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Invisibility as Ethics:

Affect, Play and Intimacy in Maranhão, Northeast Brazil

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<u>Declaration</u>

I, Matan Shapiro, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own.

Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this

has been indicated in the thesis.

Signature: <u>Matan</u>.

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Abstract

My work explores how low-income residents of the Brazilian state of Maranhão constitute affective relations with kin and otherworldly forces. Both men and women locally consider the expression of desire, rage, longing and other emotive dispositions as the provenance of autonomous agency. Persons however also stress the indispensability of self-restraint, 'respect' and deference in the maintenance of abiding social hierarchies. In the course of ordinary life, both these frameworks of action inform the public presentation of ethical personhood. Based on 20 months of fieldwork, my thesis focuses on the ways by which persons employ these mutually-exclusive modalities in the generation of intimacy within and across family houses.

I argue that by playing with the affective capacities of their bodies, *maranhenses* sway their positioning across a plurality of coexistent sets of intimate relations. Play consists in performing jealousy, anguish, mockery, and seduction. These often include a measure of simulation, double-standard or even outright deceit. In this way, actions that challenge conventional moral injunctions are provisionally kept concealed. I use the term '*spaces of invisibility'* to describe the social effect of such concealment*.* 'Invisibility' of certain actions enables persons to contingently switch between a frame of relatedness based on collective indebtedness, which turns on the public presentation of moral virtue; and a frame defined by autonomous agency, which turns on the truthful realization of personal desires. Rendering actions 'invisible' can be seen as an ethical practice in its own right, which becomes intrinsic to the proliferation of intimate relations.

Theoretically I propose that formal social distance always includes a measure of intimate proximity, and vice versa. Under this framework the term 'intimacy' can be imagined as an heuristic device that is doubly-folded: a classificatory term that totalizes the appearance of close familiarity and the affective grit by which such familiarity is detotalized and dispersed. These assertions join a growing body of anthropological literature on morality and relatedness that seeks integration between enduring collective classifications and the fleeting character of affective experience.

Acknowledgments

I could not have completed this PhD thesis without the support and love of many people. This project lasted five years, of which I spent three years in the English winter writing. I have become other to myself, as it goes, while my life has turned and convoluted through the lives of old and new friends. I think I learned something. Now it is time to show some gratitude. I hope that with these words I will be able to convey some of what I feel. As my friend Geysa from Maranhão once said, 'you cannot achieve anything alone in life'. Whatever I achieved, it is the process of becoming family along the way that made the difference.

My mother Edith Shapiro and my sister Inbar Shapiro once again proved that their unconditional love is life-giving, awesome, embracing, and uplifting. We grew up together, and we shall die together. The strange combination of frenzy and endurance my father David Shapiro embodies has given me internal strength throughout this period. This will always stay with me. I wish to thank my grandfather Yosef (Iulku) Klein for the network of security he has endowed me with, and for making sure I remember that he will always be there for me. His financial help while I was living on rice and water in London, and especially his generous financial support during my fieldwork in Maranhão, are a sign of nobility that I will inherit to my children. I thank my grandmother Bruria (Buya) Heler-Klein for her love and internal happiness, which ensured that there will always be an image of a welcoming home in my mind. I also thank my uncle Yaron klein for his faith in me, which reassured me many times in times of difficulty.

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his wife Raiane and their son Ian. This is only a partial list and I apologize if at the heat of the moment I forget others who are dear to me. *Fico eternalmente grato por tudo, minha gente, do fundo do meu coração. Sababa, paz e muito axé a todos !*

I am grateful to God, for directing the contours of my life towards inevitable nothingness with irony, impartiality and holiness. God has given me courage, which I hope to maintain and apply in everything I do. I also thank other sources of spiritual inspiration, both earthly and otherworldly: o Cabcolo da Maré, Nossa Senhora do Chão, Dona Maria Légua, the music and lyrics of Cateno Veloso, my cat Joãozão-Filho, São Jorge, the spirit of Tania Forte, and my battalion crew – Bentzi, Parpar, Spooky, Sartan, winged-cat and Shimshon.

Ultimately, I thank the people of Maranhão for accepting me as an ethical human being and interacting with me on equal terms. They taught me more than I can express in words. This makes an inalienable part of who I am at this period of my life. I would thus like to end this long preface with a celebration of the cosmology of Maranhão, and cite the *amo* (singer) Humberto from Boi de Maracanã, whose words speak directly from the abysses of my soul:

Maranhão meu tesouro meu torrão / fiz esta toada pra ti, Maranhão / terra do babaçu / que a natureza cultive / e aquela palmeira nativa / que me dá insipração / Na praia dos lençóis tem um touro encantado / E o reinado do Rei Seabstião / Sereia canta na proa / Na mato o guriatã / Terra da pirunga doce / E tem a gostosa pitombatá / E todo ano a grande festa da juçara / No mes de outubro, no Maracanã / No mes de junho tem o Bumba Meu Boi / Que é festa já do louvor a São João / O amo canta / E balança o maracá / A matraca e o pandeiro /É que faz tremer o chão / Esta herança foi deixada por nossos avós / Hoje cultivada por nós / Para compôr tua históra / Maranhão.

This thesis is dedicated with love to my sister Inbar

And to my parents, Edith and David

Introduction: Coexistent Sets of Intimate Relations in Low-Income Maranhão

The Ethnographic Scope of this Study: Diverse Forms of Relatedness in Maranhão

'When all this happened, we left the village at night and arrived at dawn. It was raining heavily. We went to the police station and the Judge asked me – *which one you want to marry*? I said – *this one right here*. This one, Dolores, was younger than the other, Isabel. Everybody said Isabel looked like she was 18 years old. But when they registered her the next day they wrote 16, because being younger meant she had priority in marrying me. Her *padrinho* (godfather) was dealing with politics, that is why they did all of that. If I hadn't married her, there would have been a hell of a law suit…'

80 years old Seu Reginaldo, who told me of his 'forced wedding' (sic) from 1952, is certainly not the only person who got married at the police station in 1950s Maranhão. In his case a small-scale scandal was involved. While Seu Reginaldo impregnated Isabel – a girl from a nearby village – he also impregnated Dolores from his own village. As the story goes, at first Seu Reginaldo refused to marry Isabel and was imprisoned for one night. It was enough to convince him to sign the documents the next day. When the wedding was concluded, however, he returned to his village and Isabel went home with her parents. Seu Reinaldo then moved-in with Dolores but left her a while later when he discovered she was frequently 'betraying' him.

Although the Brazilian law obliging men to 'assume responsibility' over loss of virginity or the impregnating of underage girls was cancelled in the Civil Code of 1940 (Caulfield 2000:190), my data suggests that it was enforced in remote regions of Maranhão at least until the 1960s. Nonetheless, as Seu Reginaldo himself and others of his generation affirmed, even in those days not all sexual affairs resulted in marriage; some girls 'lost' their virginity in their teens and others when they were much older; extra-marital relationships were practiced by both men and women; and rebellious youth who eloped more often than not were excused.

Accordingly, just as much as certain couples engaged in 'forced' or arranged marriages, some married voluntarily, others lived in consensual unions without ever bothering to marry and

yet others never resorted to file complaints for loss of virginity (cf. Eduardo 1966[1948]:29-45). Even shrewd circumventions of bureaucratic state logic were and still are common. Seu Reinaldo's sister Dona Olímpia, for example, also got married as a teenager at the police station. Like Seu Reginaldo, she did not live even one day with her husband. After her husband's death in 2005, Dona Olímpia nevertheless filed a claim for his state-funded retirement pension and she still receives it monthly.

The apparent indifference towards whether actual marital conviviality was practiced or not suggests that in 1950s Maranhão marital status was primarily related to social respectability. Marital exchange systems and duties were associated with co-residence rather than with legal contracts (Eduardo 1966:34-5). Elderly of Seu Reginalo's generation consequently exclaim that even in cases of 'forced marriages' financial support to single mothers was rarely petitioned. Strategies to account for pre- and extramarital erotic alliances consisted in accepting their legitimacy side-by-side with an imperative for ethical complaisance.

Despite profound socioeconomic, juridical and cultural change, tension between the ethics of conformity and affective interchange still remains central to the way contemporary *maranhenses* constitute networks of relatedness. My friends and research interlocutors, both men and women, continue to foster family-oriented 'careers' that anchor affective investments onto fixed sets of relations (as husbands, wives, in-laws, etc.); while they persistently attenuate the ethical foundations of these arrangements. Consequently, a striking diversity of coexistent forms of relatedness and co-residence characterizes the region. As my friend Patricia once suggested:

I think that the word you should have in mind is 'aggregate' (*agregar*). The notion of family here is a notion of aggregates. For example, look at the scheme of houses here in São Luís (the capital of Maranhão): you have a house, and then they add an extra room in the back, and another toilet, and another room. That is the way people are aggregated too… *Brasileiro* is very emotive. So if someone shows some affection to you (*carinho*), you immediately begin to frequent their house, you arrange a job nearby to be close to them. These relations are like a web that never closes on itself (*que não fecha nunca*).

During fieldwork I began thinking of relatedness in Maranhão as interconnected sets of intimate relations existing side-by-side with official formalization. As a starting point for the analysis that follows, I will use Viviana Zelizer's (2005) definition of intimacy. Zelizer (2005:18) defines intimate relations as long-term, interpersonal emotional entanglements that exhibit a high degree of mutual informal exposure, which ultimately enables at least one party access to information otherwise not publically available to others[1]. Under this framework, relatedness in Maranhão can be imagined as a plurality of such intimate 'aggregations'. Their interconnectedness is simultaneously contingent on affective reciprocity with equals *and* moral injunctions associated with such figures of authority as outraged parents, *padrinhos*-politicians and moralistic judges.

This doctoral thesis explores how affective forces of mundane encounters interact with hegemonic moral discourses among low income residents of the Brazilian state of Maranhão. On the one hand, both men and women locally consider the expression of desire, rage, longing and other emotive dispositions as the provenance of autonomous agency. On the other hand, persons also stress the indispensability of complaisance, 'respect' and deference in the maintenance of abiding social hierarchies. Based on 20 months of ethnographic fieldwork, I focus on the diverse ways by which *maranhenses* attempt to reconcile these mutually-exclusive ethical prescriptions.

I argue that through forms of play *maranhenses* sway their relational positioning across a 'web' of interconnected sets of intimate relations. Play mainly consists in performances of jealousy, anguish, mockery, seduction and other heavily contested affective transactions. These often include a measure of simulation, double-standard, or even outright deceit. Consequently, actions that challenge conventional moral injunctions are kept partially or fully concealed. Play thus produces public spaces that ethically accommodate both conformity and transgression. I use the term *'spaces of invisibility'* to describe these prevalent forms of play, which become intrinsic to the proliferation of intimate relations as ethical practices in their own right.

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[1] In the next chapter and in the conclusion I will problematize this definition and offer its revision to include strife, tension, risk, danger and other ostensibly 'negative' sentiments (cf. Geschiere 2013; Patel 2007:109).

Designating the Field

The state of Maranhão is located in the geopolitical division between northeast and north Brazil, bordering from east to west the states of Piauí, Tocantins and Pará. The state capital São-Luís is located in an island bearing the same name, off the north coast to the Atlantic Ocean (see figures 1, 2 and 3). During my fieldwork in 2009-10 Maranhão registered 6,569,683 inhabitants, of whom about 37% were defined as 'rural population' and 15% lived in São Luís[2]. In 2010, Maranhão was one of Brazil's poorest states, ranking 26th of 27 in GDP per capita figures. At the same time, the state was ranking 16th of 27 in overall GDP figures. This discrepancy implied a high measure of socioeconomic inequality, which at least statistically correlated with the heterogeneous modalities of 'familial arrangements' in Maranhão. I will now turn to further elucidate this last assertion.

The term 'familial arrangements' (*arranjos familiares*), is used in the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) surveys to include any grassroots definition of 'a family' in the Brazilian society. 'Kinship links' in the surveys technically include both contractual and consanguine relations that cut across domestic units (*domicilios particulares*); while 'families' are essentially isomorphic with coresidence. Socioeconomic indices are thus measured in accordance with the differential composition of households. The following data exemplifies this.

Primarily, in 2010, 60.2% of the families living in conviviality in Maranhão reported they chose house-sharing for financial motives. Of 1,885,000 registered 'familial arrangements' living in 1,701,000 permanent domestic units in Maranhão that year, 8.6% were of the type 'single persons'; 91.3% reported a certain combination of kinship ties, which may but may not combine conviviality with non-kin; and 0.2% of the arrangements were marked by families that reported no kinship relations at all (e.g. student house share). Whereas the latter two figures were more or less similar throughout Brazil, the figure for 'single persons' was significantly lower than the averages for both the northeast (10%) and the national (11.5%) figures respectively.

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[2] All demographic data here presented was taken from the IBGE Synthesis of Social Indicators (SIS) downloaded from the IBGE website - http://www.ibge.gov.br/. Site last accessed on 25.05.2012.

In 2009 the average number of residents in permanent domestic units (*domicílios particulares permanentes*) in Maranhão was 3.4. This was higher than the average for both the northeast region (3.2) and Brazil (3.1). The poorest families, which reported monthly income per capita equal or less than 25% of the minimum monthly salary, demonstrated even higher density with 4.4 residents; as compares with only 4.1 for the Brazilian national average[3]. In 2010, only 11.3% of the overall population of Maranhão lived in households where the average monthly income per capita was between one and two minimum salaries, which locally implied convenient living standards. For comparison, a significant 38.6% of the urban households in Maranhão reported a monthly income of half a minimum salary per capita or less. Correspondingly, 9.3% of all domestic units in Maranhão in 2009 were composed of two or more 'familial arrangements' and 3.9% of the total familial arrangements *with* kinship relations were of the type 'couples without children living with other kin'. This figure was the highest for all states of the Brazilian Federation, almost doubling the Brazilian (2.2%) and the northeast (2.5%) averages respectively.

Finally, 19.8% of all familial arrangements in 2010 were of the type 'women *with* children, living *without* a partner' and in 2008 the reported 'person of reference' for 20.4% of the households in Maranhão was a woman; whether single, married or in a common-law union. This hints the relative prevalence of teenage pregnancy in Maranhão (cf. Paucar 2003). In 2006, for example, 27.9% of registered births in Maranhão were of women within the age group 15-19, which was the highest figure in Brazil for that age group.

Socioeconomic indices of poverty in Maranhão thus go hand in hand with the distribution of people across houses. Both in rural and urban contexts, the poorer the houses are the more residents live in them and the more heterogeneous are the 'familial arrangements' that dwell therein. This is particularly salient in relation to the relatively high number of single women living with their children or teenage girls raising their babies in conjunction with relatives.

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[3] Minimum Monthly Salary is the basic social indicator in Brazil for household welfare. During my fieldwork in 2010 it was around £120 per month.

One way to read these statistical figures is to claim they underscore abound matrifocal, consensual and concubinage-based familial arrangements in low-income contexts (Woortmann 1987). Brazilianist literature is replete with such interpretations. Scholars often describe this multiplicity of familial formations as inherent to a dominant 'patriarchal' moral order, which is thought to prevail on the Brazilian socioeconomic margins (Besse 1996). Under this framework, gender inequality and domestic impoverishment are seen to intrinsically shape every aspect of economic and affective transactions in low-income neighborhoods around Brazil (Goldstein 2003).

Personally, I have not yet seen in Maranhão a family with (the average) 3.4 children, nor have I met figurative correlations walking in the street. Whatever existed in Maranhão was indeed a multiplicity of coresidential arrangements buttressed by infinitely passionate, desiring human beings; who reported interpersonal affective passages as tangible, mobilizing and motivating social forces. These turned on the local imaginary that certain forms of emotive, carnal or visceral acts of transfer 'capture' people unwittingly, and hence interconnect them in distinguishable ways.

My interlocutors in Maranhão did not normally judge such affective interconnectedness through the prism of late-modern neoliberal subjectivity, which is focused on maximizing profits or achieving individual pleasure (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 1995). Rather, 'interconnectedness' indicated interpersonal ethical commitments that were imbricated in the exchange of bodily affects. For example, jealousy was just as morally foregrounded as respect because both these sentiments simultaneously meant caring for and the possessing of another person.

It is those crucial logics of social connectivity, their regulations and their violations, that this study examines empirically. I endorse a shift of focus from the analytic centrality of the conjugal family, along with its byproduct of socioeconomic reductionism (Fonseca 2000, Blackwood 2005). Rather than outline macro-political frameworks, I here register a detailed ethnographic account of the cultural microscripts by which interconnected sets of intimate relations are made and destroyed. I contend that such description better explicates the rapid and often surprisingly flexible transformations in shape and content of local 'familial arrangements'.

Methodology and Data Collection

I first arrived in Maranhão in 2006 for a short trip as a tourist. In 2007 I conducted a six months pilot study in São-Luís, living in a low-income neighborhood I fictionally call Santo-Amaro. In 2009-10 I conducted 14 months ethnographic fieldwork living in the same neighborhood and in a small village located about 450 kilometers into the hinterland, which I fictionally call Guanabara.

Santo-Amaro was established in the late 1960s as part of an ambitious modernization plan (Costa Gonçalves 2000). The government of Maranhão deforested a region in the outskirts of São Luís in order to build there a working class neighborhood and an industrial zone (Araújo 1999). The deep-water port Porto do Itaqui, which today is one of Brazil's main export hubs, was later constructed in the vicinity. Major Brazilian industries, such as the phosphate extracting giant Vale do Rio Doce (at the time owned by the Brazilian Government, today privatized and called Vale), also established factories there. The first residents were literally removed to the neighborhood from Guanabal, a slum in São Luís city center, after a mysterious fire broke out one night in 1968 and caused the complete destruction of its precarious wooden houses (Araújo 1999)[4].

Elderly residents of Santo-Amaro, amongst the first families who arrived from Guanabal, told me of the harsh conditions they encountered. They received poorly constructed, tinny mud huts, which were completely empty. One person even told me that as she entered the hut she found a thorny bush inside, so she and her husband were forced to cut it off themselves. There were also no public services. No schools, no health posts, no maternity clinics, no recreational facilities, no jobs. Until the end of the 1970s, when a bridge over the Itaqui River was constructed, crossing over to the city was possible only by a canoe or a ridiculously long bus drive.

In the 1970s the Military Government (*Governo Militar*) endorsed huge urban development programs that brought about rapid urbanization and sharp GDP growth, which some scholars relate

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[4] Some people in Santo-Amaro still accuse José Sarney – at the time the Governor of Maranhão and later the Brazilian President – of actively provoking that fire. In this thesis I leave untouched the fascinating political debate in Maranhão concerning the oligarchy of the Sarney Family, which ruled Maranhão directly and indirectly almost continuously since 1966. See Cabral da Costa (2006).

to as an 'economic miracle' (Bethell 2008)[5]. Millions of Brazilians emigrated in the 1960s and 1970s from rural parts of the country to urban centers. In Maranhão peripheral neighborhoods of São Luís absorbed many of the immigrants. Within a time span of less than a decade Santo-Amaro thus numbered tens of thousands of residents. Illicit construction had created numerous cluster-slums expanding out from the original outline. By the 1980s Santo-Amaro was already a full-fledged slum, accommodating shootout battles between gangs as well as prosperous commerce in drugs, illegal meat slaughter on an industrial scale and thriving brothels.

The Santo-Amaro I came to know in 2007-8 and then in 2009-10 was much safer due to aggressive policing operations since the mid-1990s and the improvement of infrastructure. Through the years the Municipal Council had built schools and health posts. Vernacular community organizations had established a radio station, two active theatres, a network of midwives and some crèches. Side by side with the economic growth of Brazil since the early 2000s under the PT government, residents were relatively well-off. It was still considered dangerous to walk in the streets after ten at night, but most of my local friends agreed they have never been better.

During my studies in the neighborhood I lived intermittently in two different family houses as well as in a rented flat on my own. I participated and observed regularly the mundane practices taking place in five other households and habitually hung-out with wider circuits of friends and neighbors at local *praças* (squares), street bars and dance parties, as well as in private and public events. I observed routine everyday conviviality arrangements as they manifested in domestic divisions of labor; the mundane enactments of gender performances; the education of children in the house; routine forms of children's and adults' play; and the regulation or violation of sexual codes. I focused on forms of exchange that informed familial cohesiveness or fragmentation, as well as bestowals, favors and bequeathals.

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[5] In 1964 a military coup led by General Castelo Branco overthrew the President João Goulart. The Military Regime initiated huge development and investment projects. The economy grew by 10-12% every year throughout the end of the 1960s and the early 1970s. Due to mass migration from rural areas, within a decade Brazilian society became predominantly urban. See also Rebhun (1999:52-3).

In the course of the long-term fieldwork I accompanied Seu Sansão, one of my main research interlocutors, in his frequent travels between São Luís and Guanabara. Seu Sansão had retired two years earlier and in 2010 began the construction of what he described as his 'retirement house' in the village of his coming of age, after 35 years in Santo-Amaro. I have thus become familiarized with a network of kin and kindred in Guanabara, while living in two local family houses an overall period of about four months (in intervals of several weeks at a time).

I could not track the social origins of Guanabara. Elderly interlocutors suggested that the settlement was established in the mid-19th Century by two Portuguese families. Yet, since most of the residents were creolized Amerindian and Black, and since in the vicinities there were several other maroon communities (*quilombos*), my sense is that the village indeed started as a *quilombo* (cf. Nugent 1993). In 2010 the village numbered about 750 inhabitants. Traditionally, and to a great extent still today, the residents of Guanabara worked in fishery (*pescaria*), subsistence agriculture (*roça*), or construction (*construção*). Most families received the Bolsa Família welfare allowance from the government and to different degrees lived in precarious socioeconomic conditions[6].

Although I did not initially plan this, moving between Guanabara and Santo-Amaro significantly enriched my ethnographic work. Not only did it supply a comparative scope for the tensions existing between affective idioms and structured moral injunctions both in 'deeply' rural and urban spaces, it also made possible examining contemporary historicization of an *maranhense* identity. This was so because the countryside of Maranhão – locally referred to as *interior* – is locally portrayed as both complementary and oppositional to the capital city São Luís[7]. On the one hand, persons from all walks of life in Maranhão speak about São Luís as the pinnacle of modernity

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[6] The region capital is Guimarães, which for hundreds of years was one of the main entrance ports for slave trade coming into northeast Brazil (Pereira 2007). For a vivid description of *quilombo* life in Maranhão in the end of the 19th Century see the novel *Os Tambores de São Luís* (Montello 1984). See also Linger (1992), de Lima (2006), and Eduardo (1966[1948]).

[7] *Interior* means 'inside' (or 'within') as well as 'hinterland' (or 'countryside'). Throughout this thesis I wish to maintain this double edge and hence use the original Portuguese. Note that this division between Capital and interior is characteristic throughout all of Brazil's states, as well as in Portugal. The particular symbolic elements that give such segregation contextual significance, however, are always vernacular.

and progress in Maranhão, while the categorical '*interior*' is seen as rustic, backward and underdeveloped. On the other hand, São Luís is also seen as violent, dirty, dangerous and decadent, while the *interior* is conventionally described as mystical, virginal, pure and uncorrupt.

This thesis is not about identities as such, but the interior-capital division is important for the unpacking of a shared *maranhense* cosmology. It concerns the fact that the idealized ethics of familial hierarchies, as well as politically 'correct' images of ethical personhood, are associated with the *interior*. These virtues apply for both men and women (Mayblin 2010). They include distinctive responsibilities in house tasks, imperative for expressing and sustaining respect to others, abstaining from excessive drinking or other promiscuous behavior, being diligent and hardworking, and avoiding from meddling in other people's business (Fonseca 2000). Disinterestedness towards Others and uninhabited exchange of bodily affects are generally associated with the corruptions of São Luís. I elaborate more on this tension in chapter six.

Important ethnographic practice included the regular participation in local religious life-cycles, both in São Luís and in Guanabara. I frequently visited several Evangelical congregations in Santo-Amaro and one main *terreiro* (cult house) of Tambor de Mina – a local trance-possession Afro-Brazilian religion – located in a satellite shanty-town of the neighborhood. I also documented the Via Sacra spectacle – a street-theatre depicting Jesus Christ's last days – which takes place annually in Santo-Amaro on Good Friday (*Sexta-Feira Santa*). In Guanabara I followed Catholic ceremonies such as *Pastor Natalino*, *Carnaval*, an ordination of a local Catholic Padre in a nearby town, and a ten days commemoration of a festival in honors of the saint Divino Espirito Santo[8]. I also visited several times in a local *terreiro* that practices *Pajelança*, an Amerindian religion syncretized with Tambor de Mina (cf. Pacheco 2004).

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[8] Pastor Natalino is a religious spectacle that selectively demonstrates stations of Jesus Christ's life and follows the mythical structure of the New Testament. In Maranhão Pastor Natalino is still celebrated in some remote villages of the interior, including Guanabara. Some of the protagonists presented were an Amerindian Woman, a Flower Queen, and certain mystical creatures who all come to bless Baby Jesus on the occasion of His birth. For theory about Brazilian *Carnaval* in Maranhão, on which I will not elaborate here, see Linger (1992). A detailed description of the festival of Divino Espirito Santo appears in chapter six.

I participated in religious events primarily because most of my interlocutors were involved in them to different degrees of piety. I therefore joined them and attended various celebrations, conducted interviews with practitioners and with authoritative figures in the congregations, and participated in public rituals. I sought to document the forms by way of which the affective capacities of the human body – as they interact with super- or extra-human forces that are locally taken to encroach it – were practiced, reported, hidden, revealed, curtailed and mythologized within the procedural procurement for affective connectivity with the divine.

Forms of exchange and relation I documented in other social domains reappeared within these cosmogonic contexts in heightened vigor. Since I offer a multidimensional description of social relations in Maranhão (to the extent I am able to produce one), I will further elaborate on these points in chapters five. I claim that the classical methodological segregation in anthropology between social domains (e.g. political vs. religious, domestic vs. public, economical vs. intimate) goes against the ways by which my interlocutors constitute, sustain, mitigate or destroy intimacy within and across these domains. Intimacy thus becomes an important aspect of ritual action.

Finally, throughout fieldwork I accompanied the routine work of two Health Agents (*Agente de Saúde*) conducting house-visits in Santo-Amaro and Guanabara. During these visits I participated in conversations concerning the body and its susceptibility. I also regularly observed the daily routine of a government sponsored AIDS clinic in São Luís city center (CTA). There I was able to join public interventions, ranging from condom distribution in prostitution centers around the city to HIV tests in different locations (cf. Htun 2003). I juxtaposed my data from these activities with the practices of traditional midwives (*parteiras leigas*) and healers (*curandeiros*) I came to know throughout my fieldwork (cf. Macêdo 2008). This gave me a comparable scope through which to reflect on the discrepancies existing in Brazil between official public health discourse on maternal health and sexual risk, and the implementation of these discourses in low-income grassroots activities (Nunes 2000, Barroso and Corrêa 1995, Sanabria 2010, Ferreira 2007)

The material I collected may be classified into five different types of data: (1) narratives (and folk or grassroots categories) of sexuality, virility and the erotic, which include notions of courtship, virginity, seduction and conjugal histories; (2) descriptions of the power(s) people associate with their body and its affecting/affective capacities, including aspects of bodily functions such as the genitalia, heart, hormones, blood, mother-milk, emotions etc.; (3) the diversities of local conjugal relations and kinship interconnectivity that support and detract from these ideas; (4) institutional impingements upon local concepts of relatedness; and (5) the ethical character of intimate attachments that are valued, condemned, embodied, sanctioned and performed.

Being a 'white' Jewish heterosexual male in his early 30s and an Israeli national proved to be an advantage for collecting these types of data[9]. This was so because aspects of my sociological positioning proved to be a rich topic for insightful interchange. This included my Jewish and Israeli background (especially with Evangelical and Mina practitioners); my experiences as a student in London (especially with persons interested in consumption trends and metropolitan lifestyles); and my intimate, erotic, or love-life experiences (which interested practically everybody). I now turn to elaborate on ethical issues concerning my relatively 'deep' integration in the field.

Ethical Issues

Throughout this thesis I expose intimate details of my interlocutors' lives. I wish to make three methodological points that regard: (1) the accumulative convergence of emotionally-laden events during fieldwork creates an ethical edge for self-refashioning both for ethnographers and their interlocutors; (2) within this process both ethnographers and interlocutors change each-others' lives on pragmatic terms (which I consider to be irreversible); and (3) such transformation elucidates the force of 'intimacy' as an important analytic term. Elaboration follows.

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[9] I locate 'white' under quotations primarily because race and colour definitions in the field were fluid (cf. Schwarcz 1993). In some context I was referred to as 'white', which denoted upper-middle-class symbolic capital, and in others not. Being Israeli, I also do not feel comfortable associating myself with whiteness, which is predominantly an Occidental, Euro-American ethical category that sprung directly from the colonial encounter (Mignolo 2000). I choose to leave this category unresolved.

