*, declaring the full equality of all Portuguese citizens (except, of course, for blacks and mulattoes). Portugal had come full circle, as the renewed effort to build a powerful state produced a return to the policy of toleration that had lapsed some 250 years before.

Carneiro's book is not really social history as such; rather, it combines an institutional focus on the evolution of *limpeza* legislation with symbolic anthropology, using analytical methods taken from Pierre Bourdieu and Erving Goffman to illuminate the ideological structures and concepts embodied in that legislation. The book thus invites comparison with other recent works that lie on the borderline between anthropology and history and that have examined the ideological, social, and cultural aspects of the Spanish American caste regime (for example, Martínez Alier 1974; Chance 1978; Gutiérrez 1980). If Carneiro's book suffers by such a comparison, it is precisely because of its institutional focus, with its emphasis on laws and decrees and its relative neglect of the people affected by those laws. Although Carneiro researched court cases and church investigations concerning the verification of racial ancestry, such material appears only infrequently in her narrative. We never make contact with the flesh-and-blood human beings caught in the "purity of blood" trap and conclude the book having learned little about Jews and New Christians in the colony.¹ Despite this shortcoming, Carneiro's careful examination of the language and terms in which the "purity of blood" concept was expressed is effective in forcibly reminding its readers of the emotional and intellectual power of a symbol like "unclean, infected blood" that threatens to "contaminate" the body politic. Those who have lived through a period of Latin American history in which the metaphor of the "contagion of subversion" is still being used to justify the murder and torture of thousands of innocents have seen at first hand the tremendous force of these symbols of infection and purity, and their capacity for social evil. That force and capacity were fully

operative in colonial Brazil, as may be witnessed in the remaining monographs under review.

These three books are tied together by a set of commonalities that seem to define a consensus of sorts within present-day Brazilian historiography. This consensus is particularly striking given the different perspectives and positions of the three authors: A. J. R. Russell-Wood is an established historian at a major American university, Kátia de Queirós Mattoso, an equally established figure who lives and works in Salvador, and Laura de Mello e Souza, a recent history Ph.D. from the University of São Paulo. First, all three concur that we know far too little about free nonelites in the colony. Historians have devoted disproportionate attention to the two extremes of the slavocracy—the masters and their slaves—and have neglected the massive population that grew up between those two poles. Without an understanding of this “middle stratum,” its relationship to the groups above and below it, and its role in either preserving or undermining the institution of slavery, our knowledge of Brazil’s slaveowning society is condemned to remain incomplete. Russell-Wood therefore criticizes “the hypnotic attraction exerted over scholars by slavery as an institution,” which has led them to “severely underestimate” the importance of such groups as free blacks in the colonial social order (p. 22). Mello defines her subject to include free men and women of all races, arguing that in Brazil, “free poor people have remained forgotten through the centuries” (p. 222; also Mattoso 1982, 231–32). Russell-Wood and Mello both set out to expand the limited knowledge of that stratum of society that Mello labels the *desclassificados*, and Mattoso devotes the final two chapters of her book on slavery to freed men and women.

The three works also agree that the proper way to study these people is through their own words and records. Mattoso describes Brazilian slaves and free blacks as “a shadowy multitude which never spoke with its own voice” (p. 11), a situation that she proposes to remedy through the use of manumission records, wills, police interrogations, and other documents. Reflecting the influence of North American social historians and the *Annales* group respectively, Russell-Wood and Mello both spend several pages discussing the methodological difficulties of writing “the history of the inarticulate.” Russell-Wood calls on historians to seek out new kinds of sources; he, for example, makes use of the records of black lay brotherhoods. Mello is less optimistic about finding new sources and urges historians to “reinvent” the old ones, to “read them anew” (pp. 13–14).

Finally, these three authors concur as to the elusive character of the society they are studying. They reject notions of a stable, clearly defined social structure and emphasize instead that society’s fluidity and

turbulence. Mattoso describes the colonial period as “three centuries during which social relations never stratified, but rather evolved to produce everchanging outcomes” (p. 232). Russell-Wood portrays “a colonial society which is continually effervescing and continually evolving,” a social *chiaroscuro* characterized by “the play of light and shade, ever changing in their relationship, intensity and extent . . .” (p. 26). Even Mello, who proposes the most explicitly structural model of colonial society, describes a process of evolution in which “the extremes of the social scale continued to be clearly defined, but the structure of society became more complex owing to the increase of the ‘intermediate layer’ Unlike the masters and slaves, this layer did not possess a *well defined social structure*, being characterized instead by fluidity, by instability . . .” (pp. 62–63, emphasis in original).