In a revelatory paper about romantic relations he had had with several Colombian women during fieldwork, Peter Wade (1993) notes that relationships in the field are not merely access highways to 'data'. Rather, erotic and amorous engagements in the field are often the product of a desire to transcend the mutual construction of otherness between ethnographer and interlocutors (ibid:203). Rather than seeing sexual relations in the field as a penetration through otherness, which indeed evokes the feminist critique of gendered power asymmetry, these could also be glossed as fertility through union (ibid:205). Ultimately Wade claims that an impulse towards transcendence exist both in scientific ventures preoccupied with 'truth' and sexual life choices. The 'knowledge' ethnographers produce in the field is ultimately symmetrical to the knowledge couples produce when they explore each-others' horizons in a romantic relationship.

The main ethical inference in relation to my own fieldwork is that engagement in romantic relationships in the field meant I became morally indebted. What could have been a fleeting erotic game of seduction was made into an enduring emotional quest that reinstated my 'seriousness' vis-à-vis the people with whom I lived. Since in Maranhão sex tourism is widespread, young 'white' male tourists are often regarded with contempt as 'perverts' (*tarados*) or 'foreigners' (*gringos*). By cultivating enduring relations in Maranhão across two different field trips I gained some measure of 'respect' and this contrived me as an ethical person by local standards (see chapter three).

Since the dialectic between fidelity and infidelity was a major ethnographic issue during my fieldwork (on which I elaborate in chapters two and four), it was only when in fact I 'betrayed' my girlfriend that I realized the importance of secrecy and concealment in the organization of intimate relatedness. After this event the plurality of relational aggregations I documented ethnographically could no longer be thought of through the artificial segregation between sex (with its derivative notion of desire) and reproduction (with its economic implications). My transgression, as well as the emotional and moral dramas it incited, encouraged me to rethink and ultimately change my categorical understanding of what relatedness in Maranhão was all about.

Allen Abramson (1993) describes a similar process in the context of his ethnographic work in Fiji. Abramson argues that he only managed to understand local sexual codes as they were played out in mundane life – rather than as structured mythological prescriptions for valued or condemned types of moral personhood – after he transgressed the rules. Whereas until that point Abramson was located a 'proper' place next to chiefs and big men – a place which kept him on the ceremonial 'edge' of Fijian sociality – sexual relations with a forbidden woman made of him a true participant. Transgression therefore publically reinstated Abramson's position in the field as an acting subject (ibid:74-5).

Steven Rubenstein (2004:142) examines 'the role of power and desire in various exchanges' between him and his research interlocutors. He promotes the term 'erotic economies' in order to speak about the ways by which desire and the erotic can be used by interlocutors (in his case the Shuar in the Ecuadorian Amazon) beyond the boundaries of cultural sensibilities. Rubenstein's case consists in a romance he thought he was having with a local girl only to discover later on that she was using him for certain benefits together with her 'real' boyfriend from the village. The kind of knowledge engendered by this experience concerns the ways by which desire and intimate relations at large also signify vulnerability, subjugation, distrust and conflict.

Like the aforementioned authors, I also found myself 'involved' beyond and above any strict separation between my 'private' and 'professional' life. This aligns with Wade's (1993:201) insistence that 'the distinction between personal odyssey and analytical salience is more a matter of perspective than it is a hard-and-fast division'. For example, since 2010 I have been conversing regularly with my friends from Maranhão about the development of my argument. The intimacy I shared with friends and girlfriends in the field was merged with the anthropological knowledge I ultimately produced, as much as it has become an important aspect of my personal life.

Consequently, and since this thesis is ultimately about the minutiae of close relations in Maranhão, the writing process itself was for me a practical exercise in the ethics of intimacy. By this

I mean that as writing went along I found myself struggling to reconcile my ethical commitments to my friends with my scientific endeavour to produce an original theoretical statement. I thus began thinking critically about the explanatory force of the term 'intimacy' itself, which combines the 'experiential' and 'cognitive' dimensions of such an ethical project. In the conclusion of the thesis I will suggest that intimacy may become an important term in the cross cultural study of kinship relations precisely because it captures this dualism.

In all instances I took measures to protect the identities of my research interlocutors. All names of persons and places that appear in this doctoral thesis are therefore fictional. I also asked for permission to publish ethnographic examples. In some occasions I could not expose certain deeds or conversations, and hence I omitted those parts from the thesis. In some cases I also omitted certain details that I thought could expose persons' identities. My friends' and interlocutors' contribution is notable, but responsibility on this thesis is only mine.

The Chapters of the Thesis

I will unpack my arguments in six chapters. In the first chapter I will supply a thorough theoretical survey of the main themes that inform this work. I will begin by delineating the theoretical logic of my main argument, which will be followed by a review of the main arguments in Brazilianist literature concerning kinship, gender and intimacy. I will then direct the debate to the analytic frameworks of affect theory, play theory and the anthropology of ethics and morality.

In the second chapter I seek to characterize ethnographically the notion of 'familial aggregations' in Maranhão. I argue that the ability to wield, brandish and truncate the transfer of bodily substances and emotional idioms (Strathern 1996) is the key factor by which relatedness is locally imagined. I will use the term 'transfer' to indicate how persons locally generate distinguishable intimate linkages from affective matter cutting through sexed bodies.

In the third chapter I describe the scope of moral indebtedness in everyday sociality in Maranhão. This is salient in the context of co-residence, where unrestricted affective transfer is

deemed dangerous or even destructive. Indebtedness locally manifests in the emotional economies of 'respect' (*respeito*), by which persons introduce measures of 'proximity' or 'distance' into exchange relations. I argue that these are embodied in the materiality of local houses.

In the fourth chapter I argue that forms of play underscore the commonsense dynamics of intimate relations in Maranhão. This concerns performances of seduction (*sedução*), jealousy (*ciúmes*), pretention (*fingir*) and control (*controle*), which inspire a strategic game of concealment/disclosure. I will demonstrate how these playful episodes constitute the invisibility of certain actions, and explicate in what way this underscores local notions of ethical personhood.

In the fifth chapter I will examine notions of intimacy and affective transfer in the context of cosmogonic activities in Maranhão. I will compare between possession rites undertaken by Tambor de Mina practitioners and praying rites (*oração*) undertaken by local Christian Evangelicals. I will argue that these rituals intrinsically generate connectivity with both otherworldly and earthly entities in ways that turn 'invisibility' into a regular ethical practice of everyday life. These ritual activities constitute similar kinds of ethical persons, but they do that in different forms.

In the sixth chapter I analyze how notions of affect, play and intimacy manifest through public events in Maranhão. I demonstrate that the local imaginary of a hierarchic moral order based on deference and that of an egalitarian social order based on respect implicate each other in these events. I will argue that contemporary historicization of relatedness in Maranhão thus rests on the overlap of these imaginaries, as they relate to post-slavery social relations.

In the conclusion I will trace out what I take to be my original contribution to contemporary social theory. Beyond Brazilianist ethnography I aim to engage with scholarship preoccupied with the possible relations between the sociality of kinship and the situational dynamics of intimacy. Turning away from the 'hybrid', the 'ambiguous' and the 'cyborg', I will suggest we can begin thinking about play-forms of everyday sociality as an ethical practice in its own right; that generates meaningful intimacy as much as it may destroys it.

Chapter One: The Theoretical Framework of This Study

The Argument: Intimacy, Ethics and the Play of Invisibility in Maranhão

In her study of domestic violence in the Brazilian state of Bahia, Hautzinger (2007) refers to extramarital sexual adventures as 'adultery'. Her interlocutor Dona Alegrina, however, disagrees. Hautzinger asks if extramarital sexual relations may not bring about a 'difficult situation' and Dona Alegrina defies her: 'no, there's no such thing as a difficult situation. There's such thing as each person minding his own business… Do you know why?... It has to do with love. There's no such thing as love outside of the truth. Love is a very free thing… It's a spontaneous, free thing. And it is a thing with which condemnation does not exist' (ibid:78). Hautzinger's take on that assertion is:

Dona Alegrina's notion of her own triumph hinged on her acceptance that human desire and impulse, as well as love's own free force, *could not be controlled by abstract moral imperatives, such as those condemning adultery*... Distinct individualism among Afro-Caribbean run a similar course, suggesting that these forms derive from shared historical processes, most notably involving rapid cultural loss through enslavement and the forcible, accelerated, and improvised recreation of culture (ibid:79-80, italics mine).

But what if Dona Alegrina actually practices an alternative conjugal morality, which is just as elaborately 'abstract' as that advanced by Hautzinger? Dona Alegrina's notions of truth and love challenge prevalent Euro-American ideas about fidelity and trust (cf. Gillies et al. 2003, Jankowiak 2008:8-9, Giddens 1992) because they comprise sexual and emotional intimacy as the products of desire. Consequently, Dona Alegrina is not simply defending transgression, which is a form of resistance to dominant moral injunctions (Parker 1991). Rather, Dona Alegrina seems to promote an inclusive morality turning on *dispersion* of passionate relations. These relations are recognized as meaningfully intimate even when they proliferate beyond the singular conjugal relationship.

Everyday events that are heuristically framed under such emotive tropes as 'love' or 'passion' actively impel the refashioning of selves (Zigon 2013). These events 'do not demand fidelity to an undeniable truth, but rather, demand that one do the ethical work necessary to

readjust one's life trajectory to live the consequences of the event. In this sense, the event's demand for fidelity to it is an ethical demand' (Zigon 2013:204). Dona Alegrina' ideas about love and truth can thus be seen as generative principles that are judged in relation to the passions that sustain them from within. As emerging social events, such passions are inherently ethical.

This begs rethinking about the forms of ethical labour that are respectively inscribed through the expression or containment of affective dispositions (Lambek 2010a). What stands out ethnographically for low-income neighborhoods in northeast Brazil is that affective dispositions of the human body precipitate sensuous transactions a priori. Some of my friends in Maranhão, for instance, hold that unfaithfulness is not just physical but primarily 'spiritual' (sic); it materializes itself in the imagination and hence there is no significant difference between desiring a person and having sex with him/her. As long as certain affective dispositions demand fidelity, and hence escape condemnation, persons must find a way to appropriate them while still accommodating contrasting moral demands that favor inhibition (Rebhun 1999:21-2, Wilson 1995). I claim that this dialectic locally entails the production of 'invisibility' as a thoroughly ethical form of social intimacy.

About half way through fieldwork I had a dream that might elucidate the practical scope of this claim. At the time I was dating someone, but I also got involved in a brief affair. One day, when common friends saw me walking hand in hand with the other girl, I rang my girlfriend to confess my 'betrayal' (*traição*). This provoked a weeks-long feud. At some stage during that period I dreamt of a red creature with horns rebuking me in a creepy voice: '*you see, we told you this would happen! You should have done what we told you!*' I woke up astonished, thinking of the trickster Exú, the spiritual entity in Afro-Brazilian spiritual doctrines that links divine and mundane realities.

Without delving deeply into psychoanalytic waters, it is reasonable to claim that Exú was a proxy of my guilt and the symbol of shame. My dream vividly exhibited the moral conundrum in which I was entangled: how would my sexual unfaithfulness impinge on my commitments to significant others? I thought that by 'betraying' I publicly presented myself as unreliable and

assumed that by 'taking responsibility' I could at least partially 'clean' myself from these implications. I soon discovered, however, that from the point of view of my local friends and interlocutors the problem was not 'betrayal' itself, nor did the performance of repentance could make things better. My friend Juliana, with whom I spoke about this, explained:

You had a right to assume your guilt as long as you didn't hurt anyone. Nobody will remember that you were honest, but people will remember that you went and made a scandal (*chilique*) in front of her door. This is unforgivable. For example, we all know that your girlfriend's father also betrayed his wife, but he found a way to do it in hiding, no? You didn't. One thing is you being caught, another is you go out with your carnival custom… my grandmother always said – 'horns (*chifre*) is the notification, not the act'[10].

Invisibility of certain actions entails a sense of impunity characterizing 'deviant' trajectories especially when, as with my girlfriend's father, these are discursively condemned as marginal, risky, or infamous. For that reason, for example, conventions marking social encounters in a *motel* turn on enforcing anonymity at all costs: if you see someone at the reception, you wait outside until they disappear; if someone you actually know enters the motel you simply ignore them; and some of the *moteis* even have curtains to cover the license plates of the parking cars[11].

Both men and women in Maranhão find it difficult to adopt a confessional moral order marked by excessive honesty or enforced transparency. For example, my friend Wilson told me of 'conjugal seminars' some Christian-Evangelical congregations in São Luís regularly organize. In these occasions recently-converted ('born-again') couples hear lectures about the virtues of sexual fidelity as a divine value. One of the exercises practiced in these seminars is confession. Couples are asked to look each other in the eyes and reveal episodes of infidelity. Wilson is a Pastor, and he leads such sessions in his congregation. He told me that once, when he asked couples to confess, he heard a man telling his wife: 'I don't want to know! Don't say anything about these things'.

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[10] Horns and the figure of the 'corno' (cuckold) are widely used around Brazil to indicate sexual infidelity. This is mostly associated with men whose wives have betrayed them, but not exclusively (cf. Parker 1991).

[11] Motel in Brazil is a short-term room rent most commonly used for sexual encounters.

I do not claim that *maranhenses* are pathological liars, con-artists or crooks. As I will demonstrate in chapter three, being trustworthy, reliable and respectful are admired virtues that become an important aspect of close relations. However, complete disclosure in the sense Giddens (1992) calls 'pure relationship' does not necessarily follow. Giddens claims that in late-modernity, egalitarian gender roles in the public sphere entail a democratization of domestic relations. This requires transparency, which becomes an ethical precept in the mediation and totalization of conjugal intimacy. In contrast, in Maranhão persons maintain a diversity of intimate sets of relations in parallel to one another, and this necessitates a measure of concealment.

The crux of my argument can be summarized in three statements: (1) the body and its affective capacities are essential axes for any intimate involvement in Maranhão, as they are taken to be the loci for the extension of meaningful relatedness within and across co-residential groups; (2) at the same time, categorizations of family structure and morality restrict the scope of bodily performance and affective reciprocity; (3) in order to produce meaningful intimacy in ways that incorporate both these realms of practice persons invest considerable efforts in concealment, secrecy, hiding, mystic, cover-up stories or otherwise what I refer to as 'spaces of invisibility'[12].

I argue that by continuously producing spaces of invisibility *maranhenses* maintain their freedom of action while complying with their structured obligations to meaningful others (as kin and kindred). I will thus demonstrate that in low-income Maranhão, invisibility is *an ethical practice in its own right,* which allows persons to shift between contrasting moral injunctions (Zigon 2009:261). This undermines the tautological claim that inherited patriarchal sexual codes always entail rigid ethical categorizations, which render their inevitable transgression from within (Hautzinger 2007). In what follows I further unpack the theoretical logic of my own argument.

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[12] Stephen Nugent (1993) speaks about the economical invisibility of riverine *caboclos* (creolized peasants in the Amazon basin) as an *unethical* state negligence, thus emphasizing their socioeconomic exclusion. Similarly, Donald Carter (2010) claims that the social invisibility of African migrants in Italy is a 'corrosive social erasure insinuated into living memory that shapes the contours of social imagination and relegates the newcomer to the margins' (2012:5). Contrarily, Ramon Sarró's (2009) description of invisible sacred sites on the Guinea upper coast largely coincides with the argument I am advancing here (see chapter four).

Gender on the Brazilian Socioeconomic Margins: From Miscegenation to Inequalities

Under the patriarchal organization, the Portuguese and the Negro slaves lived in close and intimate association… In the mobile, urban society that came into existence, the mixed-blood found an opportunity to compete on almost equal terms with the pure blooded Portuguese… The pure blooded Negroes, especially after emancipation, became more mobile and lost much of their African culture (Frazier 1942:466-7).

This version for a Brazilian History builds on Gilberto Freyre's spellbinding accounts of miscegenation as the bedrock of Brazilian sociality (1956[1933], 1963[1936]). By this view, during the colonial regime (1500-1822) and the Brazilian Empire (1822-1889), concubinage and nursing functioned as complementary social mechanisms, coerced and synthesized together under the economic system of slavery. Slave women breast-fed their masters' children in the big-house (*casa grande*) or estate (*sobrado*), sometimes literally raising them as their nannies and guardians (*mucamas*). White masters' boys were later initiated into the world of sexual pleasures by those slave-women's daughters in the slave quarters (*senzala*), usually as early as puberty age (cf. Freyre 1963, Bastide 1978[1960]). Offspring of such unions were at times raised in the Big House as legitimate family members (cf. Del Priore 1993, Ramos 1951, Parker 1991).

Although clearly idealizing the paternalistic relations between masters and slaves (Levine 1991:212-13, Linger 1992), this narrative thwarted dark theories of eugenics that flourished in the 1930s in Brazil (Dávila 2003, Goldstein 2003). Freyre and his contemporaries claimed miscegenation created a unique progressive society in Brazil rather than seeing it as an impediment for the modernization of the country. This framework, however, also generated the color-blind myth of a Brazilian 'racial democracy' (Ribeiro 2000). The idea that miscegenation underscored Brazilian citizenship at large overlooked the intersections existing in Brazil still today between class stratification, gender inequality and skin-colour discrimination (Goldstein 2003, Schwarcz 1993). Scholars have thus shifted the focus of analysis from these excessively-romanticized views to the 'strained' and contested nature of gender and class relations (Rago 2006, Besse 1996). I schematically break down such critiques into relativist and constructionist approaches.

Relativist approaches tend to focus on the eroticization of gendered spaces in Brazil as a symbolic system of meaning (Chauí 1984). In this paradigm discourse about sexuality stimulates the metaphorical elision of everyday hierarchies. Richard Parker (1991:54), for example, famously incorporates a list of 'sexual classifications' to signify the 'transgressive play of *sacanagem*' (ibid:135); a ritualization of the 'dirty' and the erotic that corresponds to a Brazilian 'sexual ideology' building on symbolic female passivity and male activity. He argues:

Within this erotic world, sexual transactions acquire their significance neither as an expression of social hierarchy, nor as an external indication of an intimate truth, but as an end in themselves: as a realization of desire in the achievement of pleasure and passion. And this realization places central emphasis on those sexual practices which… are the most questionable and problematic. Erotic ideology thus structures an alternative universe of sexual experience – a universe that takes concrete shape… in the stories (Brazilians) tell themselves about themselves as sensual beings (ibid:4-5, brackets mine).

Don Kulick (1998) argues that Salvador *travesti* (transgender) maintain their social productivity within the feminine domain precisely because 'ideologically' the gender system in Brazil differentiates sexual virility and passivity. Those bodies that are penetrated fulfill feminine roles in everyday interactions, whereas those bodies that penetrate fulfill masculine roles. For *travestis* a sexualized gender career determines possibilities for the acquisition or relinquishment of economic and political resources. It ultimately entails accessibility to alternate kin networks that substitute (or function in parallel to) familial structures (cf. Parker 1999, Green 1999).

Constructionist approaches tend to argue that the links between precarious economic conditions and the construction of sexuality in Brazilian sociality always 'deprive low-income women of access to social ascension' (McCallum 1999:288); even when they are 'seen to be liberal and liberated' (ibid 287). This interpretation focuses mainly on the predicaments of domestic impoverishment as it interrelates with the nuances of power, gender roles and rapidly changing emotional worlds (Rebhun 1999, Hautzinger 2007). In this scheme, the continuous absence of state authorities on the Brazilian periphery perpetuates the marginalization of women.

Nancy Scheper-Hughes' (1992) work on violence and maternity in a shantytown in Northeast Brazil is a prominent example. Arguing against a universalizing notion of mother-love as a 'natural' instinct that necessarily manifests itself in nurturing, Scheper-Hughes claims that women who starved their infants to death in 1980s Northeast Brazil actually enacted a local manifestation of mother-love. In this scheme the women neglected their infants to death because of an emotional detachment that responded to persistent socioeconomic impoverishment. Since toddlers under the age of three were locally considered to be fallen angels, they were believed to have a 'death wish' and thus left to die. Scheper-Hughes (1992:276, brackets mine) argues:

…The apparent indifference of alto women toward the lives and deaths of some of their infants is continuous with, and a pale reflection of, the official bureaucratic indifference of local agents of church and state to the problem of child mortality in North-East Brazil today. (This concerns) the largely unconscious rejection of the 'unthinkable'… those social relations that must be concealed and misread so as to guarantee complicity in the collective bad faith alluded to earlier. What cannot be recognized in this instance are the social determinants of the overproduction of *Nordestino* angel-babies.

Jessica Gregg (2003) arrived at a *favela* in Recife since it was where 'documented incidence of cervical cancer, a disease related to sexual activity, is the highest in the world' (ibid:4). Trying to explain this correlation, Gregg identified two main 'sexual strategies' employed by women living in the *favela* – '*Liberdade*' (liberty) and '*Segurança*' (security) – turning on 'socioeconomic survival' and 'the honor and shame complex' (ibid:30). These respectively clustered obedience, fidelity and social seclusion against unrestrained sexual activity. In Gregg's account, such 'strategies' mediate the 'ambiguities' deriving from a system that ostensibly values at once virility and virginity:

The cultural construction of Brazilian female sexuality links sexuality and gender, suggesting that Brazilian women are by nature excessively libidinous and that *Brasileira* sexuality must therefore be controlled. It also suggests that how women are perceived and how they are to be treated depends on their sexual behavior… Although women understood their sexuality in relation to that cultural model, they also clearly understood their sexuality to be a resource, or tool for survival (ibid:58).

Here, the hallmarks of a Lewissian 'culture of poverty' compel women to use sex as a socioeconomic resource, which underscores fragmented family structures (Lovell 1999; but cf. Agier 1990). Constructionist authors thus tend to use dark, extraordinary jargon to speak about ordinary working-class everyday life. For example, terms such as 'do battle' (*batalhando*) and 'Brazilian polygyny' (McCallum 1999:277), or 'racialized eroticism' (Goldstein 2003:108), indirectly suggest that the middle-classes in Brazil lead a life completely devoid of hardships or pain (cf. Owensby 1999). Consequently, this approach becomes moralizing or even paternalistic, and ultimately takes part in the process of subjugation it claims to undermine.

Taken together, both relativist and constructionist paradigms convey the assumption that socioeconomic and political change in Brazil impels the structural disintegration of the 'patriarchal family' side by side with contextual reworking of patriarchal *values* (Besse 1996; cf. Carvalho and Szymanski 1995). This is so because both these approaches naturalize sexuality and reproduction as *mutually exclusive*: while the 'real world' of socioeconomic status is sustained by contemporary inequalities, the morals associated in Brazil with mundane affective encounters are portrayed as pertinent to an ideational world of erotic fantasy. Below I continue to elucidate this critique.

Contrasting Perspectives: Sibling Intimacy and Vernacular Networks of Relatedness

Alternative theoretical perspectives focus on vernacular emotional styles (Reddy 2001, Beatty 2005a) on the Brazilian periphery as legitimate cosmological systems (Fonseca 2000 and 2003b, Marcelin 1999, Rebhun 1999, Robben 1989, Linger 1992 and 2005). Under these terms relatedness in low-income contexts is regulated by well-situated hierarchies that are coherent to those who inhabit low-income neighborhoods or villages, and are central to their world.

In her study of sexual morality in early 20th Century working class contexts in Rio de Janeiro, Caulfield (2000) illustrates how conflicting moral assessments of virginity and sexual honor reflected a broader struggle over the power to shape Brazil's political future (ibid:20). Brazilian citizenship was expanding to incorporate the urban working class and the value of virginity – formally linked with familial respectability – has undergone significant revision. The Brazilian state

has thus become a factor in maintaining sexual morality. For example, 'scientific deflowering examinations' in police stations corroborated or refuted complaints of working class parents against the 'seducers of their daughters' (Caulfield 2000:104). The medical practitioner Afrânio Peixoto had personally observed 2,701 hymens from 1907 to 1915 in order to determine the condition of female virginity (Caulfield 2000:16-7).

Ultimately, Caulfield argues that in the early days of the Brazilian Republic 'Legal disputes over lost honour' (Caulfied 2000:17) were decided over women's 'honesty', a matter that under the 1890 penal code depended on their position in or outside a family (ibid 30)[13]. Caulfield thus powerfully demonstrates how 'the taxonomic conventions of colonial knowledge' (Stoler 2002:13) concerning the links between morality and political paternalism permeated through and overlapped with 'the constitutional guarantee of the moderns' in Brazil (Latour 1993:29-32). Her point is that working-class families appropriated these legal systems and macro-political discourses about gender relations in ways that matched their own changing evaluations of female virginity, masculine honor and marriage (cf. Cachapuz 2006, Nazzari 1991, Del Priore 2005).

Accounting for vernacular discourses about relatedness can thus open ways to theorize large scale processes in Brazilian society (Samara 1996)[14]. For example, Claudia Fonseca (2003a) suggests that sexual reciprocity that is not institutionalized (e.g. concubinage and consensual unions) in low-income neighborhoods across Brazil is ethically permissible; rather than counteracting prevailing parochial contentions about 'virginity' or 'honor' (Ribeiro 1945). Writing on matrifocality in Salvador, Scott (1996) hints at the consequences of such emphasis on sexual

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[13] Only in 1940 the penal code was rewritten (Caulfield 2000:191): 'Seduction' replaced 'deflowering' and was defined as achieving a 'carnal conjunction' with a virgin by 'taking advantage of her inexperience or justifiable trust'. The maximum age for the victim was lowered from 20 to 17. This put an end to the technical confusion over cases of complacent hymens and allowed judges a wider margin for deciding which girls deserve the protection of the courts. It also shifted the focus of the law more firmly away from the concern with women's virtue and toward the protection of minors. This definition was only altered in the 2005 revision to 'crimes of corruption of a minor with libidinal ends'. See Brazilian Presidency Website (Planalto.gov) in http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil/_Ato2004-2006/2005/Lei/L11106.html . Accessed 12.12.2011.

[14] Samara (1996) demonstrates that in 19th Century Brazil, despite the hegemony of the 'patriarchal family', female headed households were common. She suggests that at least in the last 150 years vernacular distinctions between private and public spheres in Brazilian cities are far less rigid than they have been portrayed by scholars (e.g. Del Priore 1993).

autonomy, arguing it makes 'domestic groups change rapidly and constantly' (Scott 1996:289). Seeking to understand the moral principles underpinning multiple forms of relatedness in low-income neighborhoods in Bahia, Marcelin (1999) portrays a continuum between 'blood' and 'consideration' (*consideração*) across three concentric circles, making up kin and family definitions. The closer to the inner-most circle a person is located (i.e. conviviality), the more he/she is 'considered' family (cf. DaMatta 1991). The further towards the external circle, the more the factor of 'blood' is used as vector of relatedness (cf. Rebhun 1999).

This dynamic underscores the prevalence of grassroots fostering traditions in low-income urban neighborhoods (Fonseca 1986). Children circulate between households of neighbors and relatives in ways that ostensibly circumvent high-modernist state logic, which is focused on the naturalized nuclear family as its symbolic ideal type (Walmsley 2008). Not only financial difficulties motivate women to 'give away' some of their children but also more prosaic considerations. These include, for example, increasing the number of significant others who contribute to a child's education (cf. Fonseca 2003b). Sometimes children even decide voluntarily they 'like' living with one of their kin and this is approved by their parents.

Criticizing the notion of 'survival strategies' as reductionist, Fonseca (2000:53-88) goes on to argue that in low-income neighborhoods power is diffused across finely differentiated intimate, contractual and consanguine relations. Intra-familial exchange patterns – which consist mostly in moral feedback (from women) and symbolic protection (from men) – cut through a multiplicity of domestic arrangements (Scott 1990). Consanguine relations win over precarious or ad hoc conjugal arrangements as well as over calculations focused on socioeconomic transfers (Blackwood 2005). Fonseca (ibid) brings forth the notion of sibling-intimacy (Stack 1975, Weiner 1992) as a crucial element in the constitution of neighborhood sociality, suggesting there has been an over-emphasis on women's exclusivity in such systems as the matrifocal family or 'female headed houses' (Smith 1996, Clarke 1999[1957]). Annette Weiner (1992:411, brackets mine) defines sibling intimacy as:

A broad range of culturally reproductive actions, from siblings' social and economic closeness and dependency to latent, disguised or overt sexual relations… Frequently women continue to play a substantial exchange role with their brothers and even their brothers' children, even after they marry, a social fact that has been ignored in the long preoccupation in Western thought with the incest taboo.

'Sibling Intimacy' challenges the tendency to polarize the primary socialization unit as diametrical to other units of signification, whether these include grades of 'blood' relatives, affinities based on 'consideration', or neighborhood/village ritual kinship networks (cf. Scheper-Hughes 1992:104). It builds on the assumptions that kinship hierarchies and gender relations on the Brazilian periphery cannot be distinguished as distinct domains of analysis (cf. Collier and Yanagisako 1987). Everyday antic manifesting in gossip and the prevalence of consensual contracts are thus enmeshed with low-income notions of power and economical arrangements. Here, persons are central to their world, with its grounded micro-political economy, its spatial outline, and its localized identities. Low-income urban neighborhoods thus become quasi-autonomous zones of social praxis exhibiting a cultural logic alien to Brazilian middle-class morality.

In a similar move, Maya Mayblin (2010:124) has recently argued that 'overgrown concern with contrast and difference between the sexes lead us to overlook indigenous categories of correspondence between the sexes'. Mayblin focuses on the moral principles underpinning marriage life in a village in Pernambuco and argues that the difficulties of marriage life – which she describes as an abrupt change from one life form to another – are thus reworked as a moral dilemma. This consists in replacing an innocent, naïve-like state of being supposedly free of obligations, with sinful existence subsumed with carnal desire and burdened by familial responsibilities. Mayblin (2010:60) powerfully claims that 'it is not sexual intercourse per se that spiritually pollutes the person so much as the dangerous and destructive emotions it gives rise to, emotions such as pride and possessiveness that in turn may lead to sinful, violent acts'. She thus focuses on the local ways men and women conceptualize and problematize 'power' through the personal virtues locally associated with ethical personhood.

Notions of power in low-income contexts in Brazil must stand in the heart of any discussion about these social worlds. Yet, describing the ethics of relatedness in 'popular' neighborhoods as thoroughly differentiated from those of middle-class context in Brazil reifies cultural difference. By this I mean that this analytic strategy entails a sense of false radical alterity (Pina-Cabral 2009): as if not only dramatic socioeconomic gaps segregate classes in Brazil but also contrasting emotional consistencies and moral injunctions. Consequently, Brazilian sociality becomes intrinsically fragmented. I will go beyond this analytic dissonance by turning to affect theory.

Affect Theory: Accounting for Interconnectedness

While relativist and constructionist paradigms segregate pleasure, intimacy and desire from the 'real world' of procreation; approaches highlighting the otherworldliness of peripheral neighborhoods vis-à-vis middle class morality seem to claim that pleasure and desire are the only 'real world' left to see. This theoretical deadlock displaces structure from process (Carsten and Hugh Jones 1995:36-42). On the one hand there are relations, templates, holism, and stable rules from without. On the other hand there is contested agency, partial truths and ephemeral sensations from within (cf. Abu-Lughod and Lutz 1990). I wish to challenge this dualism through the category of 'affect'. As an analytical concept, affect can be understood as follows:

Affect is an impingement or extrusion of a momentary or sometimes more sustained state of relation *as well as* the passage (and the duration of passage) of forces or intensities… Affect is found in those intensities that pass body to body… in those resonances that circulate about, between, and sometimes stick to bodies and worlds, and in the very passages or variations between these intensities and resonances themselves (Seigworth and Gregg 2010:1, original brackets).

The projection and absorption of bodily affects in everyday life comes down to a process of 'contagion', by which certain interconnections are made manifest (Thrift 2009, Massumi 2010). The ethnographic scope of such contagion is wide. It ranges from pragmatic instrumentalism, as with migration documents that become 'material objects of law and governance… capable of carrying,

containing, or inciting affective energies when transacted or put to use in specific webs of social relation' (Navaro-Yashin 2007:81); to theoretical inquiries into 'how imagination of the commodity is being captured and bent to capitalist means through a series of 'magical' technologies of public intimacy' (Thrift 2010:290, original quotes, italics omitted).

On the experiential level affects are inherently associated with subjectivity and personal feelings, which are properties of mind rather than openly traceable social factors. The spectral or 'seismographic' character of these 'invisible vibrations' (Brennan 2004:70-1) – which interconnect persons and things – is then difficult to register empirically. It is however possible to grasp how 'affect' manifests ethnographically by recognizing that not everything always 'flows'. When actions become emotionally and ethically meaningful for a long period of time they also involve power relations, whose description must include the affective 'grit' by which persons experience these relations (Thrift 2009)[15]. Shields et al. (2011:5, italics mine) argue:

The concept of affect fuses the body with the imagination into an ethical synthesis that bears directly on the *micro-powers* inherent in everyday interactions. How these are negotiated builds not only on individual temperament but also a persona and habitus, which are as much individual as they are a social style and regime of living. Affect is furthermore a flux that is always in context – immanent – and thus draws on a situational ethics and therefore on the social and spatial milieu.

Theoreticians of affect and emotion thus seek to avoid the snares of approaches that characterize sociality as uninhibited and free-flowing (Beatty 2005a:34). Issues of power, restriction, certainty and stability are crucial for any analysis of affective 'flows' even if these regulating forces are not registered consciously, and do not include explicit awareness (Blackman 2008:43). Modes of continuity that manifest in learning and sensitivity during interactions cannot therefore be mistaken for disentangled motility (Candea 2010). Here affects, and certain emotional idioms that accompany their transaction, become a *property* of actions (Halloy 2012). And as such they are fused with the ethics and hierarchies of everyday life (Rosaldo 1989, Das 2012).

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[15] For a recent survey of approaches to affect in social and cognitive psychology see Forgas (2006).

Affective transactions are thus subjected to observed limitations. Bodies and their transmutable affects are suffused with preconceived 'structured precisions' (Hemmings 2005:562) and stereotypes, as well as with the constraints of micro power-relations in any social situation (Ahmed 2004a:27-30, Goffman 1956). Subjects employing affective projection, consciously or inadvertently, are often also shunned and thus reified as objects. Only under these conditions it is possible to analyse affects as aspects of relations that are indeed expressed 'outwards' but also simultaneously seize people 'inwards' (Ahmed 2004b:10, Navaro-Yashin 2012:21-27).

I find the concept of 'affect' useful because it captures this subject-object conjoinment (Navaro-Yashin 2012:18-19). 'Affect' is simultaneously 'irreducible bodily property' (Massumi 2002:28) *and* their motile or reciprocal effect during action (Deleuze 1981). Affects can be imagined as 'fluid immanence' (Viveiros de Castro 2009:250-1); a projection that is nevertheless always concretized and materialized[16]. The term 'affect' ultimately brings together phenomenological and cognitivist approaches to sociality (Brennan 2004). It does so by pointing out the contingency of movement with attachment, which creates a theoretical linkage between continuity and discontinuity (Long and Moore 2013:18; Moore 2011:170).

I will use the term 'affect' for two main reasons. First, as opposed to semantically related analytical concepts such as embodiment or intersubjectivity – which presume *causal* relations between consciousness and social action - affect signifies 'neutral' interconnectedness (Seigworth and Gregg 2010:10). Affect therefore challenges analytical claims that the social is a *derivative* sphere of individualized rationalizations, as well as the imagery of always-already intentional actors (Richard and Rudnyckyjn 2009). This methodological effort to go beyond causality joins recent trends in critical theory that 'take account of the way on which thought is bound up with fantasy, affect, emotion symbols and the distortions of time and space' (Moore 2011:18).

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[16] I disagree with the tendency in perspectival analyses to discount common features of the human condition in favour of a radical emphasis on multiplicity and the production of difference (Viveiros de Castro 1998). Nonetheless, I here use Viveiros de Castro's idea of 'fluid immanence', which is a fairly straight-forward concept. *Hau* for example, is a given immanence that flows through gifts. It circulates while still being hooked to the person from whom it originated (Mauss 2001[1967]). It is therefore fluid and immanent at the same time. This also applies to *mana, axé* and *orenda* (cf. Hewitt 1902).

Second, the term affect encompasses those passages of love and passion - as well as jealousy, sadness, fear, rage and other emotive dispositions - on which *maranhenses* report as palpable and highly transitive social forces (see chapter two). It thus accounts for local concepts by which 'interconnectedness' of familial aggregations is thought through in low-income contexts of Maranhão. Daniel Linger's (1992:7-8) poetic vignette on the links between intimacy and sociality in Maranhão acutely exemplifies this point, which leads me directly to discuss the ethics of play:

One of the first lessons I learned living among Brazilians was that physical presence counts for more than it does in my own country, the United States… Relationships grow and sustain themselves through the senses and through the intimate social exchanges of banter and laughter… *Saudade*, the bittersweet emotion usually glossed as 'longing' or 'nostalgia', is a profound melancholy sense of physical separation, of apartness… The same sensitivity to physical intimacy conditions Brazilian sociability. Casual conversations with friends often have a light-hearted, conspiratorial tone. On these occasions the main purpose of talking is not to deliver opinions or make debating points but to delight in one another's presence – to exchange droll stories, to laugh together, to play. It is a mistake to see this verbal play as frivolity: precisely because such occasions are so valued, one must not squander them by losing sight of their social essence.

The Social Ethics of Play

Daniel Linger sensibly draws attention to the ways by which persons paste together affective intimacy and social ethics in everyday life through forms of play. In chapter four I will demonstrate that in Maranhão affective experiences are intertwined with forms of play, which thereby become the generators of conventional sociality as much as they are the product of it (Rebhun 1999:29-35, Simmel 1971:136). For now, I will only outline a general theoretical framework that explicates why play cannot be regarded as mere 'fun' when it is enacted in everyday life (Goffman 1961, Stromberg 2009:103-4). I will claim that this is so because activities that are explicitly framed as play produce a meta-message (that is, a message about the messages reciprocated during action), which signals 'these actions are uncertain' (Bateson 2000[1972], Handelman 1998). A slightly dense elaboration follow.

Dutch historian Johan Huizinga (1970[1938]) argues that play is intrinsic to the emergence of cultural systems and equivalent to ritual practice. Huizinga characterizes play as: (1) voluntary activity, which is 'in fact freedom [itself]' (p.8); (2) activity located 'outside real life', and beyond regular sanction (p.8-9); (3) activity that is always temporal, as it is 'played out' within limits of time until it reaches an 'end' (p.9); (4) activity that is demarcated within particular places/spaces, and at times restricted to 'forbidden spots, isolated, hedged round, hallowed, within which special rules obtain' (p.10); (5) activity that is internally coherent, rule-bound and aesthetically absolute, so that it becomes transmissible and anchored in tradition; it is an acquired cultural phenomenon (p.9-10).

Huizinga's model treats seriousness and play as oppositions (Caillois 2001[1958]). In his critique, Roger Caillois claims that 'serious' codes of action both create the space of play and govern performances within it. He supplies an alternative model, by which play is a set of self-restrained forms of serious engagements with reality, demarcated within controlled boundaries of a 'game' (Anchor 1978:89). Caillois, however, presumes that 'reality' exists a-priori to play, and that it is always stable. Addressing this point in his critique of both Caillois and Huizinga, Ehrmann (1968:55) claims that what makes play serious (and serious play) are actually the 'real' material of which it is made, such as the economic implications crisscrossing both these modes of action (cf. Bateson 2000:181-2). The distinction thus remains, although it is made more subtle.

Eugan Fink (1968) goes one step further to collapse the distinction between 'reality' and 'play' altogether. He claims that play encodes no less than the very meaning of cultural existence as social order. By this view, intrinsic to play is a symbolic duality (1968:22-24), the capacity of players to be themselves from within a demarcated play-zone and simultaneously appear as others to themselves from without that zone. Robert Anchor elegantly summarizes this point (1978:92):

Fink attributes the symbolic quality of play to its double character. On the one hand, man plays in the real world and knows himself to be playing even as he plays… On the other hand, play is not subordinate to the serious purposes served by all other human activities. Seen from within, the play world is unrelated to anything outside itself. Thus, the player consciously exists in two different spheres simultaneously, because

this double existence is essential to play (and to the higher cultural forms derived from play)… And the plaything - the doll that becomes a child, the broom that becomes a horse, the finger that becomes a pistol - forms the link between the pure subjectivity of the player and the concrete world that surrounds him. The relationship between play and reality is not antithetical, but rather symbiotic (original brackets).

Under this framework play is a dynamic element of reality made distinctive by its capacity to signify two things at the same time (Handelman 1998:68-72). This symbiosis is marked in the phenomenological realm of affective experience by an intrinsic *tension*. In other words, play would not be interesting (and certainly not 'fun') if the odds were known in advance. Huizinga (1970:10-11) claims that this aspect of play borrows from fantasy a crucial element of uncertainty:

The element of tension in play… plays a particularly important part. Tension means uncertainty, chanciness; a striving to decide the issue and so end it. The player wants something to 'go', to 'come off'; he wants to 'succeed' by his own exertions… Though play as such is outside the range of good and bad, the element of tension imparts to it a certain ethical value in so far as it means a testing of the player's prowess: his courage, tenacity, resources and, last but not least, his spiritual powers - his 'fairness'; because, despite his ardent desire to win, he must still stick to the rules of the game (original brackets).

Don Handelman (1998:68, original brackets) argues that 'uncertainty is the recognition that cosmos (or whatever entity is under discussion) exists as much as through the deep flux of unpredictability, as it does through determination. Therefore, this is another mode of thinking and talking about change, rather than rest, in the world'. It is this symbolic discharge within the rhythm of mundane transactions that makes play an existential matter (Simmel 1971[1910]:135-6, Jackson 1998): it produces uncertainty that impinges on the conceptual background of well-controlled social frames, rules, and grave consequences. Play is not just pleasuring, but an action that actively invigorates social and cosmic orders. This requires further elaboration.

'Frames' are conceptual vehicles that subjects of action appropriate to distinguish and organize demarcated experiences of everyday life (Goffman et al. 1997:155). People predict future results of mundane occurrences on the basis of commonsensical distinctions between frames

(Snow et al. 1986). Frames therefore convey messages by which to dissect 'what is going on'. This delimits multiple possible readings of a social event and its outcomes (Goffman et al. 1997:149-158). Persons simultaneously enhance frames from 'within' their situated involvement and from 'without' (e.g. bystanders in a street fight; cf. Linger 1992).

Gregory Bateson (2000:186-189) argues that both from 'within' and from 'without' frames are imbricated in meta-communicative (communication about communication) double messages. These denote an 'exclusive reading' (positively inhibiting perception of background) and an 'inclusive' one (positively enhance perception of ground or figure). Misreading could lead to the observance that particular events may appear to be something they are not (Goffman et al. 1997:161). Bateson (ibid) claims that this dual reading is an essential element in everyday communications, which is intensified in play. He claims that playful actions not only suggest that 'This is Play' but also at times inevitably raise the question '*Is this Play*?' (Bateson 2000:182)[17].

Don Handelman (1998) argues that this particular quality of play produces the message 'This is Uncertainty'. He claims that 'uncertainty may be valorized as beneficial (true, moral, sacred, etc.), as harmful (evil, immoral, demonic, etc.) or as neutral (amoral, uncaring) – but all of these continue to index the ultimately uncontrollable nature of cosmos, and yet the needs of humankind to acquire some measure of regnant control and predictability that make humanely designed orders probable' (Handelman 1998:68, original brackets).

Handelman's attention to uncertainty is far reaching. He claims that by setting-up differential points of connectivity with divine and social forces through ritual or everyday forms of play, situated actors 'measure' the shape and volume of their cultural universe. Handelman's point is that this *predictably* relies on controlled episodes of uncertainty and paradox (cf. Handelman 2004b). Handelman (ibid:64) thus asserts that 'stability and uncertainty are not remote from one

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[17] Bateson ingeniously argues that 'paradox is doubly present in the signals which are exchanged within the context of play, fantasy, threat, etc. Not only does the playful nip not denote what would be denoted by the bite for which it stands, but, in addition, the bite itself is fictional... the playful nip denotes the bite, but does not denote that which would be denoted by the bite' (Bateson 2000:182-3).

another: each is the immanent shadow-side of the other, whether people recognize that or not'. Here, playful manipulation on canon and doctrine becomes a basic moral component within the production and invigoration of tradition itself (Herzfeld 2005[1997]).

In that sense, play subverts the conceptual premises of reproductive morality only to reinstate it in a different form. For example, in an unpublished MA thesis Aquino (2008) demonstrates how humour becomes central to men's discourses on their wives' infidelity in Recife. On the one hand jokes about '*cornos*' (cuckolds) create empowering masculine alliances that turn on ridicule and mocking (Jamieson 2000, Billig 2005). On the other hand, these same jokes produce rivalries and frictions that turn on shame and images of flawed masculinity (Brandes 1980, Hautzinger 2007). Here, the same form of play can be seen as ethically constructive or destructive, certain and uncertain, depending on the situation. Simmel (1971:134) summarizes this well:

It is my obvious corollary that everything may be subsumed under sociability which one can call sociological play-form; above all, play itself, which assumes a large place in the sociability of all epochs... For even when play turns about a money prize, it is not the prize... which is the specific point of play; but the attraction for the true sportsman lies in the dynamics and in the chances of that sociologically significant form of activity itself. The social game has a deeper double meaning – that it is played not only *in* a society as its outward bearer but that with its help people actually 'play' 'society' (original italics and quotes).

This view challenges the tendency to think about forms of play merely as a resistance to 'harsh realities' or 'contested gendered spaces' (Rebhun 1999). Precisely because it produces paradox (Bateson 2000, Handelman 1998), play embeds both conscious ethical work and non-conscious reproduction of core social values (Zigon 2007). I treat the production of invisibility as a form of play because it reflects the paradox of play: a space of invisibility is always in becoming, and yet it is uncertain because it may always be disclosed unexpectedly. This begins to elucidate Linger's (1992:7) claim above concerning the ordinary ethical commitments persons constitute through play and everyday antics in Maranhão (cf. Wilson 1995). This necessitates further theorization of the concept of 'ordinary ethics' (Lambek 2010a), to which I now turn.

Morality, Ordinary Ethics and the Study of Relatedness

A lively debate on morality and ethical personhood is currently enthralling scholars across the discipline (cf. Lambek 2010a, Fassin 2012). It is focused on moving beyond analytic dualities towards a more fluid description of moral practices; indeed, to go beyond the polarization of 'good' and 'evil' (Saada 2012). By 'dualities' I mean two main discourses: one is the classic view of morality as unreflective, rule-bound, coercive social order that is juxtaposed to ethical reflection and free choice (Durkheim 2001[1915]; cf. Robbins 2007 and 2009, Laidlaw 2002). The other is the claim that moral judgment is primarily oriented towards others (Simmel 1971), as opposed to the claim that ethical labour is focused on refashioning the self (Foucault 2000, Fassin 2012:7).

One strategy to go against this fixation with alterity is Jarrett Zigon's (2007, 2009 and 2012) methodological distinction between morality and ethics. Morality is a model of primal social values that are more or less stable, largely unreflective and most of the time nonconsciously enacted. It accounts for paramount normative codes for the reproduction of an imagined 'social order' and the kinds of persons that take part in it. Ethics is the questioning of some moral aspects in everyday life, which is contingent and situational. 'Ethics… is a conscious acting on oneself either in isolation or with others so as to make oneself into a more morally appropriate and acceptable social person not only in the eyes of others but also for oneself' (Zigon 2009:261).

Zigon (2012) insists that both these forms of moral reckoning are inscribed through the minutiae of everyday practice. Morality in that respect can be seen as idealized scripts for 'good living' that are discussed with reverence and are thereby embodied in emotional or sentimental dispositions; while ethics are those pragmatic moments of reflection that are inherently situational. Ethical transformation is a process of intentionality that usually comes about in moments of 'moral breakdown'. By this Zigon means the provisional collapse of reproductive values, which occurs 'when for one reason or another the range of possible moralities available do not adequately 'fit' to the context. In these breakdowns a shift of consciousness occurs, in which… persons must consciously and creatively find a way to be moral' (Zigon 2009:263, original quotes; cf. Zigon 2007).

Michael Lambek (2010a) claims that persons do not require external challenges for ethical work to come about, but rather, that people strive to be ethical in everything they do. This includes considerations of status, emotion and faith. Lambek (2010a:12) thus argues that 'ethics is not a matter of smoothly following the rules but of the exhilaration of self-transcendence, as well as the struggle with ambivalence and conflict'. Ethical action includes constraint and conformity but also freedom and creativity (Laidlaw 2002). Lambek ultimately claims that mundane actions contain the possibility to initiate or cancel relational engagements between subjects in ways that include obligation, debt and sacrifice as well as honour, pride and self-interest (cf. Mayblin 2010). For example, '…having married one woman, given my blessing to one child, or shown my devotion to one jealous god, I cannot readily go ahead and pursue other alternatives… the freedom of starting something new entails the judgement of what kinds of compromises that will make with the old and reconciling the new direction with what is being left behind' (Lambek 2010b:55).

Lambek thus claims (2010a:18-19) that ordinary actions are a medium for the circulation of values in society (cf. Fassin 2012:11). He follows Hana Arendt (1998[1958]), who makes a distinction between *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa*. *Vita contemplativa* refers to Platonian ethics, wherein actions are measured against pure muse and abstraction. It is only possible to achieve this sublime perfection in masterful or 'complete' forms of work, most notably in Fine Arts. *Vita activa* is an unfinished, on-going labour that manifests itself in actions associated with constant investment in others. It is expressed through care, love or cleaning; actions that are ethical because they have no end and therefore they constitute a political platform for constant interaction (cf. Cachapuz (2006) for an interpretation of Brazilian Civil Code along these lines.)

Lambek (2010a) and Das (2010 and 2012) proposed the term 'ordinary ethics' for this analytic framework. Ordinary ethics is 'not a matter of eliciting opinions about what behaviour is considered ethical or unethical, or of cataloguing cultural practices on which we can bring judgment from an objective, distant position; but rather of seeing how forms of life grow particular

dispositions' (Das 2012:136). These dispositions are imbued in public actions (Lambek 2010b:49), which simultaneously include enduring commitments to others and ad-hoc transgressions. The 'ordinary' sets forth the sensibilities and subtleties of everyday life as ethical conjunctures that are relational and fluid just as much as they are tenacious and durable.

Henrietta Moore (2011) has recently suggested the term 'ethical imagination' to account for such dialectic. The 'ethical imagination' is a site for the cultural invention of 'the forms and means… through which individuals imagine relations to themselves and others' (2011:16). Moore attempts to draw attention to everyday practices that are always foregrounded by ethical commitments while at the same time they incorporate larger-scale social discourses and globalized images, the allure of alternative cultural identities, etc. Moore argues that imagining 'ethically' is a form of subjection that goes beyond mundane commonsense. The 'ethical imagination' serves to interconnect with and disconnect from larger social processes that always 'precede and exceed the subject' (ibid:75). As Michael Jackson (1998:20-1) argues:

…Rather than view the particular and the universal as static, predefined, and opposed, I see them as terms in a dialectic that admits no final resolution… This dialectic embraces many refractions of the core experiences that we are at one and the same time part of a singular, particular, and finite world *and* caught up a wider world (sic) whose horizons are effectively infinite. My thesis is that *control over the relationship and balance between these worlds is a central human preoccupation* (italics in origin).

I will work with these dialectic approaches to ordinary ethics in order to characterize the sociality of kinship relations in Maranhão. I will demonstrate that everyday ethical actions locally constitute varying degrees of care, nurture, economic exchange or other durable interpersonal investments (Das 2010:397, Biehl 2012:249-50, Zelizer 2005). In order to describe this process I will use the term 'intimacy', which denotes 'intersubjective mutuality' (Durkheim in Sahlins 2011a:10). By that I mean that an 'intimate relation' is morally restricting (e.g. the demand to comply with familial responsibilities) and yet it denotes the recognition of ethical subjectivity and individual freedom (Laidlaw 2002, Simmel 2009:84-6). I will now turn to elucidate this point.

The Dialectic of Intimacy

Anthony Giddens (1992) goes against the Focauldian assumption that sexuality is a constraining discourse. He claims that with the emergence of what he calls 'plastic sexuality' – sex dissociated from reproduction and kinship considerations – women were freed from the 'fear' (sic) to demand sexual pleasure. For Giddens, in the Global North this brought about the gradual constitution of reflexive historical subjects, whose sexual identities have become an object of interrogation and consumerism that redefined the content of close relationships at large (cf. Illouz 1997). Giddens argues that this transformation is predicated on the globalization of modernity, by which the experience of intimate relations slowly shifts from a model based on 'romantic love' (Jankowiak 1995, Lindholm 1998) to that form of open negotiation he calls 'pure relationship'. By 'pure' Giddens means a relationship that is *contingent* on transparency, negotiation, compromise, concession or other 'democratic' elements intrinsic to the relation itself; rather than being determined by external institutional constraints (cf. Gross and Simmons 2002:549).

As opposed to this either/or approach, by which intimacy and coercion are inherently oppositional, William James (1977[1909]) illustrates an ideal scale ranging from total 'intimacy' to total 'foreignness'. Here 'intimacy, internality, and relative continuity go hand in hand, while foreignness, externality, and relative discontinuity appear to be at the other extreme of the relational continuum' (Lamberth 1999:156). James' point is that all relations include continuity and intimacy to *varying* degrees in ways that always combine measures of discontinuity, disagreement and detachment (Lamberth 1999:158-9). James (in Lamberth 1999:20) argues:

Relations are of different degrees of intimacy. Merely to be 'with' one another in a universe of discourse is the most external relation that terms can have… Simultaneity and time-interval come next, and then space-adjacency and distance. After them, similarity and difference, carrying the possibility of many inferences. Then relations of activity, tying terms into series involving change, tendency, resistance, and the causal order generally. Finally, the relation experienced between terms that form states of mind, and are immediately conscious of continuing each other.

For example, the trope of 'blood' relatedness in Maranhão constitutes a relation of simultaneity, which includes various degrees of continuity and discontinuity interconnecting persons within and across 'aggregations' (Marcelin 1999). 'Blood' is experienced more or less intimately in accordance with the changing strength of the metaphor. In certain situations persons invoke the idiom of 'blood' or its connotative (viz. 'bother', 'children') simply in order to conjure sympathy. 'Blood' is thus predicated simultaneously on genealogical relatedness, ritual kinship ties, commitments derived from deference *and* the solidarity associated with 'respect' (Finkelstein 2008). 'Blood' thus includes varying degrees of intimate familiarity (see chapter two).

This emphasis on 'degrees' also coincides with the operational definition for intimacy Viviana Zelizer (2005) suggests. As I argued in the introduction, Zelizer focuses on long-term, interpersonal emotional entanglements that exhibit a high degree of mutual informal exposure; and enable at least one party access to information otherwise not publically available to others (2005:18). Exploring how close relationships are negotiated in the American legal system, Zelizer argues that 'intimate' and 'impersonal' social settings are not hostile to one another. Rather, they differ on the premise that these forms of association do not include the same degrees of moral commitments, trust, care and financial investments[18]. Zelizer (2005:288, italics mine) claims:

As long as we cling to the idea of hostile worlds we will never recognize, much less explain, the pervasive intertwining of economic activity and intimacy. Yet nothing-but reductionism fails to allow for the distinctive properties of coupling, caring, and households[19]. The *prominence of intimacy in those social relations transforms the character and consequences of economic activity within them*. The question, therefore, is not whether intimate partners can or should engage in economic transactions but what sorts of economic transactions match which intimate relations.

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[18] Especially in the milieu of gender relations, selective deployment of bodily practices becomes the primary vehicle for perfromative display of close *and* impersonal exchange (Butler 1993).

[19] 'Nothing but' is a neoliberal discourse that Zelizer severely criticizes. According to this approach economic transactions taking place in the context of intimate relations are 'nothing but' a socially constructed exercise of power (2005:22). Zelizer argues that this approach turns a blind eye, 'as if' intimate and impersonal transactions are 'nothing-but' aspects of market economy more generally (see for example Povinelli 2006).

More than emotional attachment that manifests in extreme visibility (i.e. 'pure'), 'intimacy' then consists in tacit recognition of power relations. For example, Michael Herzfeld (2005[1997]:3) argues that 'cultural Intimacy' is 'the recognition of those aspects of a cultural identity that are considered a source of external embarrassment, but that nevertheless provide insiders with their assurance of common sociality, the familiarity with the bases of power that may at one moment assure the disenfranchised a degree of creative irreverence and at the next moment reinforce the effectiveness of intimidation'. For Herzfeld intimacy is found in the *gaps* demarcating social spaces of what he calls '*disemia':* 'the formal or coded tension between official self-presentation and what goes on in the privacy of collective interpretation' (Herzfeld 2005:14).

Ethnographically this means that by strategically deploying stereotypical essentialism, persons manipulate grand cultural stereotypes. They thus dissolve 'clearly defined spaces of power' (ibid:3). Cultural intimacy manifests itself in those moments of embarrassment, irony, and subversion that outsiders would not recognize. 'Cultural intimacy' is ultimately a useful concept due to its sophisticated methodological stance, which recognizes that by playing with the 'rules' persons also reconstruct their efficacy; and that this play is profoundly 'intimate' (Steinmuller 2010). Intimacy thus simultaneously includes aesthetical and ethical values: it refers to both the 'content' of power relations and their expected public performance in changing situations.

Similarly, Georg Simmel (2009:84ff) sees intimacy as a 'social form of association', that is, an objectified precept of collective organization through which 'individuals' are cultivated and shaped[20]. In this scheme intimacy is derived from the sense of exclusivity that marks dyadic relations. By that Simmel means that intimacy is not contingent on particular transactions between persons (individuals in his language), but rather it depends on the fact that some transactions are considered exclusive in the first place (but cf. Levinger 1977:8-9).

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[20] In the conclusion of this thesis I further elaborate on Simmel's theory of forms. For now it is enough to mention that for Simmel 'form' and 'content' always merge into each other in the course of everyday sociality. Intimacy is therefore both a form (external to individuals) *and* a unique emotional affinity that makes part of persons' affective dispositions. Intimacy dialectically transposes itself as form and content.