These authors go on to argue that over time, the growth of the poor free population even began to blur the boundary defining the bottommost layer of society, the slaves. Mattoso’s discussion of free sharecroppers in the sugar zones of Bahia indicates that they were “at the bottom of the agrarian society, almost indistinguishable from the mass of slaves . . .” (p. 203). Concerning the *libertos*, those slaves who managed to win manumission, she concludes that “to be freed, therefore, is not to be free. . . . the distinction between slave and *liberto* was simply a trick, a question of terminology, a goad to the good [slave] worker. The behavior of the *liberto* continues to be the same as that of his slave brothers: . . . he will continue to owe obedience, humility, and loyalty to those who have power” (p. 206). Russell-Wood seconds this point: “*de jure* standing did not necessarily correspond to everyday reality and . . . a *de facto* position often had no basis in law. Some slaves enjoyed the functions of freedmen and some freedmen performed functions and led a way of life more generally associated with those of slaves. . . . In short, there were so many exceptions that the exception became the norm in Portuguese America” (p. 203). As a result, “the legal distinction between slave and freedman constituted a less clear-cut division than did the ethnic difference of black and white” (p. 40). Echoing Mattoso, Mello takes as the subject of her book “the poor free person—often extremely poor—who, in a slaveowning society, does not possess great advantages in relation to the slaves.” By the end of the book she concludes that the dynamics of colonial society worked to place that nominally free person at essentially the same level as his or her slave compatriots (pp. 14, 219).

It was this relative absence of “advantages” for poor free people, and particularly nonwhites, argues Mattoso, that permitted Brazilian slaveowners to be so liberal in the matter of manumission because freeing selected slaves did not eliminate their vulnerability to elite labor demands (p. 206). Although Mattoso does not go on to make this point, one might extend her line of argument to conclude that paid manumis-

sions (which formed the majority of slave freeings in the colony) worked to the benefit of the master by providing a means for expropriating additional value created by the slave above and beyond his or her daily labor obligations. Libertos who bought their freedom remained informally tied to the former master, while the master obtained the wherewithal to purchase new slaves. Thus, where the master formerly had one slave, he or she now had a slave plus a dependent liberto.

But such an argument would seem to deny the rationality of the slaves involved. If the difference between free and slave status was negligible, why were tens of thousands of slaves willing to hand over the accumulated savings of years of labor in order to buy their freedom? Was the “trick, the question of terminology, the goad to the good worker” so completely effective that it blinded slaves to the reality of their situation? This seems unlikely, and indeed Mattoso offers an explanation as to why slaves so vigorously pursued a freedom that she views as largely illusory: although the liberto did not become fully free, “in the second or third generation the dream of freedom [was] realized” (p. 206). Thus, slaves bought their freedom as much for their offspring as for themselves. This conclusion is supported by Schwartz’s findings that purchased female manumissions far outnumbered those of males—after all, mothers could pass their free status on to their children while fathers could not (1974, 611, 623).²

Still, all three authors make clear that while “a slave is always a slave in the eyes of the law,” (Mattoso 1982, 123) in daily practice, the line between slavery and freedom was not nearly so hard and fast. Each author attempts to clarify the terms of this uneasy coexistence. To categorize roughly their approaches, Mattoso is most interested in understanding how slaves created and defended small breathing spaces of freedom within the confines of bondage, Mello in understanding how instruments of social control and coercion were used against people who were legally free,³ and Russell-Wood in combining these two themes to understand, in accord with the title of his book, how black people lived in slavery *and* freedom. Russell-Wood also provides a regional bridge between Mattoso, who devotes most of her attention to Bahia, and Mello, who focuses on Minas Gerais. Russell-Wood divides his efforts fairly evenly between those two locales, with some residual attention paid to Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. The three books thus facilitate comparisons and contrasts among free workers and slaves in the plantation economy of Bahia and the mining economy of Minas.

In taking as her subject slaves and slavery in Brazil, Mattoso selected the most spectacular case of the political and economic utility of the concept of *limpeza de sangue*. While the Portuguese crown, and elements of Portuguese society, gained certain discrete benefits from the persecution of the New Christians, in the exploitation of African slaves

the Portuguese empire in Africa and America found its economic *raison d'être*. Racially defined slave labor formed the economic base on which the metropolitan-colonial relationship was constructed, while *limpeza de sangue* and the resultant dehumanization of the labor force formed both the ideological justification of that labor system and the organizing principle of the multiracial society that it spawned.