I will apply this dialectic prism to the study of intimate relations in Maranhão. On the one hand, persons locally associate intimacy with secrecy and the production of 'invisibility'. By this logic, intimacy is premised on that which is actively concealed (Simmel 1906:448). Intimacy is defined *negatively* by those Others that are excluded from the information and forms of continuity that mark concrete social alliances (Pyyhtinen 2009:119). On the other hand, in Maranhão persons publically demonstrate their moral indebtedness to multiple others, within and across domestic aggregations. Intimacy is defined *positively* as something that visibly stretches itself (infinitely?) together with the expanding boundaries of co-residential aggregations.

Intimate familiarity in Maranhão thus boils down to a conceptual and phenomenological tension between these 'negative' and 'positive' models of relatedness. By that I mean that while close relations (such as parents and children) 'officially' demand specific moral, affective and economical investments; actual affective reciprocity often includes deception, frustration and measured distance (cf. Simmel 2009:85, 313-14). This indeed manifests in techniques and concepts associated with absorption or deflection of bodily affects, ranging from deference/avoidance to joking/intercourse (cf. Graeber 2007). Both these polarities combine structured collective taxonomies with the experiential, felt 'seismography', of mundane encounters. In that sense persons prescribe anew degrees of familiarity in different situations and across sectorial segments of mundane reality as a factor of their involvement in it (Goffman et al. 1997:111-14).

My point is that in Maranhão different degrees of intimate sharing accompany the reciprocal exchange of affects. This complements the ethnographic idea that families are 'aggregated' by means of affective reciprocity. I therefore posit that local concepts of intimacy do not merely consist in excessive desire or sensual self-realization occasionally limited by rigid moral codes (viz. Parker 1991). Rather, as they dialectically produce varying degrees of intimate engagements, both men and women in Maranhão constantly 'totalize' and 'detotalize' social values associated with the establishment of kin relationships. Next I move to clarify these concepts.

The Movement of Sociality: Totalization and Detotalization

Susan McKinnon (1995) describes an inherent tension between the dispersal value of persons as tokens of kinship relations and the stationary appositeness of houses. McKinnon refers to this as a 'double movement' that generalizes and atomizes social values. Rio and Smedal (2008) similarly refer analytically to 'sociality' as an autopoietic process that simultaneously 'totalizes' and 'detotalizes' core social values (ibid:238-9). On the one hand, transactions (of goods, money or affects) contextually 'totalize' images of heterogeneity into homogenous acts, figures or icons; thus achieving a sense of hierarchy and closure. On the other hand, those same transactions distribute and 'detotalize' homogenous values in society in a plurality of forms that achieve a sense of egalitarianism and limitlessness. Elaboration follows.

'Totalization' is borrowed from Dumont's (1980) notion of hierarchy of scales in India. His analysis suggests that within any exchange across caste boundaries, the relation pure::impure always precedes political rank, which precedes military power, which precedes economic power and so on. The system as a whole can therefore be totalized into images of purity and impurity that ultimately take their symbolic visibility in the body of Brahmins (Kapfrerer 1983). Strathern's (1988) notion of 'eclipsing' in Melanesia similarly suggests that Big Men contain *within themselves* the life-force of the entire social collective. In both these cases 'sociality as a relentless process creates these singular totalities as persons' (Rio and Smedal 2008:241).

'Detotalization' builds on Dumont's (1986) notion of individualism in Western society. Dumont argues that the Western concept of an 'individual' requires the image of deterministic processes that separate between 'enclosed, finite identities that are infinitely distributed in social space' (Rio and Smedal 2008:245; cf. Strathern 1992). Forces of disintegration atomize elements of society into themselves as 'individuals' and relativize them on grounds of their otherness from one another (Kapferer 2012, Strathern 1996b). These elements are dispersed and 'detotalized' through the social universe as conceptually equal on grounds of their incompatibility with one another.

Rio and Smedal insist that totalization and detotalization are not an ordering mechanism of the 'social'. Rather, they claim these terms describe a single quality of social action. The totalizing effect of hierarchic encompassment and the detotalizing effect of egalitarian expansionism may in fact be intertwined in ways that defy distinction between these analytic imageries. Rather than compartmentalize society as a structured 'thing' that both restricts and enables freedom (Strathern 1996b[1989]) – or as a bundle of power relations withheld together through the exercise of personal agency (Ortner 2006) – Rio and Smedal (2008:241) focus on 'how the social reveals itself in different forms'. They thus direct their analytic attention to the ways by which the 'motion' of sociality, which they see as self-generating, manifests itself in everyday practice[21].

The terms 'totalization' and 'detotalization' indeed offer a sense of dialectical movement or 'flow', which corresponds with the ethnographic material I registered in Maranhão. For example, in Santo-Amaro it is customary to criticize both men and women who are so jealous about their spouses that they limit their freedom of action. At the same time, men and women who are *not jealous at all* are seen as careless and disinterested. Jealousy (*ciúmes*) here simultaneously totalizes and detotalizes the hierarchies imbued in sexual desire and marital fidelity. 'Totalization' and 'detotalization' become useful methodological tools because they suggest that everyday sociality enables contrasting values to cohabit in ways that avoid an ideological or moral crisis[22]. Georg Simmel described this principle in a poetic manner (2009:313-14):

…Concord, harmony, cooperation, which count as the plainly socializing strengths, must be penetrated by distance, competition, repulsion, in order to produce the real configuration of society; the durable organizing forms that seem to fashion society in one form or another must be continuously stirred up

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[21] Arendt's 'Banality of Evil' (1998[1963]) comes to mind. Precisely because Nazi sociality detotalized some Individuals and totalized Others as non-individuals; blind obedience and the bureaucratic proficiency of mass murder were not perceived by Adolph Eichmann as logically or emotionally inconsistent with humanistic values such as friendship, kindness and love (cf. Rio and Smedal 2008:247-8, Dumont 1986, Kapferer 2012).

[22] This approach, however, does not incorporate the historical contingency of actions. In the conclusion of this thesis I will attempt to bring together recent anthropological ventures into the synchronic 'ontology' of social relations (of which Rio and Smedal 2008 is a good example) and 'ontogenic' approaches to sociality that emphasize a diachronic approach (Strathern 1988, Pina-Cabral 2013a and 2013b). I will use the term 'intimacy' in order to reconcile these terms. See also Englehardt (1977).

through individualistically irregular powers, put off balance, whittled away in order to achieve, yielding and resisting, the vitality of their reaction and development; the relationships of an intimate nature, whose formal vehicle is physical-mental nearness, lose the attraction, indeed, the content of their intimacy as soon as the further relationship does not include, simultaneously and alternately, also distance and pauses.

Throughout this thesis I will assert that 'intimacy' in everyday life is hardly an either/or situation, which corresponds with unconditional trust and transparency on the one hand against distrust and concealment on the other. To go back to Giddens (1992), even 'pure' relations are dialectical in the sense that they aim for the totalization of intersubjective emotional dependence as an exclusive property of the conjugal relationship; while detotalizing and dispersing the image of equal, autonomous individuals that are supposedly resistant to these same totalizing effects (cf. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 1995). 'What is in order', Long and Moore (2013:2) write, 'is not a highly specific, circumscribed definition of sociality… but rather a theory of human sociality… that can account for… its plasticity and fragility, and also its possible resilience' (quotes and italics dropped).

This dialectic means, for example, that at times distinctive sets of relations become qualitatively similar to one another as a consequence of the 'intimate' actions that inform them from within. This is often the case with a spouse and a lover, a child (*filho/a*) and 'child by nurture' (*filho/a de criação*), or friend and *comadre/compadre*. Practices associated with intimate familiarity in Maranhão are ultimately rooted in partial realization of relational commitments to worldly and otherworldly forces, while presupposing freedom of action, play, transgression and trickery.

I thus suggest that the sociality of kinship in Maranhão cannot be read in terms of an ideal model of rigid familial boundaries transgressed by the effervescent mischief of sexual promiscuity. Rather than assume that 'patriarchal' hierarchies are diametrically opposed to 'egalitarian' individualism (DaMatta 1991) I argue that persons locally endorse both egalitarian and hierarchic frameworks of relatedness along with their distinctive types of intimate attachments. Accounting for this dialectic is essential for the analysis of local ethics of relatedness.

Conclusion

In this thesis I will advance the theoretical assumption that in Maranhão all social relations include measures of continuity and discontinuity (James 1977), totalization and detotalization (Rio and Smedal 2009), proximity and impersonality (Zelizer 2005). I will suggest that more often than not persons invest ethical labour in inhabiting these contradicting polarities simultaneously. Local kinship structures, which are characterized by a plurality of coexistent sets of intimate relations that are aggregated together in myriad forms, 'expand' and 'contract' in accordance with the ways by which these degrees of intimate relations pragmatically intersect in everyday practice[23].

I will demonstrate empirically that persons 'shift' the ethical register of events through play. For example, Gregg's (2003) account of switching between 'security' and 'liberty' strategies could be seen as a playful manipulation on reproductive morality. Or, my own failure to conceal sexual 'betrayal', which brought about a revelatory confession, could be seen as a refusal to play that my friends and interlocutors in Santo-Amaro perceived as unethical. Consequently, I will claim that if concealment and disclosure locally implicate one another in mundane performances (Simmel 2009:313), techniques of play bring them together in creative ways.

In the next chapter I will begin to unpack this assertion. I will argue that relatedness in Maranhão is grounded in bodily dispositions that are exchanged in particular ways, either directly fused through the transfer of substances or indirectly captured through emotive idioms. These affective linkages are locally seen to interconnect persons and constitute moral indebtedness between them. Since certain affective projections are unexpected, 'interconnectedness' is sometimes less about prudency and foresight as much as it is about being driven into ethical action by sheer affective 'capture'. I will relate to these ethnographic convictions as a form of local knowledge, which I will call 'affective knowledge'.

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[23] Expansion and contraction are empiricist tropes used by Beatty (2005b) to subvert the intuitive separation between 'structure' and 'sentiment' (Needham 1962). Through this scheme, kinship formations 'contract' or 'expand' in accordance with culturally prescribed emotional styles.

Chapter Two: Affective Transfer as Local Knowledge

The Transfer of 'Essences' and Bodily Affects in Maranhão

One night I visited Carlos' *terreiro* at a very late hour. I wanted to learn how Tambor de Mina priests (*pais* and *mães de santo*) in Maranhão enact love-magic. I entered the dark, smoky, back room, where the spiritual entity Dona Maria-Pagira was already 'on top' (*em cima*) of Carlos. She sat on a high chair, holding a silver chalice, smoking a cigarette. As a Pomba-Gira, she was wearing a red-and-black flowery dress and a large Lady's straw hat (cf. Hayes 2008)[24]. After the usual formalities I asked Dona Maria if there was any connection between 'abstract' emotions and 'substantial' human fluids such as blood, tears and semen. She whispered:

As you said - love, passion, hate are abstract things and really these are things you cannot see - but you can feel (*sentir*) them. I will compare the love, the hate and all these things to the air you breathe. This is a substance (too). You cannot see air… you cannot touch it. In the same way that people need air to survive - love, hate and passion also flow (*flui*) through persons…

Such notions of emotional fluidity build on the possibility of sensual transfer between and through bodies (Ochoa 2010). A local Pentecostal friend of mine, for example, once described immersion with the Holy Spirit as a beam of emotional force that grows from within the body and simultaneously grasps his head from without until both these currents meet and inspire an awesome religious experience; which manifests itself through speaking in tongues. Or, to this day in the *interior* of Maranhão the elderly know when a *moça* (a teenage girl) is pregnant by the singing of a particular woodpecker, which is known to chase pregnant women and sing for them.

The susceptibility of bodies also manifests in the fact that all around Maranhão babies are commonly affected by the evil eye (*mau olhado, quebrante*), which is transferred merely by spoken words or greedy gazes (cf. Brandes 1980). Babies who have been 'admired' consequently wake up

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[24] Tambor de Mina is the generic Afro-Brazilian religion of Maranhão. Priests are referred to as '*pai(s)*' or '*mãe(s)*' de Santo. Rituals are enacted in *terreiros*, a worship or 'cult' house (cf. Eduardo 1966). Being 'on top' of a medium means possession. The possessing entities reside in an invisible world referred to as the *encantaria* (world of enchantment). Pomba-Giras are female spiritual entities associated with witchcraft, opulence and sexual promiscuity (Hayes 2008).

the next day 'soft' (*mole*), crying, or feverish. The baby is then brought to a *benzedeira/o*, who is often also an experienced *parteira* (midwife). The evil eye disappears after the *benzedeira* marks the sign of a cross on the baby's forehead with olive oil (Mayblin 2010). Most crucially, however, magic effectively activates or halts the transaction of essences, as Dona Maria further indicated:

…When you use a sock, underwear, a piece of clothing, you leave there some sweat or any other personal essence... and it is this that opens the passage (for love/passion to flow)… We take that and open the path (*caminho*) until it gets to you… But in order for this (connection) to happen you have to have some kind of (prior-MS) linkage (*ligação*) with that person, only a linkage – even if you were dating (*namorando)* for one day, one night that you liked one another, an eye-sight (*o olhar*)… I cannot make love *trabalho* (work of magic) for you and her if she does not know you, if you did not have any type of relation (*relação*)…

Around that time witchcraft spooks hit the headlines of Brazilian national press. In Bahia a two years old toddler was ex-rayed with 32 long needles inside his body. In Maranhão, another two years old child was interned with five needles inside his body. Both these cases included *brigas* (disputes, fights) within the family and interventions of figures associated with sorcery. In both cases the respective parents insisted the needles were inserted into the babies' bodies by means of 'black magic' insinuated by 'evil' people. 'Maranhão is the land of *macumba*', grinned one of my neighbors, Dona Raimunda[25]. She affirmed that sorcerers also incarnate in their victims' bodies frogs and cockroaches or even kill. Pai Euclides Ferreira, the head of an established *terreiro* in São Luís (S. Ferretti 1996), attributes these occurrences to 'images of cosmic flow' by which astral essences are transposed into the visible world (Ferreira 1985:26, italics and brackets mine):

…The human brain is an inexhaustible generator of the cosmic force of nature. *The practitioner of the ceremonies can project and materialize inside the visible world the forms that his imagination created by means of cosmic material of the invisible world*. The secret of the art is in knowing to utilize and manipulate these materials that nature keeps in reserve. Materializing these mental forms is dependent on a profound recognition of plenty of mysteries, (thus) enabling to make this magic operation for good or evil…

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[25] '*Macumba*' is a pejorative term that may be compared with the term 'voodoo' (cf. Bastide 1978:294-300).

It is possible to think of such essence fusion as analogous to other common practices used in Maranhão to consciously enhance prior 'relations'. *Tomar Bênçaõ* – the receiving of a blessing from the elderly that requires physical touch – immediately comes to mind. In principle, younger or subordinate should voluntarily approach elderly of the extended family and ask for their blessing (Eduardo 1966:38). The elder would then take the younger person's hand palm, kiss it on the back side and allow the blessed to kiss his/her own palm. At times the blessing person might touch the top of the blessed head. Then the elder would bless out loud, most commonly saying 'stay with God' (*fica com Deus*). This goes both for flesh and blood human beings and spiritual entities, as Pai de Santo Carlos told me in a conversation we once had about possession:

Many people think that *tomar bênção* is just a commitment that you have, but it is not – when you go and ask blessing from *orixá*, from *caboclo*, from *vodúm*, or from anybody else – that which he has got with him, that energy, that positive thing, that good thing, some of it also passes on to you[26].

These types of relational transfers also occur unwittingly, as the following case portends. One day my friend Rui received an urgent call from his friend Concita, who had taken her husband Ricardo to *Igreja Universal* after she caught him trying to strangle their baby-girl[27]. In church Ricardo refused to let people come near him and was very hostile to the local pastors. When Rui arrived, however, Ricardo allowed him to approach. Rui thus pressed Ricardo's right hand while making an *oração* (a prayer or other communication with the divine). Ricardo's body suddenly twisted uncontrollably and he collapsed on the floor. Later on Rui asked some questions. He discovered that a woman who tried to commit suicide that morning had thrown a knife full of blood into the couple's back yard. Ricardo saw the knife, picked it up and threw it out to the street. A while later he felt headache and the possession crisis emanated.

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[26] Caboclos, orixás and *vodums* are spiritual entities that are interconnected hierarchically within particular 'chains' (*correntes*). Mina is a creolized religion (cf. Stewart 2010) that infuses Jeje tradition (a religion of West-African Dahomian origin that focuses on vodums), Nagô tradition (Yorubá religion that focuses on orixás) and indigenous Amerindian traditions (focusing on *caboclos* and forest spirits). See chapter five.

[27] Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus (IURD) is a network of charismatic Pentecostal churches that perform public ceremonies against the evil eye and black magic, including exorcism. Rui is not a Mina or Pentecostal practitioner, but he is considered to have the 'gift' (*don*) that enables him to practice spiritual healing.

That night Rui felt 'down'. He could not fall asleep and when he did he had nightmares. Even Wallison, his younger brother, woke up in the middle of the night. At five in the morning Wallison walked out to the garden and suddenly passed out. Their mother saw what had happened and cried out to Rui, who ran to the garden, performed CPR on Wallison and rushed him to the hospital. After consulting some of their relatives who 'understand these things', Rui interpreted what had happened. Apparently, he told me, the invisible entities (*invisíveis*) wanted to be orated for (receive the *oração*, here homologous to *bênção*). That was the reason they possessed Ricardo in the first place and that was the reason that they accompanied Rui to the house. They ultimately achieved access to his oratory capabilities by possessing his brother Wallison.

Whereas contact in love-magic and *bênção* opens or closes 'paths' (i.e. relations) as a form of intentional influence, Rui's case attests that contact could also facilitate the passage of essences inadvertently. By extension, such arbitrary passages also apply to other instigators of affective transfer such as cross-gaze. For example, people hold that a person with *cara fechada* – a local trope for angry or tense facial expression that literally translates as 'closed face' – can pass-on to you their own bad feeling just by looking at you. The point is that such passages have very little to do with internal convictions and embodied states of mind that some scholars interpret as 'cultural syndromes' (viz. Rebhun 1999). 'It is not about believing' - Rui once explained to me how local sorcerers enact magic - 'it is how he 'gets' you' (*não é tu acreditar, é como ele te pegar*). Acts of affective transfer are effective just like magic primarily because you simply get 'caught up' in them physically and emotionally (Favret-Saada 1980, Stromberg 2009; cf. Bastide 2003[1935]:12ff).

On these grounds, for example, my friend Robson once advised against inviting a woman from Santo-Amaro into my flat. 'At the beginning she comes and you have sex', he said. 'Then she volunteers to do your laundry or cook for you and then she stays for two or three days. By the time you know it you are *already* involved'. Robson was not only trying to alert against an ostensibly dangerous feminine cunningness. He was mainly trying to draw my attention to how things 'work'

in the passionate contestation between men and women over exclusivity in emotional interchange and sexual practice. Being unwittingly 'involved' is the consequence of bestowals that 'get you' as they fuse sexual engagement with interpersonal emotional commitments. Like common forms of play, merely by taking part you are *already* obliged to reciprocate (Stromberg 2009:3-5).

Congruous with other contexts in northeast Brazil, notions of open/closed bodies are powerful local tropes that refer to the possibility of 'being caught up'. Among practitioners of Tambor de Mina, for example, menstruating women are not allowed into the *terreiro* since during this period their body is conceived as literally 'open' (*corpo aberto*) and thus susceptible to involuntary possession (S. Ferretti 1996). In everyday life susceptibility of the body is associated with temporal emotional fragility or weakness characterized by sadness, fear, suffering or negative thoughts; as well as with destructive life-style habits such as heavy drinking or drug use.

Measures to protect the body and effectively 'close' it are thus prevalent. They include the wearing of protective necklaces and purity rituals in religious contexts, as well as non-religious everyday techniques (Mayblin 2010:79-81). Both men and women throughout Maranhão, for example, conventionally cross themselves before bathing in water ponds as a technique for 'closing' the body against sudden possession by *mães de agua* or other entities that could reside in them. Love-magic and *bênçaõ* also correlate with this processual play of transfer and deflection.

As I began to show, biological substances (e.g. blood, sweat or tears) and emotional dispositions (e.g. love, anguish) appear as conceptually interchangeable since both equally transform states of body and mind, whether this is intentional or unwitting. In all instances the transfer (or flow) of essences interconnects persons in particular ways. The point is that persons must anticipate how and when certain forms of such 'affective transfer' should be absorbed, deflected or ignored. This locally means 'feeling' and inhibiting transfers that might challenge conventional moral injunctions. I thus claim that the transfer and flow of bodily affects manifests ethnographically as a form of local knowledge. I now turn to elucidate this assertion.

The Transfer of Affects as Common Knowledge

I will tentatively use the term 'affective knowledge' to account for the forms of transfer and 'flow' I surveyed so far (Shapiro 2011a). 'Affective knowledge' is the expertise in the affective capacities of the human body as they are worked upon and reciprocated in everyday practice. This takes place through gestures, touch, gaze or smell; narratives of sexual conquest or 'betrayal'; masculine and feminine courting manoeuvres; and other tactics persons employ to effectively evoke emotional or somatic interchange. These tactics include a 'practical sense' (Wacquant 1998:12), a *doxa* or a 'know-how', which underscore elicitation of relations on the one hand and blockage on the other (Bourdieu 1990). Some examples will exemplify this point.

Take the aesthetic thrust of smelling, which throughout Maranhão is a common practice associated with a scale of positive appraisals ranging from desire/temptation to love. '*Dar um cheiro*' or '*botar um cheiro*' ('give smell' or 'put smell') are idioms used to suggest already-established affection for the person who is being smelt, which may sometimes have erotic connotations. Between adults affectionate smelling is usually enacted on the neck but with children smelling includes the body as a whole, particularly the genitals among boys. Infants are considered to have a distinctive body smell, which is imagined to be pristine, somewhat pre-social. Smelling young children's genitals is seen as manifestation of intimate familiarity between mothers, co-mothers (*comadres*) or nurture-mothers (*mãede criação*) and their children. For example, my friend Eva, whose son was 10 years old during my fieldwork, still smelled his penis. At the time she had already asked him if he would allow her to do that when he grows pubic hair. She said that when she is angry at him he sometimes approaches her, takes his pants off and says – 'look who's here…'

Smell here functions as material of relational engagements in the sense it becomes 'the subject of people's interactions and thus a quality attached to their relationships… It was made material when it… passed between persons – as an actualization of the act of transfer or donation' (Strathern 1996a:51). For example, my friend Renata once told me that she tried to influence her

boyfriend to smell her unwashed underwear because this would magically compel him to fall in love with her. Here affective knowledge comes down to the fact that notions of essence transfer, the fluidity of love and their relation to bodily substances are effectively employed beyond the dominion of love-magic or '*macumba*' (cf. Bastide 1978:300 and 2003:12-15).

Desire too is seen as a vector of different grades of intimate relatedness. Men who do not practice sex on a regular basis are jokingly considered to have their semen stuck or imprisoned in their heads ('*gala seca*'). This may cause anger, stress, aggression and headaches. At the same time, akin to Iberian contexts (Brandes 1980, Vale de Almeida 1996), excessive sexual activity is thought to debilitate men, who become weak with too much semen loss. I claim that it is *desire* itself at hand here, rather than ejaculation. This is so since even women's unaddressed desire is also seen to cause them to become hysterical or aggressive. Such symmetry ultimately comes down to *tesão*, a term representing intense pleasure in sexual activity. The following story, told to me by a female interlocutor in Santo-Amaro, elucidates the provocative ways by which people sometimes speak about *tesão*:

…We went to a *motel* with this guy. My friend is very small… (and) the man was enormous, very strong (*forte*, local indication he was fat)…. the man had a *h-u-g-e* penis, so big and thick that her mouth couldn't contain it… When he put her on all fours, my brother (*meu preto*), I said 'she is not going to endure this' (*ela não vai aguantar*). (Later) I said that she must be devastated… She said she came (*gozou*) but I don't know – she was screaming and murmuring so much that I don't know if it's from pleasure or pain…

My friend Jackson holds *tesão* to be a moment beyond rationalizing, 'a situation in which you forget who you are and do not think of anything; you are just *being* that velocity, that potency, that pleasure'. A person called Emilio also exclaimed: '*tesão* has got to do with the rise of blood pressure, faster, tighter, really more and more (*mais mesmo*), it is pressure of really pressing, something much more ardent and hot…' *Tesão* is seen to make girls fall in love and to 'force' men to ejaculate inside their sexual partners without a condom since 'there was no time to get out'. As Jackson poetically implies, tesão interconnects bodies within a vibrant sensation of oneness.

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Notions of *tesão* indeed pertain to more generalized 'erotic ideology' in Brazil (Parker 1991: 104-111). Yet, whereas Parker conceives of *tesão* as essentially transgressive and thus as unethical vis-à-vis the realm of familial hierarchies, empirical evidence from Maranhão suggests that *tesão* is an important feature of sexual relations even within the domestic orbit. For example, a person called Falcão once pronounced that he has not yet 'lost' *tesão* to his wife even after 10 years of marriage. Or, some local women expect their boyfriend (or husband) to have sex with them twice or three consecutive times. Refusal might indicate that the boyfriend is not attracted or interested. Ultimately *tesão* is not automatically associated with impurity; it is the proper way to 'do' sex and intimacy simultaneously. It is the aesthetic attributes of *tesão* – velocity, pressure and heat – which reinstate both men and women as intimate partners.

Blood flow also entails aesthetic configurations, associated both with smooth flow inside individual body and with the genealogical implications of shared substance. For example, 'bad' blood circulation in the female body is considered to manifest itself in cold feet and low energies. In the *interior* the older generation holds that if a woman falls over or is unexpectedly surprised while menstruating, her blood could become 'locked' (*sangue preso*) in her head. This may cause cerebral hemorrhage (*congestão* or *derrame*) and I heard of at least one woman who had died that way in the 1970s. Women of all generations commonly report on *TPM* (premenstrual tension) and *colica* (menstrual pain). Although less prevalent than in the past, some women still avoid *comida remosa* or alcohol during menstruation so that *colica* does not worsen (Sanabria 2011)[28]. Renata explains:

> As a virgin I felt *colica* strongly. I used to vomit; I would lie down the whole day in bed, couldn't eat anything during the pain since I lost my appetite, and was very weak. This became less painful after I lost my virginity… (but) I (still) get irritated from everyday things one week before I menstruate. Then the chest becomes hard and painful and the legs hurt, including the lower part of the back. The old generation (*os antigos*) used to call this '*dor das cadelas*' (literally, pain of the bitches).

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[28] *Comida remosa* translates as 'strong food'. This refers to food that might increase bodily inflammations, for both men and women. This includes shrimps, pork meat and acidic fruits (cf. Lancaster 1992). For an analysis of imageries associated with menstrual blood as a source for gender differentiation see Martin (1989).

Beyond gender and health issues, blood-flow is mostly important for distinguishing clustered social units (Carsten 1995b). For example, it is regularly maintained that marriage between relatives (brothers and sister but also cousins) inevitably results in the birth of mentally retarded or disabled children. I once asked an interlocutor called Arlete about this issue and she said it have to do with 'the type of blood that is the same or a genetic code that is too similar'. In parallel, however, relatives that are of 'the same blood' should ideally stand for and support one another. As a trope, 'blood' signifies an already-established relational *obligation* as well as malfunction and moral collapse (Sahlins 2011a).

The scope of this framework is pretty wide-ranging. For example, in a 'Biblical Geography' lesson I attended in an Evangelical College in São Luís, Teacher Saul exclaimed that the Israeli government had discovered that some Ethiopian Tribes had 'Jewish Blood', and thereby resorted in bringing them to the Promised Land. Or, Seu Azarias from Santo Amaro told me at his 81st birthday party that he is the progenitor of 14 children and that in the veins of all of them runs *his* O+ blood type. Familial connectivity, as well as presumed circulation of innate sameness flowing despite race or History, represents unmediated intimate conjuncture in both these cases.

This also works in the other way around. My friend Chico from Guanabara, for example, told me that he 'considers' (*consideração*) Seu Sansão's sons *as if* they are his *primos* (cousins) although they have no 'blood relation'. Chico's analogy is framed upon the affinal kinship ties existing between Chico's father Seu Joaquim and Seu Sansão, who are *compadres*[29]. The idiom of *consideração* is used to indicate intimate proximity between sets of external relations otherwise not directly interconnected through an explicit trope of substance (Rebhun 1999). This underlies such relations as co-father/motherhood (*compadre/comadres*), 'co-nurture' brothers/sisters (*irmão/irmã de criação*) or 'child by nurture' (*filho de criação*) (cf. Fonseca 1986). Similar degrees of intimate sharing underscore a wide range of structurally dissimilar sociological relations.

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[29] In 1984, when the one before last of Seu Joaquim's ten children was born, he asked Seu Sansão to be her *Padrinho* (godfather). He thus formalized their long term friendship as official *compadres*. For further reading on *consideração* as a vector of intimate relations see Marcelin (1999), Mayblin (2010) and DaMatta (1991).

Consequently, in Maranhão kin categories are equally predicated on biological, economical *and* affinal connectivity (Marcelin 1999, Scott 1990). As I have argued for other affective transactions, all it takes to make these relations ethically binding (i.e. anchored in commitments and formulated as emotive) is mutual recognition, which often takes a material or economic manifestation (as I further demonstrate below). I claim that this produces a certain degree of intimacy that designates similarity between substance connectivity and affinal ties. Ideal *primos* relations, for example, are compared with first grade siblings. Both these sets of relations imply permissible and non-permissible transactions, including the taboo on sexual involvement.

Viviana Zelizer (2005) criticizes the common dissociation of 'intimacy' from instrumental rationality and economical transactions. Such distinction, she argues, is a fallacy; it generates the illusion that there are easily differentiated spaces of social interaction in everyday life, supposedly segregating 'authentic' from 'inauthentic' emotional sharing (contra Hochschild 1983). Rather, intimacy becomes distinguishable through multiple practices that increase or decrease contingency between subjects, thereby including at once financial transactions, ethical commitments and embodied knowledge (Strathern 1995). Zelizer (2005:16, italics mine) argues:

Intimate relations vary in kind and degree: the amount and quality of information available to spouses certainly differs from that of child-care worker and parent, or priest and parishioner. The extent of trust likewise varies accordingly. *Because we are dealing with a continuum, exactly where we set the limit between intimate and impersonal relations remains arbitrary.*

Zelizer (2005:20-22) insists that Intimacy is not essentially 'hostile' to commercial exchange, nor is it a dualistic value-laden appreciation of 'close' against 'distant' feelings. It is also not about the emergence of 'pure relationships' because it directly involves power relations (Herzfeld 2005:58, Geschiere 2013). Ultimately, intimacy is a shared property of 'structured' relatedness (e.g. 'blood' or ritual connectivity) just as much as it informs some 'impersonal' relations. Zelizer (ibid:35) calls this view *'connected lives theory'*.

In Maranhão this prism suggests that bilateral material exchange (of favors, labor, bestowals, goods, food or money) is essential to modeled sets of intimate relations ranging from consensual unions to legal marriages to parenthood. For example, it is conventional in the region of Guanabara that builders bestow work on their contractor as a reciprocal expression of good social standing. During my fieldwork a family of builders from Guanabara was thus criticized for *not* bestowing work on their 83 years old 'blood' matriarch, who contracted them to refurbish her small house. Although money changed hands, the assumed 'high' grade of intimate connectivity here demanded recognition that was nevertheless ignored.

Affective knowledge also underscores the *absence* of systematic exchange. Rui, for example, told me he has a milk-sister (*irmã de leite*) in the *interior* because as a baby he was breastfed by his MBW, who gave birth some months beforehand. Rui's milk-sister is also his 'blood' *prima* (MBWD) and yet they are not entangled in any reciprocal exchange. Common substance here merely implies *synchronic* connectivity that is distinguished from the ethical commitments marking close intimate relations (as those of ideal kin). Transfer of essence or substance that is not reciprocated is analogically the same as unstructured exchange, which is not formally recognized as kinship. This is so because both these types of relation imply the lack of framed commitments that manifest in transactions. Consequently they denote a lower grade of intimacy.

Affective knowledge pragmatically constitutes intimate forms of relatedness from a given state of affairs, in which personal 'essences' conflate *all the time* (Wagner 1977, Simmel 1971). The transfer of affective essences does not materialize things in the world *ex nihilo* but merely enhances, diverts or redirects regular affective flux that is already circulating (viz. Ferreira 1985). Transfer may be recognized only formally (as with Rui's milk-sister) or actively directed through further reciprocal exchange. Imageries of fusion, deflection and blockage thus set up concrete boundaries across intimate aggregations (Carsten 1995a). In the next section I further elaborate this claim through the notion of metonymy/synecdoche.

Metonymic Forms of Relatedness in Maranhão

The transfer and fusion of affects shape visible structures in the world: they truncate intimate sharing just as much as they intensify it (Povinelli 2002:218-19, Strathern 1996a). I wish to assert that in Maranhão full-bodied persons circulate in society as metonyms for larger conceptual structures. By this I mean that built into their public image, persons always-already represent sets of prior intimate transactions that are intrinsically associated with them (Bastide 2003:20ff)[30].

I shall begin with one of Maranhão's numerous popular legends, which tells the story of Boto: a sympathetic fish that saves people from drowning in the rough seas surrounding the island of São Luís. On full moon nights Boto becomes a handsome young man. Dressed in a white suit, his black hair combed and neatly divided with a side parting, he appears in the *festas* (parties) of humans. Boto captures attention with his delicacy, fine gestures and witty remarks. No woman can resist this young man, who promises the stars and proposes a stunning wedding in church with a veil and garland, a *padre* and the full décor. After having sex Boto nevertheless disappears, turning himself into the sympathetic fish he truly is. When a young *moça* gets pregnant but does not know who the child's father is, her *comadres* affirm – this is the son of Boto! (Reis 2008:94).

The incarnation of Boto as sympathetic-fish/handsome-father mediates between the legitimate containment of sexual moral transparency (marriage in church) to the risky fulfillment of covert erotic desires. Boto's bipolar capacity suggests that the cultural organization of courting in Maranhão concerns the visceral rapture of erotic pleasure just as much as it concerns the moral encompassment of child bearing. Here seduction facilitates pregnancy and parturition; but since moral encompassment is strictly unattainable (Boto is 'actually' a fish) responsibility must be transferred further along networks of relatedness to kin and *comadres.*

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[30] Among the four 'Master Tropes' metaphor is premised on homologous similarity, metonymy on substitution of cause-effect relations, synecdoche on substitution of whole with part (or vice versa), and irony on internal contradiction. Synecdoche can be seen as a sub-category of metonymy (D'angelo 1992:93-4). For clarity of argument I will mainly use the term 'metonymy'. See also Lakoff and Johnson (1980:35-41).

Boto belongs in mutually exclusive sets of relational engagements. Once he is the sympathetic fish, then he is the sleek seducer. Boto is not a 'unified' social person and consequently he cannot be incorporated into a fixed web of human exchange relations. On the other hand, Boto's lover is only herself, and she thus signifies the concrete set of aggregated intimacies in which she is immersed. To which relational cluster of intimate aggregations does the baby belongs 'more'? I postulate that the baby embodies the borderline between these worlds within its-self. It is just as fantastic and elusive a creature as it is a human being, and that is the way people treat it: being simultaneously of both. Ethnographically, this includes metonymic relations with distinctive sets of kinship aggregations, as I will now turn to demonstrate[31].

Take Patricia, who is one of Carlos' *filhas de santo* (an initiate at his *terreiro)*. Patricia was 'given' to a Pomba-Gira before she was born, as a consequence of the fulfillment of a promise her mother directed towards that entity. 'In this case I am of two mothers', Patricia smiled, 'like adopted children… but I *consider* as my real mother another entity, Dona Maria Pagira… she resolves everything for me'. As mentioned above, Maria Pagira is one of Pai de Santo Carlos' main possessing entities. This detail is significant since Patricia is Carlos' ex-girlfriend's daughter, and as a child Carlos used to live with them in the same house for several years. When Patricia meets Maria Pagira for consultation – during which she vents out and asks the entity for spiritual guidance – Patricia also meets Carlos, as well as contested memories of her own past. Consequently, Patricia continues to call Carlos 'uncle' (tio), rather than the required 'father' (as her *Pai de Santo*).

During my fieldwork, Patricia's mother Claudiane accompanied her during most of the religious sessions celebrated in the *terreiro* – often as frequent as twice a week - even though she did not speak with Carlos' concurrent partner Irací, who is Claudiane's *comadre* and used to be one of her best friends. As the story goes, Irací lived with Claudiane and Carlos for several years at

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[31] This stands in contrast to common Euro-American kinship idioms. Strathern (1992) demonstrates that in 1980s Britain the imagery of 'individuals' is predicates on the relations between wholes and parts. A person is bilaterally 'composed' of 'halves' and 'quarters', but is nevertheless imagined to be an independent and 'complete' entity defined by a sense of his/her autonomy as a 'whole' in its own right.

Claudiane's house and secretly maintained a passionate romance with Carlos. At some point Carlos left the house and moved to his adoptive mother's house Dona Silvanda, where he eventually established his *terreiro* (see chapter five). Iraçí moved out with him.

Claudiane told me various times how angry she was with Iraçí, whose eight years old daughter Claudiane was raising as her nurturing mother (*mãe de criação*). During my fieldwork Claudiane did not speak with Iraçí, and she minimized her contacts with Carlos to the absolute necessary in and around Patricia's involvement with *terreiro* activities. Yet, during religious sessions and feasts Claudiane contributed work, money and food, as well as exchanging occasional conversations with Carlos' and Iraci's entities while these were 'on top' of their mediums. More strikingly, Claudiane was regularly seeing Dona Maria Pagira during those nightly sessions, in which she was sharing her own difficulties and receiving wise advice from the entity!

In this complex, mutually-exclusive sets of intimate relations become interconnected in a metonymic fashion. By this I mean that the public images of all persons involved already include intimate linkages and contested memories associated with the others. These relations intersect only in designated moments, such as those of possession; which becomes a pivotal situation during which all the given array of social relations available at hand (with humans and spirits alike) provisionally overlap (see chapter five). Here persons acquire the characteristics of Boto, being simultaneously a human medium and his or her possessing entity. This allows for affective transfer between persons that would have otherwise remained hostile to one another. Each person thus comes to symbolize the interconnectedness of the entire set of aggregated relations.

More prosaic than possession, however, metonymy is exemplified with the simple question – 'of whom are you?' (*de quem você é*) – by which persons classify their relational engagement with your parents and grandparents, their uncles and so on (cf. DaMatta 1991:151-168 and 1997). In many instances this determines if you would be considered a person of good social standing that deserves respect, or merely someone with whom interaction should be limited to cordial etiquette.

On this ground persons across the generations also manage the reciprocity and appropriateness of *bênção*; the sometimes minute differences between malevolent gossip and conspiratorial exchange of information; and the scope of economic exchange.

Obligations marking *compadre/comadre* relations also entail metonymic relations. They denote the invention of blood relatedness and thus include bestowals and transactions of gifts or money across wider domains. For example, when Seu Sansão or his sons arrive to Guanabara they always stay in Seu Joaquim's house although they also have 'blood' kin who live in the village. During my fieldwork both Chico and Seu Joaquim were even hired by Seu Sansão as the main builders of the house he was building in the village, although all of Seu Sansão's wife's brothers and nephews (WBs, WZSs) who live in the village are professional builders too (see chapter three). Likewise, Chico once lived free of charge for six months with Seu Sansão's family in São Luís due to his work as a builder.

Such intersections suggest that metonymy is almost unlimited in scope. In that Geography lesson mentioned above, for example, teacher Saul sought to 'prove' in the scriptures that 3000 years ago the South American continent was only several dozen kilometers away from Africa. He thus pitched that the legendary biblical site of Ophir – to which King Solomon had sent ships that returned abundant with gold – was actually the land we now call Brazil. This not only proves, exclaimed Saul, that Brazil is mentioned in the bible as integral part of the prophetic divine plan for the history of mankind; but also that since antiquity different peoples migrated into Brazil to bring about 'healthy' miscegenation. According to teacher Saul, who is also a pastor of an Evangelical congregation he set up himself, this explains why 'there is no single Brazilian race and we are all genetically mixed'. Here genetics substitutes for other vectors of biological connectivity predicated on the conflation of essences (such as blood or semen) and the transaction of wealth. This assures that miscegenation in Brazil is an indwelling quality of the impulse towards Rapture.

Bestowals, contested memories, desires and obligations towards deities are all imbricated *within* bodies when persons locally engage in meaningful reciprocity (cf. Willerslev in Venkatesan et al 2011:232). Affective knowledge and the exchange-patterns it instantiates thus become almost limitless in their capacity to reform the conceptual boundaries of relatedness in Maranhão. it is possible to claim that intimacy 'proliferates' through affective essences of persons; who are themselves parts of interconnected familial aggregations. I now turn to elucidate this point.

Proliferation of Intimate Relations in the Making of Relatedness

In the context of my fieldwork, metonymic linkages dispersed, detotalized or expanded the perceived boundaries of aggregated intimate relations (Fonseca 2000). This, as I have shown, may go symbolically all the way back to King Solomon. I therefore suggest that intimate sets of relations 'branch out' or proliferate in ways that necessarily entangle together wider forms of 'blood', emotive or otherwise affective idioms that intermediate relatedness (cf. Sahlins 2011a:5). The term 'proliferation' thereby means active creation, invention or constructive imagination, which all have ethical implications (Moore 2011). In what follows I wish to strengthen this point.

Tallitha's story is a starting point. Tallitha became pregnant when she was 16. She moved into her boyfriend's parents' house with her baby although their relationship (*namoro*) had already officially ended. In parallel, Talitha's father registered the newborn as *his* to entitle the child access to private health insurance that makes part of his employment condition. When her child was 20 months old, Tallitha 'gave' him to her mother-in-law (*sogra*) and came back to her father's house. A while later she met a new guy with whom she began having 'plenty of sex' and got pregnant again. She told me she 'could not care less' ('*eu não estava nem aí*'). Tallitha now lives with her three year old second son at her father's house and has only occasional contact with her first child.

This same 'branching out' is also at times a self-conscious choice. For example, when he was 12 my friend Oswaldo from São Luís moved out of his parents' house to live with close family friends because he felt 'attached' to them since he was little. As he told me, he used to come to

their house after school every day since he was six, and by the time he was 12 he was just as much as 'theirs' as he was of his biological parents. His decision was therefore approved by his parents. Today in his thirties, Oswaldo uses kin terminology to refer to both his consanguine and affiliated parents and siblings (mothers, brothers, etc.). He even told me that his two 'mothers' often jokingly argue who is more of a 'real' mother to him. The crucial point of connectivity here is Oswaldo's social person, the product of his relational engagement with both these families respectively.

The proliferation of intimacy may even be stronger than death, as the following case suggests. 18 years ago my friend Eridán had given birth to a premature baby in a hospital in São Luís that had no incubators. The baby was placed under a lamp and died several days later. Eridán had become downtrodden with sorrow and used to cry desperately. She told me: 'my mother always told me to stop crying because if I wouldn't – because he was such a small angel – my baby would be all wet up in heaven. (But I kept crying) until one day my mother told me she had a dream of my baby, that he was all wet… so we had to ask Deus to take him away (from us)'.

Along orthodox lines of folk Catholicism in northeast Brazil it is accepted that deceased toddlers are incapable of sin and therefore ascend directly to heaven (Scheper-Hughes 1992). Consequently, they are equated with angels and they should not be mourned. Regularly, the oppositions earth:heaven and mortal:divine correspond to wet:dry, mourning:indifference, and tears:joy. This typology is however defamiliarized and inverted by the penetration of an earthly substance to heaven, which makes it uncomfortably wet (cf. Seremetakis 1991:58-61). Eridan's mother's dream served as a transitive vehicle by which to restore classificatory order and complete the process of bereavement. Eridán consequently stopped crying. Instead, she began ritualizing her baby's death through the occasional reciting of Our Father (*Pai Nosso*) on his grave[32].

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[32] I think a functionalist conclusion is unavoidable here. I follow Nadia Seremetakis (1991:58), who argues that dreams reconstitute schematic social relations after they have been breached. This is most commonly made through (1) defamiliarization, (2) inversion, (3) shared substance, and (4) static signs of negativity.

These examples suggest that measures of intimate familiarity criss-cross various types of relations in Maranhão precisely because intimacy itself is seen to proliferate through institutionalized social forms. This rests on the affective 'grit' that is seen to underscore all forms of relatedness with all types of entities. For example, In order to enter the jungle and come back safely, persons seek to deceive the spiritual entities that reside there (*encantados, invisíves*). Thus, when Seu Joaquim from Guanabara picks forest fruits (*buriti, bacuri* and *juçara*) he goes into the forest dressed as he would normally; but he wears his clothes inside out on his way back.

This is also the case with sworn enemies. For example, my friend Rubão from Guanabara had been grappling with health problems and mental depression for years. After numerous checkups in hospitals that yielded no results he called a skillful pajé, who summoned his entities and discovered that the source of these evils was a jealous neighbor[33]. Rubão began taking treatments at the pajé's *terreiro*, located about an hour drive away. He told me that as a rule, while he was driving towards the *terreiro,* the symptoms of his mysterious diseases would disappear. They would however reappear later on. He attributed that to the magical powers of the Pajé, who were strong around his *terreiro*, but weaker through distance. Rubão's body was less susceptible to the destructive consequences of black magic in the proximity of the Pajé, who successfully deflected affliction. My point is that these sequences of absorption, deflection and retribution would have been meaningless without a sense of 'intimacy' with social others, both friends and enemies, who live in close proximity to and daily contact with one another (Saada 1980).

Peter Geschiere (2013:72) asks 'how can one fence oneself off from one's intimates, with whom one shares so much?' In Maranhão witchcraft, the evil eye, *peito aberto*, depression and other minor afflictions are based on the implicit assumption that the 'affective grit' of relations can also be utterly negative (cf. Mayblin 2010:76-80). Dona Formosa from Guanabara was even allegedly blinded in one eye by a witchcraft her neighbor – who used to be a close friend – directed

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[33] Pajé is the main religious figure in the creolized Amerindian religion of Pajelança, which is prevalent in rural parts of Maranhão (cf. Pacheco 2004). Pajés are equivalent to mãe or pai de santo in Tambor de Mina. Pajés are healers, sorcerers or witches, depending on the context.

against her. Consequently, it is reasonable to assume that the proliferation of intimate familiarity is not limited only to 'positive' relations based on sympathy and trust. Both in Santo-Amaro and Guanabara persons are very careful from disclosing personal aspects of their lives to the people they meet daily and with whom they often drink and eat.

I thus suggest that the proliferation of intimacy is largely unpredictable. For example, in many instances 'blood' relatedness is emphasized, cultivated and fortified throughout the life cycle along with continuous proliferation of 'external' intimate linkages (Fonseca 2003b,Walmsley 2008). This may produce elaborate networks of kin and kindred that are 'aggregated' together in houses. This process builds on deflecting, absorbing or blocking the transfer of bodily affects and emotional idioms. Next I turn to show the empirical scope of these claims in the process of 'aggregation' across contested intimate linkages in low-income Maranhão.

The Birth of Mâmi

For several years Juanice from Guanabara dated (*namorou*) Marcio against the approval of her older sister, Duda, who tried to implement her own authority as the dominant figure in their house. That was so because both of Duda's and Juanice's parents died at the early 2000s; first the mother from heart problems and then the father from 'sadness' (*tristeza*). Yet, 'after the death of their father, control over the family has been lost' told me Dona Fatima, Marcio's nurturing-mother (*mãe de criação*). The *namoro* thus continued and Juanice became pregnant. Three months into pregnancy she moved into Marcio's family house in spite of Duda's disapproval.

Although Marcio publically 'took responsibility' (*assumiu*) over the pregnancy – and even confronted Duda for her reservations - he was also having an affair with his neighbor Arlinda. Marcio said – 'I began this case (*caso*) with Arlinda before Juanice moved into our house and when I woke up (*acordei*) I was already involved… the woman that I liked was Juanice but you know how it is, the flesh is weak (*a carne é fraca*)… I knew I was wrong (but continued the affair)'.

The word spread and Juanice challenged Marcio, who denied rigorously. Once she even returned to Duda's house in protest, but came back to Marcio's house the next day. Meanwhile her pregnancy advanced well. In fact it was so smooth that Juanice went through her entire pregnancy without having an ultrasound scan. Marcio says she thought that the purpose of the scan was merely to tell the sex of the child, and since she did not want to know she did not ask for it. The doctor of the small rural clinic located in the nearby field town Buriti did not prescribe it either.

Juanice had birth-labour pain (*dor de parto*) on the eve of Father's Day (*Dia dos Pais*), which in Guanabara is commemorated by one of the biggest annual *festas* of the region. Juanice refused to go to the health clinic in Buriti, although Dona Fatima repeatedly asked her to so. Dona Fatima thus called Dona Formosa, one of the local *parteiras*, who checked Juanice and left the house because it 'it was not the time yet'. Dona Formosa returned in the middle of the night to attend Juanice in her strenuous delivery. Dona Formosa told me of what she saw: 'when Mâmi was born it was seven in the morning on Father's Day. But when the placenta arrived, her uterus went out with it too… So they sent to call for *comadre* Tereza, who is a nurse, and she said 'this is her uterus! You must take her to Buriti!''. Dona Fatima further described the scene:

…In the moments before parturition one of Juanice's sisters, Peteca, ran in. She was very frightened, because a glass burst and broke in her hand. She panicked because she thought this is a (bad) sign. The same thing happened almost at the same time at the house of Comadre Sandra, a tea-cup (*xícara*) broke. It was the *festa dos pais*, and all of a sudden from nowhere (*do nada*) one of the walls of the portable speakers (*paredão,* which is about 3 meters high) collapsed. This has never happened before or after… Dona Formosa is not a child anymore, but she was very worried. (When the placenta came out) she got up and put her hands on her head and said she had never seen anything like that. What happened was that when the placenta came, it arrived like a stone, like a dry root, very big. At that time Juanice wasn't bleeding yet…

They quickly sent to call Marcio from the *festa.* He ran and borrowed a car with which to rush Juanice to Grajaú. Dona Formosa summarized briefly what had happened next: 'from the shaking of the car her blood was flowing... then from Buriti we got the notice that they will send

her to São Luís in an airplane (*avião*), but when this notice arrived she was already dead'. When *this* notice arrived at Guanabara deep anguish swept through the village. The *Festa dos Pais* was called off, Marcio's house was filled with visitors, and people were crying in public.

Already before Juanice's burial a shroud of suspicions broke out between Juanice's siblings on the one hand, and Marcio and Dona Fatima, on the other. The latter were accused as being responsible to Juanice's death. Juanice's siblings therefore demanded to examine the newborn Mâmi – whose name Juanice picked antecedently 'in case it is a girl' – in a clinic in São Luís. They sought to guarantee that no misappropriate birthing techniques were applied by either Dona Fatima or Dona Formosa. Marcio recalls:

I was totally wiped out (*transtornado*), I wasn't even stepping on the ground, it was a profound shock... Two days after Mâmi was born, one of Juanice's brothers came to me and said they will take away the child. I said – 'no. I do not give my permission to this'... So the first thing I did was to register her identity as my daughter. I arrived with the certificate and I said – 'now if you want I make an agreement with you'. They proposed an accord (*acordo*) by which they would take the child to make tests and bring her back to me when she is three months old... We agreed and there were witnesses, my mother was there and my sister.

Dona Fatima elaborated:

They gave the child to that aunt (*tia*) of Juanice who wanted to raise her up in São Luís. But when this aunt saw that the baby arrived already registered (as Marcio's child), she didn't want to take her by any means (*de jeito nenhum*). So (*então*) Juanice's brothers gave Mâmi to another aunt (*tia*)... but they didn't help that aunt financially at all. So she had to buy the diapers and all the rest by herself... So, she came (to Guanabara) by her own will (*da sua propria vontade*) and told us about the situation. We were surprised because we thought that Mâmi was with the brothers who took her in the first place...

Following this visit, which took place when Mâmi was about two and a half months old, Marcio decided to break his contract with Juanice's siblings. He embarked on an eight hour boat ride to São Luís and the next day came back with the baby to Guanabara. I asked Marcio and Dona Fatima how the girl was fed. Dona Fatima replied:

When she was with the *tia* in São Luís she was breastfed by a niece (*sobrinha*) – the daughter of that *tia* – who stopped breastfeeding her own baby (*tirou do peito*) so she could give milk to the girl… When she came here we asked a girl who had a baby some time before to breastfeed. She had good intentions but when we had to call her at these hours, you know how it is… So we saw it would not work. So we bought milk for breastfeeding in a can, and that is how we brought her up. Thank God she is still today a healthy girl.

Suspicions against Marcio and Dona Fatima subsided over the years after both families were assured by medics that Juanice's condition of *placenta-previa* was untreatable and that it meant a high risk of death[34]. Most of Juanice's siblings kept their distance, with the exception of three of Juanice's ten brothers and sisters who maintained regular contact. Two of them were present at Mâmi's baptism in 2010, in which I also attended. Marcio is still tormented by the emotional misgivings he feels he had caused Juanice, and therefore he avoids all contact with Arlinda. Contrarily, Marcio, Mâmi and Dona Fatima maintain reciprocal transactions with dead Juanice. This focuses on annual commemorations taking place after Mâmi's birthday party and on Mothers' Day (*Dia das Mães*). They all go to the graveyard to say Pai Nosso, put flowers and light a candle on Juanice's grave. Here, too, there is a viable intimate relation, as Marcio said:

When Mâmi celebrated her third birthday, I took her to the cemetery on my motorcycle. When we came back she suddenly looked back and laughed a lot and waved and said '*tchau*'. I stopped the bike and asked her what she saw and to whom she was waving. She didn't know what to say so I asked her if it was for her mother that she said goodbye and she said yes. So I stayed there for a while, staring, maybe all of a sudden I would see her too...

Mâmi shifted across given sets of structured relations, publically displaying the totality of possible intimate linkages that intersected her person, as well as those possible linkages that were provisionally deterred. Mâmi's body thus represented a continuous affective field within which the premises of intimate relatedness could have been negotiated at large. In fact, Mâmi herself deploys her changing position within these interconnected aggregations of intimate linkages (Wagner

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[34] Although a rare condition, *placenta previa* is actually easily treated with a simple caesarean (Bamford 2007:80; cf. McCallum 2005).

2001:84). For example, Mâmi calls Marcio 'father' (*pai*), Dona Fatima *and* Juanice 'mother(s)' (*mãe*) and Zé-Onça (Fatima's husband and Marcio's biological father) 'grandfather' (*avô*). To Marcio's sisters Mâmi calls 'sisters' while to Juanice's sisters and brothers she calls '*tios*' (uncles and aunts). Mâmi pragmatically applies kinship terms to 'degrees' of intimate familiarity she sustains with her relatives. She thus absorbs the integrated boundaries of hierarchic social positions while rearticulating and subverting their moral integrity from within.

My emphasis on the 'proliferation' of intimacy captures exactly this dialectic between morality and ethics. Precisely because Juanice's tragedy discloses the multidimensionality of intimate relatedness, it highlights the general uneasiness in Maranhão marking the relations between biological kinship and affective transfer. In this case 'uneasiness' manifested in the tension between notions of ethical responsibility and notions of 'legal' ownership. While Juanice's siblings felt it was their moral responsibility to take care of Mâmi, by giving the baby away they nevertheless only upheld an *image* of moralistic 'blood' relatives. The feud between Marcio's and Juanice's families therefore suggested that notions of transfer and the shifting of entire bodies were in a continuous tension with the fixed roles characterizing 'conventional' familial hierarchies.

Nonetheless, affective transfers imbued in nurture entailed a higher degree of intimate sharing between Dona Fatima and Mâmi. Here, nurture and the practices of conviviality determined the ways by which Mâmi today classifies her relational proximity to her various relatives across familial aggregations. The practices associated with nurture could therefore be seen as ethical labour (viz. Arendt 1958). The point is that Mâmi intuitively recognizes her commitment to reproduce structured intimate linkages *and* ethically refashion them in accordance with her real-life experiences. By calling her grandmother 'mother', Mâmi effectively exemplifies the tension between these local systems of value. One of the most acute fields of everyday practice in which this tension locally manifests is the common narration of dreams, to which I now turn.

Historicizing the Proliferation of Intimacy in Dreams

My friends and interlocutors in Maranhão frequently told me of their dreams, daydreams, premonitions and revelations. People recounted dreams both as actions in their own right (i.e. they had an internal 'seriousness', rhythm and ethical implications) and as statements *about* cultural models external to dream reality (Mageo 2010). In what follows I will claim that this dialectic has a generative effect that results in historicizing certain tensions underscoring the proliferation of intimate linkages across networks of relatedness in Maranhão (cf. Basso 1987, Mageo 2004).

Nadia Seremetakis (1991) argues that recounting dreams is an action that predicates intersubjective transformations of intimate relations (Littlewood 2004). Dream-narratives circulate between people, places and temporalities as the 'crest' of deterritorialization (Seremetakis 1991:62). This creates an 'economy of dreaming… a relation of debt and payment that links the messages of the dream… to its actualization in social life' (Seremetakis 1991:61)[35]. Taiane, for example, told me of a nightmare experience she had had when she was 16:

I played with a toy that belonged to my *prima*… suddenly… one of the toys began growing… I felt as if something is blocking my mouth and my throat. I wanted to shout and I couldn't so I only said – 'Oh, my Deus, help me' – and that thing is still next to me and it is creating flames. It looked like an enormous bear with eyes of burning fire. And then I remembered Jesus so I started saying - 'Jesus, Jesus, take me away from here'. I was desperate, I was sure I was dying… But only then, when I called Jesus, it finished so quickly…

In the following months Taiane had similar dream/daydream experiences, which included an unwitting possession by a demon. Taiane said that the entity only left her when Jesus himself cried out: 'leave her, don't touch her, for she is mine'. The semi-erotic content of Taiane's nightmare had to be suppressed due to her conscious moral struggle to become a faithful Christian (Stewart 2002:297). The confessional nature of 'telling' (first to the aunt, then to the pastor and as

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[35] Building on Deleuze and Guattari's (2011[1972]) treatment of money as deterritorialized value codes, Seremetakis (ibid:62) argues: 'the signs and symbols of the dream… are provisionally free-floating, deterritorialized tokens. The process of ascertaining to whom the dream is directed is an attempt to territorialize, to locate and to anchor the signs of the dream in their proper place'.

a memento shared with me) allowed exactly that: it constructed a narrative that historicized and rearticulated both the actions within the dream and the cultural models that were employed to interpret them (Zigon 2012). Telling 'deterritorialized' established local notions of *macumba* and instead publically instantiated an economy of debt between Taiane and Jesus. Recounting the dream took part in Taiane's active rejection of Afro-Brazilian synesthetic rituals, which culminated in her ultimate 'conversion' to Evangelical Christianity some years later.