Mattoso's goal is to synthesize the existing secondary literature on Brazilian slavery and to convey to the modern audience (lay as well as academic) what it was like "to be a slave in Brazil." The book is well informed by the author's sensitivity to the regional and chronological variations in Brazilian slavery, but her efforts to present a comprehensive picture of the institution through three centuries of Brazilian history are seriously hampered by the large gaps that still exist in the literature and the numerous questions that remain unanswered. Given the tendency of that literature to focus on Bahia, and the author's detailed knowledge of that region, the book ends up mostly telling what it was like to be a slave in Bahia. Despite Mattoso's opening observation that Brazilian slave society had nothing in common with its Caribbean and U.S. counterparts, much of her account will ring familiar to students of plantation slavery in those areas (p. 12). Paralleling the line of argumentation developed in the United States by John Blassingame and Eugene Genovese, she seeks to "relegate to the shelves of History the ridiculous image of the passive slave, indolent and without character" (p. 214) and to replace that image with one of slaves who skillfully exploited their dual position in the white and the black worlds and who used the weapons of passive (and occasionally active) resistance to maintain their dignity, identity, and autonomy.

Some settings proved more conducive to those struggles than others. Mattoso and Russell-Wood concur on the relatively advantaged position of slaves in the mining zones of Minas Gerais as compared with slaves in the plantation zones of Bahia. Slaves in the mining encampments tended to be owned in smaller numbers than was the case on the sugar plantations and therefore usually worked in closer proximity to their masters.⁴ Their earning potential, particularly if they had the good fortune to find a large nugget or diamond, was greater than among the field and house slaves of the plantation; and because Minas was then a more urbanized area than the rest of Brazil, a larger proportion of slaves enjoyed the comparative freedom of urban slavery. All of these factors combined to favor the life possibilities of slaves who lived and worked in Minas. Of course, such advantages were purely relative. While one seventeenth-century observer placed the average remaining life expectancy of newly arrived plantation slaves in Bahia at seven years, another ventured a figure of twelve years for slaves in Minas (Boxer 1969a, 174). Still,

one figure is almost double the other, and Russell-Wood seems justified in concluding that nowhere in Brazil besides Minas “were relations between masters and slaves, conditions governing labour, and the degree of autonomy granted to some slaves to be characterized by such fluidity” (p. 104; also Mattoso 1982, 108–9).

Further accentuating this fluidity was the peculiar nature of the Minas economy, which produced little of value besides gold and diamonds. Given the rampant inflation generated by such a situation, *mineiro* slaveowners depended on regular cash income from their bondsmen to a far greater degree than in Bahia. This dependency translated into a stronger bargaining position for slaves in Minas vis-à-vis their owners, and slaves used this bargaining position to extract concessions and to reduce their masters’ control over them. Russell-Wood describes a situation in which slaves flouted the laws governing slave behavior, some even fleeing their masters to join the substantial population of fugitive slaves at large in the province. Although no master would condone open flight, royal officials found that “masters in the mining areas were unusually tolerant of slaves’ misdemeanours. . . . This tolerance was especially marked in poorer miners, who could ill afford the unproductivity or loss of even a single slave, and who lacked the financial means to replace a slave condemned to jail or to death” (pp. 126–27).

Here one encounters a contradictory situation, for while the relative autonomy enjoyed by Minas slaves served the interests of individual slaveowners, it undermined the interests of the slaveowners as a class as well as those of the colonial state. The crown and the slaveowners were accomplices in creating a social and economic order based on slave labor, and as accomplices they usually collaborated to repress and contain the tensions generated by such a system. In Minas, however, because of the peculiar pressures of the mineral economy, the alliance began to erode. In giving in to their slaves’ demands, slaveowners betrayed the very system to which they owed their loyalty, which in turn caused them to live in a state of “insecurity, tension, and stress which verged on paranoia” (Russell-Wood 1982, 125; also Mello 1982, 108–10).

Other factors also drove a wedge between the Portuguese state and the miners. Just as the slaveowners depended on their slaves for cash earnings, so the crown depended on revenues from the mines of Minas. Miners and merchants eager to retain a larger portion of the fruits of their labors collaborated in networks of contraband and tax evasion that were the most extensive in Brazil. The crown obviously could not allow such a situation to continue, and it stepped in to assert direct state control over the social, political, and economic affairs of the region to a degree unprecedented in the colony. Unlike in Bahia, Pernambuco, and São Paulo, where local landowners retained primary responsibility for

the policing of the countryside, the elites in Minas were found derelict in the performance of their duties and displaced from positions of authority (Mello 1982, 96; Mattoso 1982, 108).