This last point suggests that narratives also supply a medium for the ethical refashioning of selves, which Zigon (2012:205) calls the 'embodied ways of being-with-oneself'. Dreams are indeed relational, but they account for particular moral breakdowns (Zigon 2007). When she was 14, for example, my friend Renata dreamt she heard a knock on the door. She opened and saw a huge bird that looked like a human-size penguin, who embraced Renata's mother Dona Aparecida under his wing. In the dream Renata tried to pull her mother away but was unsuccessful. The bird then said that Renata's mother would not come back anymore. He began ascending to the sky, still gripping Dona Aparecida firmly under his wings. A day or two later Renata's mother died.

Dreaming did not 'guess' Renata's mother's death *ex-nihilo*. At the time she had already been hospitalized for weeks after a stroke. Yet, the dream participated in historicizing this event by conveying the moral message that God had wanted this to happen and that Renata's mother ascended straight to heaven. This awesome statement made the dream memorable and communicable even 20 years after it has been dreamt. The dream thus served both as an external reflection and an internal generator for the course of bereavement that had to be uncoiled.

These examples suggest that dreams in Maranhão are also *performed* as moral stories, and hence they contextually serve as platforms for interactive social processes (Tedlock 2004). Dreams thus become spaces of connectivity between meaningful others rather than seen as a completely introvert, individualized psychological phenomenon. Persons infer moral messages in dreams and play them out precisely because 'the dream seizes us… like any trickster, by slipping away. We have

to trap it, to possess it, to obliterate the possibility, the inevitability, of its slipping away…' (Crapanzano 2003:194). My point is that the more intense or awesome the dream experience is, the stronger its moralizing force in the mediation of particular intimate aggregations. In that sense it appears that the transfer of dream narratives is similar to the transfer of affects, essences and bodily substances: it is not about believing in these narratives, but how they 'get' you.

Pastor Campos from Pinheiro (the *interior* of Maranhão) was arrested because he could not let his dream slip away[36]. He was accused of having sexual relations with five teenage girls in his congregation – 'The Church of the Chosen Saints' (*Igreja dos Santos Escolhidos*) – and impregnating two of them. Pastor Campos asked, and was granted permission from the girls' parents, for the consummation of these acts. He told them an angel called Rabício was revealed to him in a dream. Rabício showed Pastor Campos a pentagram crown made of fire, each of its spiky points flickering with the facial-features of the girls in question. Rabício indicated that they will gestate five sons, who will destroy the world of sinners and reinstate the City of God that will reign for 1000 years.

In our conversation Pastor Campos emphasized the *inability* to ignore this vivid dream, even though he wept for exemption. He claimed he defied God by asking why He could not have chosen adult women whose sexual matters are 'their own business' (*donas do seu nariz*). Yet Campos ultimately succumbed to the divine message, which made of the girls in question the literal containers of absolute values. The Biblical iconicity of Pastor Campos' dream reproduced a narrative-structure that facilitated the erotic breach of ethical and juridical boundaries under the guise of legitimate resistance to Evil. That is the reason that the parents of the girls cooperated.

At times dreams constitute a space for symbolic resistance in face of prevailing inequalities (Mageo 2010, Bilu 1989). Leonedes from Guanabara, for example, told me he was once sick with fever when his *encantado* took him through a water pond on a trip to the *encantaria.* Leonedes

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[36] On the arrest see also Journal Pequeno, accessed on 08.07.2010. http://www.jornalpequeno.com.br/2010/7/8/pastor-e-preso-acusado-de-engravidar-duas-adolescentes-em-pinheiro-123770.htm. I interviewed Pastor Campos in the presence of his lawyer at the Pinheiro Police Station on 14.07.2010.

saw a gorgeous (*linda*) city, full of cars and golden palaces, 'which is not like our *interior* here'. Within the twilight zone of his feverish journey Leonodes challenged and subverted the asymmetrical power relations which sustain socioeconomic discrepancy between São Luís and the impoverished interior. The *interior* is here *intimately* connected with the world of *encantaria* and thus the dream/daydream itself, as well as its narration, becomes a mode of political action.

The experiential zing of dreams brings together that which is intimately intelligible with that which is amorphous, unfamiliar or even alienating. Dream narratives acutely disperse the existential 'withinness' (Handelman 2004a:10) experienced during the dream while attributing an ethical edge to this experience (Eggan 1952). Once dreams are shared they thus become ethical injunctions that produce *interlocutors* (Crapanzano 2003). Just like the transfer of other affective matter – whether in forms of linguistic idioms, substances or emotional sensations – the narration of dreams creates a dialectic relation between self and other. By this I mean that the narration itself (as a form of transfer) enables dreamers to authenticate existing social hierarchies as much as it encourages the use of affective knowledge to achieve subversion and change (Tedlock 2004). Dreams thus account for fantasy, desire and imagination as powerful devices in the creation of relational worlds to the extent they introduce these aspects into everyday sociality at large.

My point is that dream narratives take active part in the proliferation of intimate relations in everyday life. As narratives they relate simultaneously to self and other, tying together the fluidity of dream reality with the totalizing demands of waking life. Dream narratives thus maintain an ethical edge to the relational transfer of affects as well as to the inherited moral weight of biological relatedness. In all instances, dreams reorganize images of social aggregations through rhetoric statements that are passed on to others, and therefore reflect most acutely the process of 'proliferation' I have been trying to theorize in this chapter. The transfer of dream narratives serves as an ethical platform for the local imagery of proliferating intimate aggregations in their context-specific formation and deformation (viz. 'ethical imagination' in Moore 2011:70-6).

Conclusion

In this chapter I focused on affective transfers in Maranhão and the types of knowledge that underscore them. I argued that this sort of creative invention codifies the proliferation of intimate linkages in the making of ever more elaborate co-residential 'aggregations'. Affective transfer entails certain reciprocal obligations, which take the form of established exchange relations. I argued that this dynamic cannot be seen as a 'happy go round' model of unregulated sociality. Branching-out of new intimate linkages often embeds a fear of gossip or witchcraft that, as I tried to demonstrate, build on the possible enhancement of affective matter already circulating in the world (Ferreira 1985).

The concept of 'proliferation' ultimately enables to assert that despite the dominance of familial hierarchies in Maranhão the boundary between structurally similar sets of relations is *initially* blurred. Infidelity or 'betrayal' (*traição*), for example, is not always just a matter of sexual excitement. When I asked my friend Robson from Guanabara why he maintained a girlfriend outside marriage he simply said: 'sometimes you just feel like getting to know a new person'. The ethical reworking of affective transfers and the moral obligations to domestic responsibilities may at times overlap precisely because intimacy instantiates itself through everyday acts of transfer.

My reading of affective transfer in contemporary Maranhão suggests that dualistic representations such as obedience::transsgresion, hierarchy::egalitarianism or consanguine::affinal are reductionist (cf. Sahlins 2011a). Notions of transfer are not strictly about biological substance just as much as they cannot be reduced to an 'everything goes' New-Age approach. Likewise, emotional idioms are used both to reflect genuine sentiments and to play with or manipulate the performance of such sentiments (see chapter four). Ethical and affective interconnectedness indeed comes about in face-to-face interaction as an imperative for inclusive conduct, but it is always sliced and shaped alongside the linchpins of familial and amity alliances. It is these 'structured precisions' (Hemmings 2005:562) that I will analyze in the next chapter.

Chapter Three: 'Respect' and the Anchoring of Intimate Relations in Houses

The Ethics of Respect: Proximity and Distance

When my friend Rui heard that his 6 years old son Aléx had asked me to buy him a video game for his birthday, he was furious. He spanked Aléx on the back of his head three times. Seu Pedro, Rui's father and Aléx's grandfather, heard Aléx weep and hurriedly came out from the back room. 'What happened?' he inquired. 'Aléx is being disrespectful to others' answered Rui, smacking his son once more. He then sent him to the back room to 'think' and forbade him to play video games for a week.

Following this incident, which took place in Santo-Amaro, I began paying closer attention to the notion of respect (*respeito*). Ethnographically this was particularly salient in the demand for deference in the house as a quality of vertical relations between authoritative to subordinate figures. For example, Seu Sansão once rebuked one of his grandchildren, who was talking too much during a celebratory family lunch (*almoço*) and interrupting the conversation: 'children speak very little or stay quiet altogether, observe, and follow the rhythm of adults'! My friend Renata told me that her mother instructed her and her siblings never to contest, dispute, challenge or present questions to 'others' – especially the older generations – as a sign of their respect towards them. Maya Mayblin (2010:44) reports that in the past a morally correct form of relations between generations in the Northeast even included averting one's eyes in the presence of elderly.

Yet, 'respect' also characterized horizontal solidarity between peers. Most of my interlocutors, for example, conceived of an immediate return within the context of gift-exchange to be 'disrespectful' (*desrespeito*). Symmetrical relations between *comadres* and c*ompadres* too, were often defined on these grounds. Several persons told me that such affinities, which last for life, are not mere formal agreements consolidated in church. Rather, co-parenthood is primarily based on and reproduced from a sense of mutual respect. 'Respect' here marks sharing, proximity and mutuality (cf. Geertz 1961:19-21), rather than signifying asymmetry, deference, or distance.

'Respect' simultaneously exhibits prerogatives and inhibitions that appear to be mutually incompatible (Finkelstein 2008:100). On the one hand it underlines hierarchic distance, with its vertical gamut and contingency (Jamieson 2000). On the other hand it instigates egalitarian solidarity, with its horizontal sense of proximity and productive negotiation (Goffman 1956:480). This suggests that in order to be 'respectful' persons must skilfully navigate between these two forms of boundary-making, along with their differentiated codes of conduct and affective transfers.

Sergio Buarque de Holanda (1936:101-112) captured this subtlety in his debate on 'cordiality' in early 20th Century Brazil. Cordiality is presented as Brazilian commonsense towards social interactions, by which formalism, politeness, and the ritualization of etiquette in the public sphere paradoxically take the form of informal, affect-laden familiar reciprocity. Holanda describes this as *extreme humanism* that resists parochialism both from within family-houses and the public sphere. This is so because as a form of performance, cordiality mediates an existential tension between the intimate dependencies and exigencies marking familial hierarchies and the impersonal egalitarianism marking an 'abstract' public order (cf. Linger 1992)[37]. Holanda argues:

There is nothing more significant in this aversion from social ritualization… than the difficulty Brazilians generally feel about prolonged reverence in front of a superior. Our temperament harbours formulas for reverence, even willingly, but almost exclusively when these do not supress all possibility for a more familiar conviviality. The normal manifestation of respect amongst other peoples is replicated here, as a general rule, within the desire to establish intimacy (Holanda 1936:108).

Holanda's methodological emphasis on the inherently transformational nature of cordiality (as both hierarchical and egalitarian) is applicable to the deployment of 'respect' in contemporary Maranhão. It suggests that as with 'being cordial', respect implies awareness of tacit relational hierarchies underpinning (almost) all sets of social relations. Both vertical and horizontal relations

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[37] Holanda's text is controversial in the sense it lends itself to multiple interpretations, sometimes mutually-exclusive. Here I present my own reading of Holanda's ideas. Note that Holanda's vocabulary is consonant with the debates of his time. I therefore adapted it to my needs with such terms as commonsense, interaction, performance and reciprocity. Contemporary Brazilian idioms such as roguery (*malandragem*) and 'aptness' (*jeitinho*) express similar meanings. See Barbosa (1992), Cândido (1970) and DaMatta (1991).

should ideally include the practical regulations and inhibitions that 'having respect' implies. Reproducing respect toward 'others' thus comes down to making minute ethical distinctions rather than to keeping faith with utterly polarized formal social spaces of rank, position, status etc.

This brings to mind Joel Robbins' (2007 and 2012) methodological distinction between morality-as reproduction and morality-as-freedom. The first type follows a rule-bound Durkhemian approach to 'stably organized unreflective norms' (2007:300). These are instrumental scripts upholding certain moral principles as absolute imperatives that are taken to be essential for social reproduction. The second type follows a Weberian notion of cultural value-spheres. Here, there are mutually irreconcilable cultural values seeking to outrank one another. Conflicting values thus allow for contestation between incompatible moral principles, thereby giving way for freedom of choice in social action (cf. Zigon 2009)[38].

Crucially, Robbins (2007:295-6) insists that reproduction and freedom coexist, as cultures allow freedom of choice in some domains and inhibit it in others. Along this line of thought I will focus in this chapter on life-situations whereby choice is at times limited and at times permitted. Performances of deference at times submit to notions of responsible, virtuous personhood; and at times enhance notions of autonomous choice (Ortner 2006:138-9). I will call the first kind of these moral performances respect-as-distance and the second kind respect-as-proximity.

In what follows I will demonstrate that in Maranhão persons operate both these types of respect-relations in ways that pragmatically delimit the potentially limitless scope of affective transfer. I will posit that aggregated sets of respect-relations conceptually meet in particular houses, which may thus be imagined as *hubs* that facilitate a tangible space for the interconnectedness of intimate aggregates. In that sense houses in Maranhão discontinue the incessant proliferation of intimate relations, or at least materially foreground them.

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[38] Weber (1978) builds his theory of value on the assumption that mutually exclusive cultural domains (or spheres) produce contrasting values that contest with one another. Impersonal norms and rules governing State Bureaucracy, for example, contradict the personalized relations of traditional village life.

Ritualizing Respect: The Constitution of Social Domains in Maranhão

Both as horizontal proximity and vertical distance, having 'respect' locally means avoiding arrogance, cynicism, abuse of power or other acts that signify a breach of inclusive approach towards 'others'[39]. As such, respect is mostly concerned with allowing space for 'others' to act. It includes utterances, gestures, and acts that become a set of normative principles; but also, importantly, a composite of personality traits, attitudes, and certain affective dispositions (Wilson 1995). Respect must therefore be taught, or indeed 'instilled' as esteemed virtue. That is the reason that parents endorse certain corrective mechanisms as essential tools for shaping a sense for respect among children. 63 year-old Seu Joaquim from Guanabara, to bring but one example, once watched a television advert that condemned child beating. He groaned (emphasis mine):

Those children that are not beaten today will end up beating their own parents and *disrespect others*. If a (contemporary) teacher even pinches (*belisca*) a pupil they go and make a fuss in the media and that teacher can be sued and lose his job. In the old days, children were beaten in class if they gave the wrong answer or made a mistake and then when they came back home sometimes they were beaten again by their parents because the teachers left their corrections on their notebooks[40].

Most of my interlocutors, men and women, were beaten by their parents or grandparents when they defied or transgressed rules. In some occasions, punishment consisted in kneeling down on corn grains for hours, facing the wall in a praying position. More commonly, beating was done with either a belt or *palmatório*, a wooden ladle the size of a palm of a hand. In all cases, beating

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[39] Power, however, is abused on every level, as a long list of ethnographies in Brazil suggest. In this thesis I am not interested in the socioeconomic and political implications of power asymmetry but rather in the mundane manifestation of ethics and intimacy in interpersonal relations. Although at times 'respect' is a derivative of status and rank, I do not think that in Maranhão it is merely a whitewash for inequalities.

[40] In the colonial plantations subalterns who did not demonstrate their submission through deferral and obedience were publically beaten (Ribeiro 2000:192-215). Yet, as Freyre (1956 and 1963) and others convincingly demonstrated, even within such oppressive political regime - which was marked by clearly differentiated spaces of power and privilege - the boundary between avoidance and joking was often contested. Josué Montello's historical novel *Os Tambores de São Luís* (2008[1975]), for example, tells of a slave who became a respected free citizen of Maranhão by cleverly oscillating *between* transgression and deference. From that perspective beating can be seen as a critical point in which hierarchies are temporarily reinstated.

preceded (or followed) a moral lesson. Contemporary young parents still use educational beating, although probably less frequently than in the past. A man my age told me, for example, that it is (emotionally) more painful for him to beat his son than the physical pain his son must endure.

My point is not beating per-se but that it ritualizes 'respect'. If beating reinstates relational subordination within a hierarchic familial setting, and if hierarchy itself also produces a measure of emotional proximity or a degree of sharing (Graeber 2007:30-36, Sahlins 2011a:13); children interiorize both these notions under the guise of 'respectfulness'. Beating instigates 'respect' as interiorized value, by which it becomes possible to perform self-control. Respect thus allows for comparison between categorical social domains rather than being confined to family houses. This is so because it marks ethical boundaries (i.e. measured distance) both within and without the family-house. Respect thus becomes a value that is primarily associated with ethical personhood.

My interlocutors indeed employed 'respect' as idiom by which to relate, juxtapose, or overlap putatively distinctive sets of social domains. These were elderly/youth, *interior*/city, and house/street. In chapter two, for example, I claimed that taking *benção* marks 'respect' towards the elderly besides being a channel for affective transfer of sentience and knowledge. Likewise, *Interior* discursively implies in Maranhão a quasi-mythical category where familial hierarchies have been preserved, as opposed to the relative individualism of city life. Finally, Seu Sansão's comment below conveys the way 'respect' locally distinguishes 'house' from 'street':

…I didn't want my children to leave the house… Sometimes they escaped, but not for the whole day, because they were afraid I would beat them up. I avoided them from being raised in the street because in the street you learn lots of stuff that is not good for anything. At that time (1980s) there weren't so many punks (*marginais*) in Santo-Amaro, but there were lots of cheeky (*safados*) children around. They spoke swearwords, they were bad influence; they did not respect others (*não respeitavam os outros*).

Seu Sansão intimates that 'house' and 'street' symbolically contradict one another in the same way that the harmonic unity of the interior can be discriminated from the cacophony of the

city and the lived-experience of elderly belies youthful impetuosity. Yet, at the same time tolerance for 'escaping' implies that respect cannot be exclusively contained in the house. There might be more or less 'respect', and in different capacities; but respect cuts through all sets of social domains in ways that defy the idealized segregation between them. This stance problematizes Roberto DaMatta's (1991) analysis of 'street' and 'house' in Brazilian society, to which I now turn.

House and Street in Brazilian Society: DaMatta Revisited

In his seminal works on carnivals (1991[1979]) and citizenship (1997[1985]) in 20th Century Brazil, Roberto DaMatta analyses three conceptual domains making up the Brazilian social universe. These are the house (*casa*), the street (*rua*) and 'other world' (*outro mundo*). DaMatta claims that the spatial and temporal constraints associated in Brazil with the confinement of the house (*casa*) and the hierarchies of the family (*família*) are conceived in diametrical opposition to the anonymous freedom of the street (*rua*) and the egalitarianism of the 'people' (*povo*). 'Other world' (such as carnivals, processions, 'zones' of prostitution, and public squares) stands for the liminal refuge that intermediates between the two and combines them ontologically. He argues:

At home Brazilians are subjected to the rigid code of love and respect for the family, a group seen as inevitable and inescapable, on which one is a perpetual dependent and in which one's individuality is frequently dissolved. Our social ethics tells us that one 'owes everything' to this group, because in it we learn to be 'someone' (*alguém*) and become a person (*uma pessôa*)… The realm of the street is just the opposite. Here the individual is torn loose from the moral group and thereby subjected to the impersonal codes of traffic, of supply and demand, and of all the levels of government. It is a hostile world almost devoid of hierarchy and complementarity (1991:88, emphasis omitted, original brackets).

The importance of 'other world', then, is in that it offers a space for gradation. Persons and things move between 'house' and 'street' by way of shifting across the 'other world', whose logics of connectedness allow mediation, inversion, fusion or denial of 'this world' altogether. DaMatta calls this 'displacement' (1991:70). He claims that tracking the trajectories of those values, objects

and people that are displaced from one domain to another could expose the intrinsic systematization of Brazilian cosmology at large. 'Displacement' comes down to metaphor:

I would suggest that there are situations in which the house is extended into – and encompasses – the street and the city, so that the social world finds its center in the personalized metaphor of the house. In other situations the opposite is right: the street and its objects and values tend to penetrate (and encompass) the intimate world of the house, so that society is integrated by the metaphor of public, impersonal life. Finally, there are situations where the two domains are related by a 'double metaphor', the domestic realm invading the public realm and being invaded by it in turn (1991:73, original quotes and brackets).

For example, the body becomes the medium of transference and reallocation of faith in the context of religious processions (1991:75-8). The body visibly ceases to be an instrument of pleasure and enters a sphere of self-sacrifice in the *service* of the sacred. Such movement neutralizes the alienation of the 'street' in the name of profound 'homely' intimacy with a divine agency that encompasses it. In the military parade, on the contrary, the 'street' becomes the encompassing category that disciplines the 'house' into ranks (ibid). Brazilian carnival is the paradigmatic public event in which 'house' and 'street' penetrate and invert each other, temporarily suspending the very premises that initially separated them as distinctive social spheres.

Crucially, for DaMatta the main incongruence between 'street' and 'house' is grounded in the fact that in the 'street' it is difficult to reproduce the moral premises of hierarchy unconditionally. Rather than merely a matter of aesthetics, this incompatibility is synchronic with notions of order/disorder in Brazilian society; which were shaped by centuries of semi-feudal colonial hierarchies and at the same time submit to imageries of modernity and egalitarian citizenship. The main problem, then, is that notions of 'respect' cannot exclusively govern the public sphere (1991:185-6). DaMatta argues:

…In the house relations are ruled by the 'natural' hierarchies of sex and age, precedence going to males and the older; in the street it often takes some effort in localizing such hierarchies because people can be classified by many different criteria. In this way, although both domains should be governed by a hierarchy

based on *respeito e consideração* (respect and consideration), the latter being a fundamental relational concept of the Brazilian social world, this basic concept is above all characteristic of the relationship between parents and children… (1991:64-65, original brackets and quotations).

The bottom line for DaMatta (1991:188-9) is an ontological Brazilian dilemma: how to balance between the contradictory demands of the house and the street when one suddenly takes over the other, when the 'person' of the house becomes merely an 'individual' in the street or the other way around (cf. DaMatta 1997:37; 1991:183-197). For him, the answer for the dilemma is ritual. 'It is my thesis', he writes, 'that the Brazilian ritual system is a complex mode of establishing a permanent and strong relation between the house and the street' (DaMatta 1997:43).

DaMatta consequently focuses on ritualization as a medium by which individualization and personalization are contested and reaffirmed. He describes, for example, ritualized passages within the spatiality of the 'house', which iconize or objectify persons as a public property. This manifests in life-crisis celebrations ranging from hospitality rules to funerals, weddings, baptism, and birthday parties. On the other hand, when in 1970s Brazil you asked a stranger '*do you know who you're talking to*?!' (DaMatta 1991:137-189) you mobilized a Brazilian 'rite of separation' that pragmatically engulfed impersonal law with personalized hierarchies (cf. Hess 1995:8-15).

DaMatta's analysis is masterfully presented and methodologically inspiring. I suggest, however, that it misrepresents the crucial role of 'respect' in the proliferation of intimate relations. DaMatta asserts that 'respect' (*respeito*) and 'consideration' (*consideração*) a-priori and radically distinguish hierarchic order in the house from the unpredictable mess and distinct individualism of the 'street'. Ritualization of various kinds thus generates continuity and social reproduction. Contrarily, and in line with my argument in chapter two, I claim that forms of affective exchange in house and street are *initially continuous*. Thereby they require 'respect' to set them apart. Here I will focus only on 'respect' because during fieldwork only rarely did I encounter the concept of *consideração* (on this see Robben (1989), Mayblin (2010), and Rebhun (1999)).

The Man of the House: Respect and the Ethics of Responsibility

My argument entails two aspects. Firstly, although 'house' and 'street' are undoubtedly segregated as cultural categories, good social standing always predicates the expression of 'respect' as a moral code that underpins both. Subtly employing different measurements of both solidarity and deference, to which I related as proximity and distance, are essential for everyday reciprocity. Both these expressions of 'respect' therefore systematically interpenetrate both these social domains. Second and consequent, social domains are not given a-priori. Persons invigorate the imagery of 'domains' side by side with the ethical reworking of respect, as it is deployed in quotidian practice. The following ethnographic vignette elucidates these claims.

Danilo was born in the interior village (*povoado*) of São Bento in the mid-1980s to teenage parents. His mother gave birth to four more children in consecutive years. When Danilo was a five year old his father found a job in an industrial corporation in São Luís. The family then moved to São Luís and settled in Santo-Amaro. There, Danilo's mother gave birth to three more children. When Danilo was ten years of age his father suddenly died in mysterious circumstances. Danilo's mother became a 27 year-old widow with eight children to take care of. She received financial compensation from her late-husband's workplace, which she used to refurbish their tiny house. She then gave the rest of the money to Danilo's FM in the *interior*. Danilo recalled:

After he passed away... there was lots of mess (*confusão*), it was children growing up, going to school, beginning to *namorar* (date), and the responsibility for this was left on my shoulders. About two years after my father's death, my mother arranged another relationship... This guy helped in the house, paid the bills, worked and always brought back the money into the house. He always had shame towards me (*teve vergonha de mim*), I mean, he respected me, so always when I was around he was very quiet... Everybody told me – 'Danilo, now you are the man of the house. Take responsibility over whatever is happening there'.

Danilo's responsibility was even greater because his mother gave birth to two more children with her new boyfriend, who later left the house following recurrent arguments with her.

The babies were one and two years old. Without the extra salary, the economic situation in the home worsened. Conviviality had begun to resemble the competition, individualism and roguery that DaMatta's (1991:205) perspective typically associates with the 'street'. Danilo described:

Nobody worked. My mother continued to receive a very small pension. I used to come back from school and there was nothing to eat in the house. I used to take a cup of coffee, a cup of *farinha da agua*, and a cup of water, mix them, and this was my dinner[41]... I didn't have a space even to hide 10 *centavos*... I used to go over the cracks in the wall, brick-by-brick, to see if someone else (of his siblings) was hiding something. Shoes I couldn't leave, shirts. If I left anything, one of my brothers would have already worn it.

When he was 17, Danilo moved out. He slept at the community theatre in Santo-Amaro, where he had begun working as a night guard. He was still 'the man of the house' though:

From the moment I entered the theatre I left the house. I even slept at the theatre. But I kept being the man of the house: every time that there was a problem my mother used to call for me, from wherever I have been, to come and make order. When my brothers were growing up sometimes they were coming back drunk or stoned and made a mess in the house, so I used to come and put them in order. That was my role in the house, the 'wood breaker' (*quebrando pau*), and until today all of them respect me for that.

Danilo ranked his relative proximity and distance with his siblings in accordance with grades of 'respect' marking their relations. The youngest siblings – both from his biological father and those on the side of his mother – were ranked first because they take *benção* from him. Then Danilo ranked two of his sisters who he considered judicious (*juizadas*) and committed to productive life-styles. Both of them lived with their boyfriends in common-law unions and worked. Last he mentioned three of his siblings with whom he stopped talking. They included a teenage sister who got pregnant and the two brothers nearest to Danilo in age[42]. Danilo explained: '...I do not speak with them because I gave up – I said – 'this is what you want? No problem. But from now

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[41] *Farinha da Agua* is a local staple made of manioc root. It is normally eaten as a supplement to rice with fish or meat dishes. It is the one of the main sources of income in rural parts of the interior.

[42] At the time of our conversation in 2010 the sister who got pregnant was 18 years old, single, and still living with their mother. The two brothers with whom Danilo cut all contacts were on their way to delinquency.

on… do not speak to me, forget that I am your brother, and don't come into the house because I will be watching. Anything that happens here I will come to resolve as it is happening'…

Danilo said that some of his peers engaged in joking relationships with him concerning his mother's ostensibly promiscuous sexual behavior. He did not see such engagement as expressions of contempt or 'disrespect' precisely because he was accepted and treated publically by peers, neighbors and relatives as 'the man of the house'. He noted that although it is unpleasant for him to hear rumors about his mother, 'nobody speaks ill of me' (*ninguem fala mal de mim*).

The main differentiating axis between 'house' and 'street' in this narrative appears to be grounded in a discourse on 'responsibility', which stands out as praxis-oriented code of conduct locally imbricated in familial hierarchies (Jamieson 2000:312). Initially it was Danilo's father's responsibility to 'make order'. After his death, Danilo acquired and 'assumed' this responsibility, which is intrinsically associated with the house both as spatial and conceptual category. It signals a passage across social statuses here described as a property of masculinity (Lancaster 1992).