But having shunted aside the local oligarchs, the crown faced an intimidating job of social control in Minas. In addition to the assertiveness of the slave population and the questionable loyalty of the local elites, there was also a large, worrisome free population. The mines formed a unique locus of opportunity in eighteenth-century Brazil; thousands of fortune hunters swarmed into the encampments, where their numbers were further swollen by slaves who had purchased their freedom and by the natural increase of the resident population. After the tax collectors as well as the moneylenders and merchants based in Rio de Janeiro and Bahia took their cuts, the mines could not possibly support a population of this magnitude. Mello describes both the "democracy" of a poverty in which all shared equally and the paradoxical *fausto falso* of a region that gushed forth wealth while its inhabitants lived lives of misery and semistarvation. High levels of crime and violence were the inevitable result of such a situation, and more than one royal administrator perceived in the *quilombos* of fugitive slaves (the bands of desperadoes and highwaymen who operated throughout the region) and the generalized bitter poverty a powderkeg of rebellion.

How did the crown meet the challenge of policing this turbulent society existing in difficult terrain, far from the military and governmental installations along the coast? One response that emerges clearly in these books was a state policy of shoring up the racial hierarchy that was still in force in the more stable coastal region but which had broken down in Minas. Life in the mining camps tended to erode the distinctions between free and slave workers, thus contributing to the independence and assertiveness of the latter. At the same time, the service economy that sprang up around the mines offered opportunities for black and mulatto advancement that were not available in the plantation zones. Mello notes the existence of a significant stratum of small merchants and entrepreneurs, many of whom were black or racially mixed (Mello 1982, 29; Russell-Wood 1982, 52–53). In seeking to control and destroy the networks of criminality, tax evasion, and resistance existing in Minas, the crown devoted particular effort to breaking the ties between whites and upwardly mobile blacks and mulattoes. Its officials acted to remove nonwhites from town councils, to subject black and mulatto merchants and street vendors to discriminatory restrictions, and to eliminate intermarriage and interracial concubinage.

How effective this program of racial discrimination was in producing the desired results is unclear. At least some evidence exists of *mineiro* resistance to the crown's efforts to restrict nonwhite participation in the affairs of the region (Russell-Wood 1982, 53, 71). What is significant is

that when confronted with a perceived crisis of social control, the crown responded by reinforcing the distinction between black and white. Racial division and hierarchy formed the social base of the colonial system, and it was to that base that Portuguese officials resorted when the system was challenged.

In addition to promoting racial division in Minas, the crown employed other instruments of control. One is the previously mentioned high level of urbanization in the region. By incorporating municipalities and creating town councils, the government hoped to organize and structure the population that had gathered around the mining sites and to convert these settlements into foci of governmental control over the surrounding region.⁵ Along with the establishment of these urban centers went the creation of a network of military garrisons near the mining sites and along the frontier facing the Indians. Finally, in order to extend its presence into the countryside and increase the productivity of the region, the government initiated programs of infrastructural development—particularly road construction—and state-promoted agricultural settlements.

In implementing these policies, the government made ample use of what Laura de Mello terms the *desclassificados*, that mass of extremely poor people who abounded in eighteenth-century Brazil, particularly in Minas. The *desclassificados* or *vadios* (vagrants), as they were termed at the time, were either brought into Minas by the state, which press-ganged or sentenced them to terms of service in the frontier forts and the agricultural developments, or they arrived because of their perception that greater opportunities were available there than in the plantation societies of Bahia, Pernambuco, and Rio de Janeiro. Clearly, the government had use for them, as is evidenced by one official's comment that "these vagrants, who elsewhere are harmful, [in Minas] can be useful" (Mello 1982, 72). In a region where general price inflation and high costs of transport had rendered slaves too expensive to be used for any but the most immediately lucrative enterprises, a large free population, especially one readily coercible by vagrancy laws and other legislation, proved an important asset to a government seeking a source of cheap, expendable labor.