Assuming responsibility meant that Danilo earned respect/shame. Respect within the house was based on authority and distance coupled with constraining measures (or 'wood breaking'). In 'the street' Danilo gained respect that was based on demonstrations of solidarity or proximity in the form of asymmetrical joking-relations. These were forms of deference in which 'A jokes at the expense of B and B accepts the teasing good humouredly but without retaliating; or A teases B as much as he pleases and B in return teases A only a little' (Radcliffe-Brown 1940:195). In both these settings 'the expression of respect places the two people in a known position in regard to one another so that further interaction can take place in a controlled and orderly way, and uncertainties of expectation will be minimized' (Geertz 1961:19). It follows that for Danilo different *performances* of respect dynamically created and destroyed boundaries between social domains. 'Respect' itself did not define mutually-exclusive forms of relationships a-priori. It was a property of all social relations rather than a moral imperative exclusively enacted in the house.

Peter Wilson (1995) raises a similar point for Caribbean relatedness. 'Respectability' and 'reputation' refer respectively to actors' adherence to church, class and prescriptive etiquette on the one hand; and their 'good character' as ethical individuals on the other. Wilson`s point is that contestations and 'antics' always signify metaphorical egalitarianism that permeates both these types of hierarchic ranking scales. Hildred Geertz (1961) even argues that in Javanese kinship terms, 'respect' and 'familiarity' make up a scale that overcomes political power relations. She observes that the performance of 'respect', which codifies status categorization, is at time discarded as a consequence of the actual emotional reciprocity between the persons in question. They voluntarily decide to express affection and close familiarity despite social codification.

David Graeber (2007:16-24) insightfully argues that joking and avoidance relations could be thought of as complementary forms of action. Graeber argues (ibid:21) that 'the body in the domain of joking… is constituted mainly of substances – stuff flowing in or flowing out. The same could hardly be true of the body in the domain of avoidance, which is set apart from the world… while joking bodies are necessarily apiece with the world… and made up from the same sort of materials, the body in avoidance is… constructed out of property'. In this scheme 'substance' and 'property' serve as an analogy for the relations between egalitarianism and hierarchy. Graeber thus suggests that 'hierarchy' (as distance) and 'egalitarianism' (as proximity or solidarity) are properties of everyday relations readily available to be performed as systematic social values (ibid:33-4).

Following on from this point I claim that in Maranhão respect as proximity and as distance mark relations inside and outside the house. Although relational positions in the 'house' require higher expressions of reverence (as with asking *benção*); actual intimate familiarity often modifies formal expectations. A respectful action can be imagined as a moebius-strip composed simultaneously of both hierarchic and egalitarian elements. In that sense 'respect' is focused on the ethics of cordiality (viz. Holanda 1936). It becomes a flexible differentiating mechanism by which you may impede too much familiarity on the one hand and too much distance on the other.

Danilo testifies, for example, that his relations with the second group of siblings (the two married sisters) is marked by proximity, humour and equal reciprocity even though he officially took fatherly responsibility on them as they were growing up. On the other hand, notions of restriction in the *street* are latent, but existent. Ludic mock-attacks must be subtle in the sense that all actors stretch teasing only to the point beyond which transgression would imply 'disrespect' (Goffman 1971). Here respect is essential for any definition of ethical personhood at large.

In everyday life respect therefore boils down to voluntary commitment rather than consist exclusively in blind compliance. Respect is an embodied moral principle indeed associated with 'correct' social conduct, but also with personal reputation, which goes beyond masculinity and femininity (Mayblin 2010; Zigon 2007:17). 'Respect' encapsulates knowing oneself, recognizing the constructive value of social limits, and trusting that 'Others' will do the same. Evidently, rather than distinguish between mutually-exclusive social spheres, Danilo's responsibility was realized in different *situations* through the performance of respect-as-proximity and respect-as-distance.

Consequently, both 'house' and 'street' accommodate differentiated forms of affective reciprocity; at times giving precedence to vertical hierarchies and at times permitting for horizontal solidarity (Carsten 1995b). This raises a different problem. If respect is an idiom *maranhenses* continuously contest and reaffirm, how is it that the 'house' remains a stable cultural idiom (or 'key symbol') for intimate relatedness? Rather than focusing on ritualization and mediation I suggest looking at local concepts of 'dwelling' (Heidegger 1977) to begin thinking why that might be so.

'Dwelling Perspective': Continuous Relations between Houses and Streets

Tim Inglod (1995) treats the built environment as continuous with social relations and ecosystems. His 'dwelling perspective' suggests that 'people and environment are constitutive components of the same world' (Tilley 1994:23) and hence that people continuously 'dwell' in places before during and after they actually build a shelter. Ingold argues (brackets mine):

[Dwelling Perspective] means that the forms people build, whether in the imagination or on the ground, arise within the current of their involved activity, in the specific relational context of their practical engagement with their surroundings. Building… cannot be understood as a simple process of transcription, of a pre-existing design of the final product on to a raw material substance… people do not import their ideas, plans or mental representations into the world, since that the very world… is the homeland of their thoughts. Only because they already dwell therein can they think the thoughts they do (Ingold 1995:76)[43].

Inglod's 'Dwelling perspective' resonates well with local ways of thinking about houses in Maranhão. Primarily, house construction is often an open-end process, rather than a temporal passage-phase between concretely defined life-cycle statuses. Secondly, although the internal design of houses indeed articulates cosmological gradation between private and public spheres (DaMatta 1991:65-66), the movement of persons through houses always reassemble the fringes of this gradation into new forms. Third, people may 'dwell' in one part of Maranhão while physically residing elsewhere. I will now elaborate each of these points respectively.

The first point concerns the fact that construction of houses in Maranhão rarely has an end date. A local wit holds that you always know when you begin building but you never know when you will finish ('*construção a gente só sabe quando começa, não se sabe quando acaba*'). This depends on such diverse factors as cash flow, availability of materials in stores, last-minute change of plans, the number of workers, changes of house composition, municipal legislation and its oversight, or the receiving and giving of favours to/from local politicians (cf. Mayblin 2010:47-50).

For example, my friend Leonardo began building his house in 2007. He only managed to move into the still-unfinished house in 2012. Meanwhile he lived together with his wife and their three children in a makeshift compartment adjacent to his parents' house. Due to her rivalry with Leonardo's mother and the small daily intrigues this entailed, Leonardo's wife Dona Geralda was

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[43] Inglod claims that constructionist approaches diametrically propagate a 'building perspective'. In this scheme, acts of world-making (as properties of mind) always precede acts of building (as 'containers' of life-processes). Here, the cognitive organization of space predicts and constrain its material expression.

anxious to move. Leonardo, however, wanted to 'to do it right', buying the building materials unhurriedly when cash flow allowed. Here, the disagreements existing between perpendicular sets of intimate dyads directly influenced the ways by which persons imagined the final function of the slowly-emerging house. This process ultimately defined the house as the embodiment of Leonardo's dream to establish a home (*lar*), rather than being a pragmatic getaway.

Second, houses in Maranhão – both in the *interior* and in the capital city – generally contain three parts: front room, bedrooms, kitchen/garden. The front room is a semi-public space, which sometimes includes a veranda, a porch or at least a window (Robben 1989:166-174). Boys usually sleep in one space and girls in another. Parents occupy one room even if they do not sleep together on one bed. In all houses I have been, the kitchen is located in the back and it opens to a yard or garden. Until a decade ago most houses in the *interior* did not contain toilets or bathrooms. When these were installed, they were most commonly located in the garden.

Robben (1989:150-177) describes an almost identical design in Camurim, a fishing village in Bahia. Relying on practice theory (Bourdieu 1990), Robben (ibid 167) argues that 'the division of the house into three areas… and the taboos that surround their use regulate the social behaviour and social relationships of the family members. This domestic habitus determines which activities are proper in the house, where they should be exercised, and which should be carried out elsewhere'. Play, sex, cooking and eating – undertaken as private business from within the house – account for intimate reproduction. Exchange of money, transactions of goods and other forms of barter undertaken in the external margins account for economic reproduction (cf. Rebhun 1999).

Bourdieu (1990) holds that 'systems of social meanings are not just the products of action but also operate as generative principles which inform action' (Moore 1986:77-8). I think Robben dismisses this notion of regeneration, which ultimately implies that 'while the meaning given to the organization of space is context- or practice- dependent, it can also refer through association to those meanings which will be given in other contexts… actors are not unaware of the meanings and

values associated with the organization of space, and they are also in a position to choose how to invoke and reinterpreted those meanings through their actions' (Moore 1986:79).

In that sense, the phenomenology of experience within both private and public spaces defies their strict polarization. My friend Jackson, for example, once laughed at me when I complained about a guy who entered a toilet booth I was using in a bar we were in, and began urinating into the same urinary. 'Don't look for privacy here because you will not find any', he said. Or, it is common to hear others sighing of pleasure in *motels* and some of my interlocutors agree this intensifies the affective quality of *tesão*. These 'private' experiences in the 'public' domain are fairly common. As Jackson testifies, such experiences are not usually judged as exceptional.

Along the same lines, conversations in kitchens and bars are never devoid of political implications because more often than not gossip and 'rumour' leak out (Gluckman 1963, Besnier 2009). Or, persons traveling from the *interior* to the capital city (or vice-versa) at times stay for long periods with relatives. This often requires relocation of children from one room to another or other internal modifications. These visits always involve bestowals or transactions of money (Forte 2004). And finally, in all houses I know eating is not confined to the kitchen (contra Robben 1989). Eating together is a matter of special occasions (such as religious holidays) so that often persons eat alone in the living room. Affective reciprocal routine is not necessarily scrutinized by these dynamics.

The third point is that 'dwelling' locally refers to something other than physical co-presence. The word *morar* (inhabit, live-in) most commonly refers to a place of residence. Yet, persons also use the term house (*casa*) or the conjugations of the verb 'to be' (as in 'I am from') to refer to their metaphysical space of dwelling (cf. Dalakoglou 2010:766). For example, my friend Juliano and his wife, who were raised in Santo-amaro, live in a flat they own in a distant neighbourhood in São Luís. Although they have been living there for about seven years, Juliano still declares that Santo-Amaro is 'casa' and touches his heart when he does that. He works in the neighbourhood and visits his mother almost daily.

This notion also manifested in the displaying of photos of relatives and close friends on house walls side by side images of saints, Jesus Christ or Afro-Catholic iconography. For example, in our goodbye conversation elderly Dona Formosa from Guanabara asked me to send her my picture (*retrato*) so she could 'kill her longing' (*matar a saudade*). She wanted to add it on to the collection of photos of relatives presented on the shelves behind the television. My picture would then dwell therein permanently as an objectification of our intimate connection (cf. Sansi-Roca 2007).

These three points permit illustrating a scale of 'typical' houses in Maranhão. On one end I locate Seu Sansão's family-house in Santo-Amaro, which was surrounded by a high wall. You had to ring the bell and wait for someone to open, so entrance was exclusive. On the other end I locate the house in which my friend Eva's family lived (see chapter four). It was literally continuous with the 'street' since the main door was always wide-open. Here you could simply walk in.

I locate most other houses, however, somewhere in the middle. In Santo-Amaro iron-bars commonly separate the house from the street. The interior of houses is always visible and audible to some degree, so you simply need to call or clap to draw attention (cf. Prado 1995). In Guanabara doors are usually kept wide open but politeness requires clapping before entering. Everywhere in Maranhão the thin clay brick walls facilitate soundscapes that literally defy the physical distinction between house and street. Sensory stimuli such as smell and sound are just as crucial for distinguishing 'house' from or connecting it with 'street', as is visual sight (Helliwell 1996).

In chapter two I demonstrated that the circulation of men, women and children across aggregated sets of intimate relations retrospectively constitute the moral permissibility or impermissibility of affective transfer (semen, blood, milk but also of care, nurture and sentiment). Pregnancy, for example, can be seen as permissible or not depending on the situation between the couple at hand (harmonious, abusive, etc.). The 'dwelling perspective' here adds another dimension to this claim. It suggests that the fluidity of substance, affect or entire bodies is conceptually *attached* to the concrete materiality of houses; which enhance or delimit the motion

differentially. If, let us say, Seu Sansão's house spatially distinguishes moral reproduction (in the house) from a certain moral suspension in the street; Eva's house enables to imagine a single sense of moral conduct that interconnect these domains almost freely. As I hinted above, most houses stage forms of moral attachment in scales that are located between these polarities.

Thinking about 'the house' in Maranhão through grades of conceptual *and* phenomenological connectivity with 'the street' coincides with the assertion that 'dwelling' is continuous with on-going transformations of material forms, rather than a priori transfixed onto rigid categorizations (Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995:40). It is therefore possible to imagine local houses as *hubs*, through which a multiplicity of 'proximate' (egalitarian) and 'distant' (hierarchic) respect relations conceptually meet. I now turn to demonstrate this empirically.

House as Hub: The Spatial Demarcation of Intimate Familiarity

Seu Sansão was born in 1942 in the *interior* village Maraguabô. His mother had by then been a widow for six years, raising four children she had had with her late husband. She then dated (*namorou*) Sansão's father, who was known in the area as a slick womanizer. As the story goes, Seu Sansão's father had impregnated three women at the same time. He did not marry any of them. Seu Sansão's mother thus raised her five children by herself.

Around the age of puberty, Seu Sansão's brother Nelson was sent to São Luís to live with his godmother (*madrinha*) and study[44]. He returned to the region after completing five classes in São Luís, found a job as a storekeeper in the nearby village Guanabara and soon settled there with a local girl, Dona Bernardinha. Sansão and Nelson's sister, Dona do Carmo, had also moved to Guanabara and married there. At 14 Seu Sansão's sister's husband invited him to work in a *Bumba Meu Boi* festival (see chapter six) he sponsored annually on his landsite (*sitio*) in Guanabara. He told me: 'the *festa* always took place during two nights and there used to be so many people there that

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[44] Such arrangements are common in the *interior* still today. The child studies in São Luís for several years while living with relatives. In return the child works in the house as caretaker, cleaner, cook and so on.

it was scary. I liked it so I stayed to live with my sister and her husband… I (later) lived with Nelson and Bernardinha, in front of Dona Bernardinha's parents' house next to the mango tree'.

Around that time Seu Sansão began dating in secret Dona Bernardinha's younger sister Jara. Although Jara's parents initially opposed this relationship, they ceded after Jara 'revealed herself' (*se descobriu*) to Sansão[45]. Jara's father summoned Sansão for a conversation and asked whether what he had heard was true. Seu Sansão approved and 'took responsibility over Jara' (*tomei conta dela*) by committing himself to marry her. They married at Dona Jara's parents hut in a civil ceremony in 1969. In the end of 1974 Seu Sansão, Dona Jara and their two children had moved to São Luís in order to 'improve our living conditions', as Seu Sansão described it. He recalled:

We arrived to São Luís on March 16th 1975. I had approximately 400 *cruzeiros* stashed in my socks. Since Nelson and Bernardinha moved to São Luís before us, we lived for one year at their house… Then I rented a house for 10 months… I was working as a simple builder in a company and earned almost nothing, 108 *cruzeiros* per week. I later found a much better job in a huge project to build *Porto do Itaqui* (the deep water Port of Itaqui)… When I left that job I also received compensation (*indenização*) and then I could buy lots of stuff: a bed, a gas tank (*botijão*), a stove (*fogão*). Until that time we had nothing in the house, only hammocks. In 1977, when that house appeared for sale (in Santo-Amaro-MS), I bought it.

Seu Sansão then found a job in a factory as a general service-man, and in the early 1980s embarked on a freelance career as a builder (*pedreiro*). Later on he had acquired the position of *mestre de obra* (an equivalent of work manager in a construction site), administering larger-scale projects and handling larger amounts of money. Over the course of 35 years in São Luís, Seu Sansão returned to Gauanabara only three times. He kept in touch with relatives, *compadres* and friends through phone calls or when they visited in the city. Yet, he always wanted to go back. He said:

I belong more to the interior than to the city. In Guanabara it is more tranquil, everything is natural, the fish is fresh and the food is better, the *povo* (people, kindred) here are more receptive (*mais acolhedor*)… The *povo* is the most important thing that exists in our life… This is why I want to come here (Guanabara).

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[45] Elderly of the region still today use the expression 'revealed herself' to indicate loss of virginity.

In 2007 Seu Sansão retired and began planning his return to the *interior*. He planned to build his retirement house on a fraction of the territories which belonged to Dona Jara's parents, where he had set up his first hut in 1969. The area was roughly the size of one hundred and fifty hectares. Until the 1990s several huts stood there, but in 2010 only one hut remained, occupied by a single mother from Guanabara and her children. Seu Sansão compensated her financially and arranged for her to move into a nearby hut. There were several other complications though.

The first issue concerned notions of propriety rights. Traditionally the territories of Guanabara were divided between three land-owning families: the Damasco family, the Bento Family, and a third unknown owner. These latter lands were under the authority of the Brazilian Institute for Natural Resources (IBAMA). In order to gain considerable development budgets from the Federal Government, a cooperative in Guanabara claimed the collective ownership of these lands from IBAMA. One of the leaders of this organization, called Macalê, claimed that Seu Sansão's land could also be included. That meant incurring tax or other payments from Seu Sansão.

A Second issue concerned the number of potential heirs. There had been four heirs to the Damasco family lands, who were all deceased. One of them was Dona Jara's mother. Although no documents were used, it is still acceptable in Guanabara that inheritance can pass bilaterally (cf. Eduardo 1966:22). Consequently, in 2010 there were about a hundred potential heirs who could claim rights to the land. That included Dona Jara's eight siblings and their children and grandchildren, as well as all bilateral relatives *and affines* of the other three original inheritors.

The Third issue was financial. Seu Sansão had not managed to save money throughout the years and in 2009 he was merely a state-pensioner earning one minimum salary per month. He owned the house in Santo-Amaro and took pride in the fact that 'we never lacked food in the house'; but for all that mattered his purchase power was insignificant. He thus relied on his son Juliano – a small-scale businessman – to finance the project. Consequently, advancing with the plan to operative stages depended on Juliano's cash flow.

Seu Sansão first resolved the ownership issue, simply by claiming that the terrain on which Dona Jara's parents lived still belonged to the Damasco family descendants. As for the number of potential heirs, Seu Sansão reckoned that once he begun building on the land nobody would be able to remove him. The third issue did not preoccupy Seu Sansão too much. He repeated: 'I dedicated my life for my children… now it is their time to take care of me'. In December 2009 we thus set out to Guanabara to commence. The construction lasted throughout my fieldwork in 2010 and was only completed in mid-2013. Here I wish to summarize this long process briefly in order to assert that boundaries derived from 'respect' delineated Seu Sansão's house as a hub (or a meeting point) for some sets of relations while marking it as off-limits for others.

To begin, the persons involved in the construction were carefully selected. On our first trip to Guanabara Seu Sansão hired three local menial workers – Ze-Pitú, José and Almonides – who in just four days slashed and burnt the entire jungle that covered the terrain. They also destroyed the single mud hut that still stood on the site. These workers, and only they, were later on called intermittently when the 'brutal' job had to be done. The actual builders of the house, beyond Seu Sansão himself, were his *compadre* Seu Joaquim and two of his sons, Chico and Dudú.

Seu Sansão preferred manual construction methods, so that throughout the whole process no machines were utilized: the workers used only axes, hammers and machetes. Seu Sansão even calculated the levelling of the house using fishing strings and a water pipe. That was so partly because as *mestre de obras* he mastered these traditional techniques and partly because it saved him money. For example, in the first trip to Guanabara Seu Sansão had spent only 200 BRL on wages for three labourers, who performed a job equivalent to ten days' manpower. Hiring a tractor from the local municipality for one day would have cost him 300 BRL.

Seu Sansão himself drew the initial architectural draft. It was then remade in computer software by Juliano's wife Marta, who is an architect. Yet, Seu Sansão kept changing his plans. He even decided at some point to modify the proportions of the whole house and make it 12.6

centimetres wider. He ultimately had five building-plans in his hand, which were actually chasing the building process rather than the other way around. This was so because Seu Sansão applied changes without bothering to draw the drafts on the computer again. Until Marta had done that and produced new plans, several weeks could have passed.

Changes revolved around Seu sansão's intentions to increase the communal space in the house as much as possible at the expense of the size of the bedrooms. Seu Sansão wanted to make sure that the house would accommodate his four children's families during weekends and national holidays. He thus sought to instantiate the connection of the whole family to Guanabara as their *metaphysical* place of origin (cf. Tilley 1994). Conceptually the house thus acquired an atemporal dimension, truly serving as a dwelling place in which past and future generations could meet.

A more tangible plane of reference for this symbolism can be seen in the convergence of respect-relations surrounding the building process. Initially, when I asked what the basis for their friendship and co-parenthood is, Seu Sansão and Seu Joaquim decisively told me it was 'respect'. Their relationship thus included the types of affective and economic exchange delineated in chapter two as typical for high level of intimate familiarity. For example, Seu Sansão was hosted at Seu Joaquim's house. He usually left some money with Seu Joaquim and his wife Dona Lelê before leaving to São Luís and even bestowed parts of his land to Seu Joaquim, who planted manioc there. In the months Seu Sansão had spent in São Luís it was Seu Joaquim who monitored the terrain. There were multiple other contributions to the house economy in food and groceries[46].

In line with my argument in chapter two, here too there is a sense of proliferation of intimacy. For example, the menial workers were chosen due to Seu Joaquim's assertion they were trustworthy and professional. With time Seu Sansão also produced work for some of *their* kin, as

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[46] Seu Sansão's linkages with Seu Joaquim and his sons were strengthened through the construction process. For example, when Seu Sansão realized that Chico could interpret architectural plans well, he taught him how to further calculate and redesign the drafts they had in their hands. This was equivalent to initiation, as Chico could now aim for advancing his own career as a builder and become a *mestre de obra.*

with José's wife, who came to weed (*capinar*) Seu Sansão's land site and Seu Joaquim's back garden. Since economical resources in Guanabara are scarce, this was also a significant public declaration towards others that might have had certain expectations or claims from Seu Sanão. This was especially true for Seu Sansão's wife's kin, as I further detail below. Likewise, Seu Sansão was invited to national and religious commemorations that took place at Seu Joaquim's DH Iwaldo, at Cristina's parents' house and other 'aggregates'. Through time Seu Joaquim's grandchildren even began asking for blessing (*benção*) from Seu Sansão and Chico's wife Cristina began doing Seu Sansão's laundry. All these types of exchange relations reproduced respect-as-proximity.

Respect as a form of social solidarity was also used to codify Seu Sansão's own structured 'blood' relations. The only relative (*parente*) in the area with whom Seu Sansão maintained contact was a second-grade cousin called Dona Concita, who lived in a nearby town. He contrasted her to other second grade relatives, to whom he referred as 'cheeky and shameless' (*safados sem vergonha*). I accompanied Seu Sansão in his attempts to buy other materials from 'blood' relatives who owned a building-material store in a nearby town. Although meeting his cousins and their sons was informal and relaxed, Seu Sansão was disappointed with the price they offered and decided not to pursue this connection further. Seu Sansão ultimately decided to order from Dona Concita the wood for the building of his roof[47].

I mentioned above that during the course of Seu Sansão's return to Guanabara, respect-as-proximity most cogently manifested in the fact that Seu Joaquim, Chico and Dudú were hired as exclusive builders. This mostly came at the expense of Seu Sansão's WB Seu Francisco, his sons and some grandchildren, who are builders too. As the story goes, in the past Seu Sansão had worked with Seu Francsico various times and even arranged for him to meet the woman who later became his wife. Yet, he had become disappointed by what he saw as Seu Fransisco's ingratitude and was

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[47] Dona Concita and Seu Sansão have kept in touch (although irregularly) throughout the years. She thus chopped down a huge tree in her garden and gave Seu Sansão a good price. Contrarily, due to long-lasting disagreements from the distant, Seu Sansão avoided contacting other relatives living in the area. He had not had any contact with the relatives who owned the building-material store since the 1980s.

therefore reluctant to call him for work[48]. Beyond this issue Seu Sansão also knew that Seu Francisco could potentially demand rights on the land as direct heir, if he were involved in the actual building.

Although their intrigues from the past had never developed to avowed hostility, a tension remained. Seu Sansão, for example, was frustrated because Seu Francisco and his wife Dona Claudia were not being inclusive towards him. Months after the construction had begun Seu Sansão told me bitterly that Seu Francisco and Dona Clauida 'have not yet even invited me for a coffee in their house!' Seu Francisco, on the other hand, was frustrated due to the building itself. At some stage he arrived at the construction site and exclaimed: 'I was born on this terrain and my umbilical cord is buried right here in the soil, so I also have a part in this landsite'. Seu Sansão smiled and answered he would chase Seu Joaquim away with a machete if he dared invading the land. This too had not escalated to a full-fledged conflict.

Seu Sansão and Seu Francisco's relations were nevertheless based on 'respect' since boundaries were kept; Seu Sansão avoided interfering with any of Seu Francisco's business in the village and Seu Francisco did not interfere with the construction project. Note that there was no coercion involved. It was in their interest to maintain respect-as-distance partly due to their structured filiation as brothers-in-law and their distinctive obligations to Dona Jara. Both Seu Sansão and Seu Francisco had to 'swallow' their pride and be 'respectful' in order to remain ethical.

Take the following anecdote for comparison. Some years ago Macalê called Chico during a football match 'son of a bitch' (*filho d'uma egua*). Chico in response kicked Macalê in the knee and to the best of my knowledge, he does not speak to him to this very day. The point is that Macalê is Chico's mother's *compadre* (Dona Lelê is the godmother of Macalê's daughter). While Dona Lelê

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[48] Seu Sansão claimed that about ten years ago he had set up Seu Francisco and his sons with a construction job in the *interior* city of Zé-Doca. He supplied a house for them to live in for the duration of the project, as well as three meals a day. 'All it lacked was that I arrange women for them', he told me. The next time he employed Seu Francisco and his sons, however, Seu Sansão did not supply such luxuries. This allegedly resulted in Seu Francisco reclaiming these benefits from Seu Sansão and later gossiping about him.

and Macalê still converse regularly and affectionately, Chico could not withstand the metaphoric break of boundaries that signified 'disrespect'. It appears to me that Seu Sansão and Seu Francisco consciously and wisely avoided such crisis.

Ultimately, codification of 'respect' pragmatically interconnected various sets of relations revolving the emergence of Seu Sansão's house. These cut across both structured (consanguinal and affinal) kinship linkages and unstructured (amity) relations (Fortes 1969). The house has thus become a hub through which multiple sets of intimate relations conceptually met. The house thus acquired a deep symbolic value associated with its very materiality, as well as with objects and artifacts inside it. Following Susan McKinnon (1995) I will now turn to demonstrate that this 'anchors' or 'embeds' the value of dyadic intimate relations in material form.

The Making of Intimate Hubs: Anchoring Respect-Relations in Material Form

Susan McKinnon (1995:178) claims that 'the shape of houses is created through the differentiating effects of exchange'. Dealing with contrasting forms of affiliation and residence in the Tanimbar Islands of Eastern Indonesia, McKinnon argues that the tension between two kinds of possible marriage contracts – one signifying extension and the other particularization of life from its source – manifests in local conceptions of 'the house'. This reproduces social hierarchy between 'named' and 'unnamed' houses, a process to which McKinnon calls 'anchorage':

The generalization and objectification of relations (through exchange of valuables) anchors the source of life in named houses. Yet the extension of life depends upon the particularization of relations in unnamed houses… As much as the source of life must be anchored by the immobilized weight of concentrated value, the extension of life must be realized through its fluidity, mobility and lightness of being. The generalization and particularization of relations are therefore the two sides of the double movement that links sources and issue in an organic figure of growth (McKinnon 1995:183-4).

For McKinnon, houses 'anchor' this permanent tension between the particularization of past ancestors and the dispersion of future children. I borrow the term 'anchorage' since it deftly

depicts the notion of critical gravitation associated with the house in Maranhão. This imagery points out the metaphorical 'downward pull' of respect from the ether of moral convictions onto material form. By 'anchoring' I refer to acts of attachment that pragmatically include certain relations as pertinent to the spatiality of the house and exclude others. This also applies for religious and personal objects that are exhibited within houses (Sansi-Roca 2007).

There are two points in this regard. First, in Maranhão 'anchorage' may be illustrated by the fixing of religious iconography and pictures of relatives on house walls. When people move to a new house they often also call a *benzadeira/o* to bless it. Seu Francisco's buried umbilical cord also pragmatically invokes the fusion of substances as life-forces. In Mina *terreiros* anchoring is formally institutionalized under the notion of *fundamentos*; magic-elements that are buried under a stone located in the exact center of the house (cf. M. Ferretti 2000a). The stone is signified by a pentagram star. It represents the image of cosmic vitality (*axé*) that the local pai or mãe de santo can enhance through sorcery. *Terreiros* often disintegrate when their mãe/pai de santo dies but the *fundamentos* buried in them will remain powerful as containers of (quasi) infinite life force[49].