The benefits of the *vadios'* presence did not come without its price, however. The presence of large numbers of rootless, poverty-stricken individuals only added to the fears of slave rebelliousness, and the *vadios* were blamed for much of the crime and brigandage that plagued the region. As Mello suggests, a constant tension existed between the *vadios'* social utility and the burden they posed in terms of their alleged unruliness and criminality. The result was that the *vadios* found themselves in "a contradictory relationship of incorporation and exclusion" with the slaveowning order (p. 147). When their labor was

required, they had a place within that order—a miserable one, but a place nonetheless. When their services were no longer required, they were pushed outside the order, often physically as well as socially by being shipped off to frontier settlements and fortresses far removed from the mines.

Because a significant proportion of these *vadios* were white, the concept of “purity of blood” alone could not serve to justify their exploitation. In her concluding chapter, Mello discusses the modification of racist ideology into an increasingly classist concept, an *ideologia da vadiagem* that posits the existence of an “*other humanity*, unfit by reason of its ignorance, its vices, its race mixture or the blackness of its skin” (p. 219, emphasis in original). This concept served to justify both slavery (how could one possibly hope to satisfy the labor requirements of the colony with free workers of such abysmal quality?) and the use of violence to control slave and free workers alike. Those familiar with the pernicious aspects of the twentieth-century “myth of marginality” and its characterization of today’s *favelados* and *marginais* (Perlman 1976) will find the similarities between this contemporary school of thought and the eighteenth-century *ideologia da vadiagem* clear and strong. Despite the transformations that have taken place in Brazil’s society and economy during the last two centuries, intellectual constructs concerning its underclasses show remarkable continuity.

To conclude: different instances of racism have different origins and causes, and the interactions among social, ideological, economic, and cultural factors are always complex and difficult to untangle. But what these four books all make clear is the importance of state policy in allowing open manifestation of racist attitudes, and indeed in even promoting them. In a century that has witnessed the most systematic state-directed campaign of racial extermination in human history, and in which national states regularly trade accusations of genocide, such a conclusion appears so obvious as to be banal. Its utility, I would argue, lies in understanding those cases of racial policies that do not destroy racially defined groups but rather create or preserve them⁶ and that thus have historical consequences decades and even centuries after the policies themselves have been overturned.

While actions of the state often tend to have repercussions long after the point at which they occur, the aftereffects of state-supported racism appear to be particularly intractable. The case of Portugal and Brazil provides a clear-cut example of a state that embraced racist thought, legislation, and action as tools to achieve certain policy goals: increasing its power and authority, raising revenue, creating an empire, and maintaining control over a fractious section of that empire. These policies spawned a heritage of racial hierarchy and racist ideology that, although modified by the historical experience of the intervening two

centuries, continues to afflict present-day Brazil.⁷ The modern Brazilian state declines to take definitive action against that social ill, arguing that to adopt such measures would itself be an act of racism. But to assume such a laissez-faire attitude in the face of entrenched racial inequality is the functional equivalent of continuing to support it. Having exploited race for policy purposes (as virtually all nations in the Americas have done), the state's future decisions must consider not simply whether it wishes to abandon its previous course, but rather in what new direction it wishes to move. Neutrality and passivity are not options, for once having taken up the matter of race, the state cannot so easily set it down.

NOTES

1. For rich, albeit unorganized, anecdotal material on the Inquisition and New Christians in Brazil, see Wiznitzer 1960.
2. Although indirectly supporting Mattoso's point, Patterson speculates that "probably the most important reason why women were manumitted at a greater rate than men is that in all societies so-called free women were far more dependent than free men. Masters took fewer risks in losing the services of female slaves by freeing them than they took in freeing male slaves. Despite all this, in many cases, especially in . . . the Americas . . . , women were obliged to pay full replacement costs for their freedom" (1982: 263–64).
3. As noted in her introduction, Mello's book is modeled on Maria Sílvia de Carvalho Franco's 1969 study of free people in the slaveowning society of nineteenth-century São Paulo.
4. Schwartz 1982, however, argues that historians have underestimated the importance of small holdings of slaves in Bahian agriculture.
5. The establishment of state control over local areas was a frequent objective of Spanish and Portuguese colonial urbanization (Portes 1976; Socolow and Johnson 1981, 38–40).
6. This category actually includes genocidal policy as well because the unintended outcome of efforts to eliminate given racial groups has often been to preserve and maintain them, even if under new and drastically altered circumstances. One thinks of various ethnic groups who have been the victims of campaigns of extermination and yet who remain alive and even politically active today, such as the gypsies, North American Indians, and Armenians. The best known, ironic example of this phenomenon was the Nazis' "final solution of the Jewish problem," which led directly to the creation of the Jewish state.
7. For an interesting examination of those two centuries, see Hasenbalg 1979, 134–93.

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