Second, as I claimed, houses in Maranhão can be imagined as conceptual hubs through which multiplicity of respect relations meet. Consequently, houses are not merely loci for the realization of structured kinship relations or the extension/reproduction of particular life sources from their nucleus. Houses also embed the quite mundane aspects of respect-as-proximity and respect-as-distance in material forms. Anchoring manifests in icons that represent the set of respect-relation at hand. In this sense some respect-relations are always given more visibility in the house and others are pushed aside or even actively concealed.

For example, Seu Sansão fenced off his terrain with barbed wire. This demarcated his 'space' of dwelling as *isomorphic* with the 'place' of his coming of age (Tilley 1994:22-26). In

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[49] There is a famous Pai de Santo in Maranhão whose *terreiro* has been demolished altogether. As the story goes, the workers could not by any means knock down one of the pillars, under which some of that Pai de Santo's 'secrets' were buried. I was told they had to call a truck with a lever winch.

parallel, Juliano bought an old wooden-wheel carriage to symbolize the humble origin of the family. The carriage was kept under Seu Joaquim's shed. Seu Joaquim was also the only person that could transgress the fence. He guarded the construction site during the months Seu Sansão had stayed in São Luís and has thus become a literal 'gatekeeper'. The fence and the carriage 'anchored' an intimate sense of respect-as-proximity existing between Seu Joaquim and Seu Sansão. Yet, it also marked out the respect-as-distance that existed between Seu Sansão and Seu Fransico.

Seu Sansão also engaged in exchange relations of money, food, labour or goods, which may be seen as practices of anchoring. For example, Seu Sansão planted an enormous vegetable and fruit garden long before the house began to take shape. He received most of the seeds, stems and cut-plants as *gifts* from friends or co-parents living both in Santo-Amaro and Guanabara. When some of the plants yielded fruits, Seu Sansão distributed the crops back amongst these friends and allies. Finally, from a phenomenological perspective, Seu Sanão's house has even become viscerally fused with bodily substances of Seu Joaquim, Seu Sansão and Chico; whose blood and sweat literally dripped into the cement of which the base of the house was erected.

An opportunity to examine these assertions comparatively came during fieldwork. One of Seu Francisco's sons, called Beckenbauer, was living with his common-law wife in a small brick house belonging to one of his brothers. At some stage Beckenbauer decided to build his own *casa* because his brother – who resided in Rio de Janeiro – planned his return to Guanabara with his wife and child. Since he lacked funds for a solid house, and since he did not want to borrow money, Beckenbauer sought to set up a mud hut, which is the cheapest kind of house he could build (locally referred to as *casa de taipa*). I summarized the building process in my field-notes:

…On a Sunday morning Beckenbauer and his wife gathered friends and several family members and lots of children. Some of the men dug quite a deep hole in the soil and others constantly watered it with a pipe. They sent buckets of moist soil up for the rest – mostly children and women – who grabbed handfuls of mud and began wedging the naked wooden skeleton. Everybody was drinking and there were jokes running around. The mood was carnivalesque but by sunset the house was completely sealed.

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Although Seu Sansão's building process did not resemble this type of communal labor, it persisted from a similar conception of sociability (cf. Eduardo 1966:20-5). In both cases selected sets of intimate relations were aggregated together as direct collaborators. Other relations were inevitably set aside. Both the open-end communal building and the close-circuit partnerships Seu Sansão cultivated were not merely ad-hoc socioeconomic arrangements. Rather, both *anchored* respect onto physical spaces that became the virtual bearers of social values (Basso 1984).

The concept of 'anchoring' challenges DaMatta's (1991) notion of displacement. 'Displacement' builds on the assumption that 'respect' in the 'house' counteracts amorphous 'disrespect' in the 'street', and that these positive and negative values must constantly be mediated. Contrarily, the notion of anchoring assumes a unified morality underpinning both these social domains, which is refracted through two kinds of respect-relations imbricated in the materiality of houses. Only through such symbolic 'anchoring' can houses actually become hubs.

Following on from this assertion, Seu Sansão's building process suggests that the 'house' in low-income Maranhão (*casa*) is a cultural symbol by which people locally objectify aggregated sets of social relations. 'House' combines three moral planes of reference that pertain to: (1) juridical principles delineating formal inclusion (descent/inheritance, affiliation, ritual kinship, etc.); (2) co-residence as corporate group; and (3) an emotional or intimate community stretching across social domains. This immediately evokes Lévi-Strauss' (1999[1982] and 1987) notion of 'house societies'.

The House as a Medium for the Circulation of Values

Focusing mainly on the Kwakiutl of Southwest Canada and Feudal European Noble houses, Lévi-Strauss (1999:180) claims that in both cases 'a dialectic of filiation and residence constitutes a common feature'. In the Kwakiutl case this manifests in the practice of both exogamous and endogamous marriages so that both matrilineal and patrilineal descent are practiced. Among European Nobles this manifests in the practice of marriages 'very distant and very near' (ibid 183). Lévi-Strauss argues that the 'house' in these societies 'transfixes' such incompatibilities:

Lévi-Strauss draws attention to the fact that, as social institution, the house combines together a series of opposing principles or social forms such as filiation/residence, patri-/matri-lineal descent, hypergamy/hypogamy, close/distant marriage, which traditional kinship theory often treats as being mutually exclusive… 'Transfixing' an unstable union, transcending the opposition between wife-givers and wife-takers and between descent and alliance, the house as institution is an illusory objectification of the unstable relation of alliance to which it lends solidity (Carsten and Hugh-Johns 1995:8, original quotations).

For Lévi-Strauss 'house societies' occupy an intermediary position between kinship-based and market-based social structures. McKinnon (1995) criticizes this implicit evolutionary framework, claiming that societies are always governed by internal logics. McKinnon (1995:187-8) insists that houses do not merely permit 'antagonistic principles' to cohabit. Rather, they explicitly articulate a dynamic process by which contrasting social forms *implicate each other* (cf. Smedal 2011:272)[50]. This assertion can be applied for the case of Maranhão. Contrasting social forms locally manifest in the proliferation of intimate relations and their intrinsic thwarting in durable hierarchic structures. Respect-as-proximity and respect-as-distance come to implicate each other in this dynamic because they are always practiced in and around reference to house affiliation.

Following from this stance, it is possible to claim that in Maranhão respect can be imagined as a metaphorical 'currency' or a grain of wealth, which may be 'stored' in different ways so that its social value is realized in different forms. I here allude to David Graeber (2001:75-83), who offers a scale by which to think about the circulation of values. It ranges from fleeting performances to concrete 'storage' in tangible objects. While money fixates and reflects permanent value through time, performance cannot essentially be transferred and consumed later on. In this latter case 'there can be no distinction between circulation and realization (of values)' (Grabaer 2001:78, brackets mine). The ethnography presented above thus seems to suggest that depending on the context, in Maranhão it is possible to think about respect as a social value that is both performed

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[50] It is crucial to note that Lévi-Strauss primarily pointed out to the fact that in house societies certain organizing elements associated with genealogical classification are fused with notions of status and wealth generally associated with class-based stratification (Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995:9).

(e.g. expositions of proximity and distance) and anchored in objects. In that sense respect becomes indispensable for the proliferation of intimacy, which is dialectically performed (in the street) and 'stored' (in the house).

This claim goes against DaMatta's model, which portrays responsibility, accountability and judgment (*juízo*) within the 'house' as well-structured triadic values organized diametrically against disinterestedness, carelessness, neglect or other expressions of uninhibited misconduct towards kin. For DaMatta, responsibility is a social *obligation* so that failure to reproduce it results in negative sanctions. In this scheme the positively valued must always encompass and contain the negative (viz. Dumont 1980) so that house and its personalized routine will always morally win over the street and its supposed alienation (DaMatta 1991:147-9)[51]. Yet, when sociality is imagined as simultaneously 'totalizing' and 'detotalizing', the binary distinction that DaMatta employs may be discarded analytically. Values associated with respect keep 'totalizing' familial intimacy through material symbols while detotalizing it through social performances.

Totalization and detotalization of intimate relations in Maranhão thus implicate each other in local conviviality. On the one hand I described an open-end house-sociality predicated on affective knowledge, which I called 'respect as proximity'. In this scheme the transfer of affects, substances, essences and consequent economical exchange are conceptually limitless. On the other hand, I described a closed-end house-sociality predicated on hierarchy and deference, which I called 'respect as distance'. In this scheme affective interchange is delimited in form and content to differentiate grades of intimate relations that are interconnected mainly by degrees of measured distance. As the process of Seu Sansão's return to Guanabara suggests, people practice both these social forms in the mundane actions characterizing house conviviality. The house thus supplies a tangible space for the values associated with ethical personhood to circulate.

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[51] Scheper-Hughes (1992), for examples, describes a teenage girl who was arrested for having thrown her baby to the river. Persons passing by her cell window severely condemned her as immoral, murdering mother. Scheper-Hughes juxtaposes that to the relative tolerance in 1980s northeast Brazil toward neglect of some infants who were considered to be angels. At times this culminated in the infant's death.

Conclusion

Having a 'family' in Maranhão, which usually entails marriage and children, is locally seen as a 'base' for the realization of larger scope life-projects. Yet, as I suggested in chapter one, families may include various types of aggregates. Building on this ethnographic material, and adopting some of Roberto DaMatta's (1991) claims, I argued that it is not the 'family' as such that demarcates relatedness in Maranhão. Rather, it is the house. This claim challenges the idea that the values associated with personhood on the Brazilian margins pertain exclusively to the territories of the self (Hautzinger 2007). The house in Maranhão therefore remains a core cultural category due to its spatiality as it relates to the ethics of conviviality. In this scheme, *maranhenses* are pristine 'dwellers' rather than primordial 'builders' (Ingold 1995).

The ethnographic context I presented at the onset of this thesis should now be thoroughly clear. A double movement of core moral injunctions in Maranhão – one focused on particularizing deference, respect and self-constrain and the other on distributing affective investments in others – underlies local conceptions of kinship. The intimacy associated with close-relations is dialectically totalized and detotalized in the making of relatedness. While affective transfer disperses the value of individual autonomy, mundane demonstrations of respect concretize degrees of intimate proximity and distance through the performance of ethical personhood.

In the next chapter I will demonstrate that institutional forms of play in Maranhão are key aspects in this dynamic. Local play-forms allow persons to produce spaces of invisibility, by which actions that challenge core social values (such as fidelity, respect and honesty) are provisionally concealed. Going beyond affect theory, and by way of negating the tiresome debate about inherited hierarchic power structures on the Brazilian periphery, I will try to show that in contemporary Maranhão any attempt at theorizing intimate relations must advance with a thorough contextualization of the notion of play.

Chapter Four: Play and Spaces of Invisibility in the Making of Relatedness

The Advent of Play in Maranhão

Especially salient amongst men during drinking sessions, the banter of double-meaning catch-phrases (or: *pegadinha*s) usually revolved around clever linguistic traps contingent on homoerotic attributions. The rules of the game were simple: you must never say or do anything that might represent you as gay. For example, during a small-talk someone would ask his interlocutor 'which team do you support' using a combination of syllables that could also mean 'who stuck you up'[52]. This mode of riddle-play (Huizinga 2000:105-119) was often expanded to other latent sexual implications, turning on creative use of phallic objects; above-under inversions; culinary metaphors; and an elaborate arsenal of tropes concerning relative hardness and softness of things. Once, for example, a friend of mine asked his sister why she dated a certain person. 'It's his *cabeça,* isn't it?' He commented ironically[53]. They both rocked with laughter.

Richard Parker (1991) claims that eroticized linguistic tropes in Brazilian society symbolically transgress the ideological premises of a dominant patriarchal moral order. He refers to this as '*sacanagem'* (ibid:54), a term with strong erotic connotations that translates somewhere between 'libertine' and 'lewd'. According to Parker (ibid), *sacanaem* represents that which is out of place, dirty, or unethical; and thus constitutes a realm of practice beyond the visible repressions of moralistic sexuality (Chauí 1984). My research interlocutors indeed sometimes referred to sexualized joking-relations as *sacanagem* or *putaria* (trashy, vulgar)*.* More common, however, was the idiom *fuleiragem*, which best translates somewhere between 'tacky' and 'irresponsible'. As opposed to the figure of the *malandro* (trickster) – who slyly and cunningly subverts power asymmetries in his/her favor (Cândido 1970) – the *fuleiro/a* simply demonstrates sloppy carelessness towards polity, social refinement and the 'serious' rules of everyday life.

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[52] 'Que time é teu' (literally 'which team is yours') Vs. 'Quem te Meteu' (literally 'who messed up with you').

[53] *Cabeça* is 'head', which in this context could mean the guy's 'brains' or the tip of his penis.

The point is that while *sacanagem* and *putaria* are considered disrespectful, '*fuleiragem'* is tolerated as mere humorous distaste. For example, my friend Chico from Guanabara used to call elderly Seu Jurandir 'my father-in-law' (*meu sogro*). Seu Jurandir is of Chico's parents' generation. When he happened to pass next to Chico's house, Chico would greet him and threaten he would 'abduct the brunette' (*morena*); Seu Jurandir's 20 years old daughter, who at the time was the girlfriend of Chico's colleague Lucinaldo. Chico himself defined such form of joking relations as *fuleiragem*, which represented both the consequence and the constituent of intimate familiarity.

Persons also commonly referred to such buffoonery by the more neutral and positively laden term 'play' (*brincadeira*). Intense joking relations were thus qualified as a legitimate interaction located *within* the etiquette of mundane practice. For, the term 'play' (*brincar*) in Brazil 'may also mean to 'enter into relationship' by breaking down the barriers between social positions, to create an atmosphere of unreality and to superimpose it on real life. When we 'play'… we dramatize relations, possibilities, desires and social positions' (DaMatta 1991:109-110, original quotes). By 'dramatizing' DaMatta crucially recognizes that play is not always inclusive. Once I visited Carlos' *terreiro*, for example, and was 'caught in play' (Stromberg 2009) when some of the *batezeiros* (drummers) engaged with me in joking relations that bordered on malice. They were calling me a 'Portuguese', which locally means a dumbbell or an imbecile. Although they were smiling and laughing, they projected a menacing prospect that I could not ignore.

The fact that at times playful behavior also communicates threat suggests that play is an extremely malleable mode of action through which persons may comment on the foundational principles of social order, as well as the inherently uncontrollable nature of the cosmos (Handelman 1998:64, Fink 1968). Taking this assertion as my point of departure, I contend that *brincadeira* and *fuleiragem* in Maranhão are more than mere 'fun', venting-out mechanisms or late-modern libertinism. I argue that play locally recurs as the ethical threshold through which persons weld the affective force of intersubjective relations with the moral contours of social organization.

'Morality Play' in Maranhão

Going beyond Huizinga's (2000) model, Roger Caillois (2001) offers a typology of four main types of play: competition (*agôn*), chance (*alea*), simulation (*mimicry*) and vertigo (*ilinx*)[54]. Caillois (2001:14-26) claims that instituted games and popular festive characteristically include at least one of these forms of play as dominant. Basketball, boxing, and football, for example, are classic *ogôn* games where winning is a foundational value; roulette, lottery or card games are the epitomes of *alea* games, emphasizing luck and eschatological linkages with untamed forces; karaoke, carnivalesque inversions and online sociality characterize *mimicry* games (cf. Long 2013); while bungee jumping, rock climbing and parkour typically exemplify *ilinx* (or whirlpool) games.

The life cycle in Maranhão is replete with demarcated zones of play that present a combination of these elements. Amongst children, *agôn, mimcry* and *alea* locally manifest in games such as 'falling-kite-has-no-owner' (*papagáio caido*), round-about games (*brincadeira de roda*) or 'fall in the well' (*cái no poço*)[55]. Grown-ups commonly articulate *ilinx* play in drinking session and couple-dance parties, most popularly to the rhythms of *brega*, *forró* or *reggae*[56]. *Alea* play is also salient in webs of lies some men and women weave only to keep two erotic relationships going at the same time. *Mimicry* intrinsically characterizes the play of seduction, which also often includes invention and deception (Shapiro 2011a). In these types of games, 'fun' is often defined by the 'serious' consequences play may entangle. For example, children who steal a kite that was shot-down by others are seen as untrustworthy. Or, dancing too close with an unknown dance partner could evoke gossip that might reach spouses and cause arguments (*brigas*) between couples.

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[54] I related to Huizinga's (2000) analysis in the introduction. He argues that play is an activity that is (1) free, (2) separate, (3) uncertain, (4) unregulated, (5) symbolic, and (6) fictive (cf. Caillois 2001:43).

[55] Children play kite-wars after gluing shards of glass to the strings. The aim is to cut someone else's string and run to get the falling kite. Round-about games are childhood mythology in Maranhão, but they are not played since the 1990s, to the best of my knowledge. 'Fall in the well' is a puberty kiss-in-the-mouth game.

[56] There are different bodily movements and steps characterizing each of these one-to-one dance styles. Play here consists in a mixture of Caillois' four types, for the *festa* also often go hand in hand with heavy drinking, seduction, competition over romantic conquest, and sexual arousal. Note that reggae in Maranhão is a huge cultural phenomenon on which I cannot elaborate here. Being a reggae fan – *reggeiro* – is a local category that in the last three decades has been associated with class and race issues. In São Luís city centre vendors sell t-shirts declaring Maranhão to be 'Brazilian Jamaica'. See also Silva (1995).

Even during established local *brincadeiras*, 'fun' and 'serious' moral messages intertwine. This is especially true for the dance performance of *Cacuriá*, the exuberating drum beats of *Tambor de Crioula*, the effervescence of *carnaval* and the annual spectacle of *Bumba Meu Boi* (cf. Reis 2003 and chapter six). In the case of Cacuriá and Tambor de Crioula, what being celebrated is 'the unique folklore of Maranhão' (S. Ferretti 1998) as well as a sense of Afro-Brazilian pride in face of continuous marginalization[57]. *Carnaval* is a play by which *maranhenses* 'show themselves that even under the most trying circumstances they can manage the chaos of self and society, thereby assuaging their feelings of vulnerability to the powerful, to the violence in the streets, and to their own resentment engendered by the sociocultural conditions in which they live' (Linger 1992:95).

The annual commemorations of the Bumba Boi festival are directly linked with Catholic Saint-Day (Lima 1998). My friend Cliff, for example, recalled standing on a stage after São João parade (24th of June) when he was six years of age, wearing an angel's costume stitched with white wings. He lit there a candle to fulfill his mother's promise to São João, who cured Cliff from pneumonia. Or, elderly Dona Lurdes from Santo-Amaro once told me of '*simpatia*', a do-it-yourself divinatory technique for a good wedding arrangement. During the period of the Bumba Boi festival in the *interior*, young men and women used to pierce a banana leaf with a knife and pull it out while rotating their wrists anti-clockwise. This left a mark in a shape of a letter, which represented the initials of the future husband or wife of the practitioner. And finally, during the Bumba Boi festival, dance groups from different regions in Maranhão 'seriously' historicize post-slavery sociality by re-enacting a foundation myth (see chapter six).

Play simultaneously questions and reaffirms such moral issues as familial responsibilities, the legitimate fulfillment of sexual desire, and identity politics (Bateson 2000). It is precisely this ambivalence that makes play an important educational apparatus that *generates* ethical reflection, rather than a mere diversion from such activity. The following example illustrates this claim.

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[57] Both these performances are sensual dance styles vernacular to Maranhão. Cacuriá is performed annually in June during the São João Period (which coincides with the June Festivals in other states in Northeast Brazil). It is enacted by dance groups composed mostly of teenagers. Tambor de Crioula is performed all year round, though nowadays mostly as a tourist attraction in the Historical Centre (*Reviver*) of São Luís.

Once, when I was taking a haircut on a veranda of a house in Guanabara, a neighbor called Marcelo grinned at four years old Haroldo, who was hanging about in the yard. 'Hey Haroldo', Marcelo lisped in a childish voice, 'where is the *cassorro*? Is the *cassorro* angrier than the *cassorra*?'[58] Adults that sat on the veranda laughed as Marcelo amusingly repeated the joke. Haroldo looked back at him with a wondering smile. He may not have fully understood the mockery ingrained in Marcelo's speech-act, but through the playful ambivalence it projected Haroldo could capture the ways by which his own baby-speech might impinge on his public image.

Jean Briggs (1998:62-3) describes a similar scene among the Qipisa Inuit in Baffin Island, whereby three years old Chubby Maata is encouraged to play out her 'babyness' by her mother Luísa. Chubby Maata does that by deliberately mispronouncing some words. Briggs claims that local toddlers learn in this way to present a playful behavior in order for their demands to be negotiated socially. Briggs (ibid) shows that when Qipisa adults alternate between 'clear' and 'ambivalent' messages they exercise an educational principle, by which they 'cause someone to think' (ibid:66).

Briggs (1998:67-8) calls this exercise 'morality play', which plunks Chubby Maata down in a concrete, often frightening situation, in which she is pulled in different directions. It then demands of her a response. What is being instilled through play is not an adherence to a rigid moral code concerning 'proper' behaviour, or other kinds of virtuous emulation. Rather, it is the pragmatic ability to *navigate* a difficult situation characterized by contrasting moral injunctions. This is done by thinking through and acting out the various levels of self-presentation that constitute the image of ethical personhood in the public sphere. 'Morality play' thus becomes a pragmatic exercise in social ethics: it entails commitments to general reproductive values side by side with indulgence in perfromative techniques that mock (or at least challenge) the premises of these values.

As Haroldo's case suggests, play with children in Maranhão similarly includes an ethical or educational gist. This locally entails the oftentimes paradoxical use of imperative language, which

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[58] 'Dog' is '*cachorro*' and a bitch is '*cachorra*'. Marcelo deliberately mispronounced these words as '*cassorro*' and '*cassorra*' to mimic Haroldo's innocent mistakes.

obscures boundaries rather than emphasizes them. For example, my friend Caetano once delightfully told me of how his parents used to make him reflect on his mischievous behaviour when he was a child. Although at times he was punished for being 'disrespectful' (see chapter three), sometimes a responsible adult would just scold him: 'I am only going to tell you one thing; I am not telling you anything!'[59] As with alternations between 'serious' and 'playful' messages, this type of double-standard emphasizes agility of thought, contemplation, and double-perspective.

Both in Santo-Amaro and Guanabara parents still engage in 'morality play' with their children, by way of making them 'think'. They thus enhance the innate changeability of play, during which 'a phenomenon is one thing and another simultaneously, therefore at one and the same time it is both, and so it may be neither' (Handelman 1998:68; cf. Anchor 1978:87). This ambiguity makes play a potent medium by which persons dialectically illustrate *and* obscure boundaries between sense and nonsense, dogma and antic, precariousness and steadfastness, reality and fantasy, movement and constancy (Fink 1968, Stromberg 2009). Everyday play-forms (such as joking relations) thus offer a certain fluidity in social relations that enables managing difficult or confusing situations (Lévi-Strauss 1966:30-3; Jackson 1998).

My point is that in Maranhão explicit play-forms are intensely entwined with 'serious' activities, whether these are enacted in the midst of popular public events or throughout the flow of everyday life. Conditioning play through the uncertainty of ridicule, mimicry and double standard – or through chance, competition and vertigo – locally exposes the porous boundaries between a 'serious' breach of core social values and 'non-serious' reproduction of cultural intimacy (Herzfeld 2005:52, Handelman 1998). The inclusion of play in routinized practice entails the exercise of practical judgment (Bourdieu 1990, Fassin 2012), by which persons navigate the emotional and moral conundrums of intimate relations. In the next section I will begin to unpack this claim by focusing on forms of play and deception characterizing conjugal relations in Maranahão.

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[59] '*Só vou te dizer uma coisa; Não te digo nada!*'

Desire, Seduction and 'Betrayal': Play in Conjugal Contestations

One Saturday morning I sat at a street bar with my friends Jackson and Alberto. We started drinking early and at some stage had a conversation about infidelity. Jackson exclaimed:

The loyal wife doesn't exist! She can be whoever, an Evangelical and everything, put any woman in front of me and I will find a way to 'get' her… Sometimes it may be difficult, but there isn't such thing as a woman who doesn't want. She can be married, she can have children or not, it doesn't matter… (this is so since) betrayal (*traição*) is not physical, it is spiritual. For example, you sit here with your wife and all of a sudden she desires Alberto since he has something attractive in him... This is already a betrayal…

A street vender in Santo-Amaro called Seu Ednardo once taught me a satirical rhyme dealing with this contested dynamic: 'Maranhão is a good land/ a land given to us by God/ during the day it lacks water/ during the night it lacks energy…/ and in the house that there isn't a *corno* (cuckold)/ it is due to the negligence of Jesus'[60]. This rhyme contributes eventual fidelity to erroneous divine negligence while institutionalizing sexual infidelity as part and parcel of the nature of passionate relationships in Maranhão. Seu Ednardo reiterated the humorous neologism '*cachimblema*' to account for this cultural reality (*cachaça* [Brazilian rum], *chifres* [a cuckold's horns] and *problema*). Jackson once explained the practicalities of such convictions:

Let's say a woman goes into the bank to pay a bill. And let's say that all-of-a-sudden (*de repente*) she meets a man waiting in the queue. He opens a conversation with her and all-of-a-sudden he writes his telephone number and gives it to her. And let's say that when that woman got back home she had a fight with her husband. She is sad and upset and all-of-a-sudden she calls the number that the man from the bank left in her hands. So several days later she already meets the man for lunch. The man is shrewd (*esperto*), and he knows how to talk. A week later they meet again and by this time they are *already* 'together' (*ficando*).

Here, sadness and anger essentially destabilize the cohesiveness of marital commitments while affective investment during an 'innocent' conversation in the bank retrospectively transforms inhibitions against infidelity into personalized biases that encourage it. Jackson's hypotheses about

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[60] *Maranhão é terra boa/terra que Deus nós conduz - De dia falta água/de noite falta luz... E se há uma casa que não tem um corno/É um descuido de Jesus.*

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what could happen 'all-of-a-sudden' owing to just a little bit of playful agency are shared knowledge in Santo-Amaro, so that 'betrayal' is considered merely a question of circumstance. 'When the situation allows', told me Caetano, 'anyone would be tempted'[61].

My friends and interlocutors in Maranhão conceive of infidelity as perpetuating a danger to structured conjugal arrangements. My friend Eva humorously exemplified this logic. 'It is never only the tip' (*nunca é só a cabeça*), she laughed. This popular joke draws on an hypothetical situation of a man trying to convince his new girlfriend that he only wants to introduce the 'tip' of his penis into her vagina, rather than the whole thing. The explicit imagery of penetration leaves no room for mistakes: seductive elicitations go deep, and an ethical sense is required to administer these elicitations wisely. The following drinking toast, which I recorded during the pilot study, further elucidates this point. I sat at a street bar when a group of teenage girls recited:

A toast for us women, the bearers of seduction, which no idle man is capable of destroying. That our men stay ours, that other women's men be ours as well, that those men never go back to them. If this should happen, they shall become impotent. I drink because in the bottom of this glass I see stamped the picture of a loved man; may he drown to death, the wretched bum. May our fountain not dry-up and our mother-in-law never be called 'hope'; because hope is the *last* to die. And, from the age of 13 we take everything. For a man serves only 3 purposes: paying the bills, carrying the suitcase and growing a cuckold's horns[62].

This toast condenses together intimate family ties, eroticized courting maneuvers and the heroic womanly canniness that is required to weave them together. It suggests that those seductive powers that are embedded in women – their 'fountain' – are to be operated by the

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[61] I do not think there is a gender bias here. I once asked a female friend of mine how many of her girl-friends did not 'betray' their respective husbands or boyfriends. After contemplation she replied that as far as she knows all of her friends have 'betrayed' at some stage or another. A hairdresser called Dona Raimunda also told me in length of the various stories of 'betrayal' her female clients tell her 'confidentially'.

[62] The Portuguese version is: '*Um brinde à nós mulheres, portadoras da sedução, que nenhum homem vagabundo é capaz de destruir. Que os nossos sejam nossos, que os delas sejam nossos, que nunca venham a ser delas. Se for para ser, que broxem. Eu bebo porque vejo estampada no fundo desse copo a foto do homem amado, morre afogado, vagabundo desgraçado. Que nossa fonte nunca seque e nossa sogra não se chama esperança, porque esperança é a ultima que morre. E a partir de 13 anos estamos pegando tudo, porque homem só tem três utilidades – pagar conta, carregar a mala e levar chifres*'.

incitement of adulterous competition between women *over* men. An ironic discursive utterance in Santo-Amaro in that regard is that women dress up for other women rather than for men. Since the toast constitutes fidelity as utopian, women's sexual favours are tested against utility, which intertwines (female) insubordinate sexuality with material affluence. Seduction thus arises here as a form of play that attenuates networks of relatedness by the all-consuming power of desire.

Yet, the play of seduction here is both an embodied trait naturally carried by women; and a *doxa* that is enacted by men. This dialectic outlines the differential social trajectories both men and women are expected to follow as they engender sets of intimate relations. On the one hand they should assume the position of epic, reckless lovers; whereas on the other hand they must be responsible husbands and wives, in-laws etc.[63] My friend Renata said that these two modalities of personhood and relatedness often clash, making it difficult to reconcile the role of a seductive lover with the role of a housewife, who is also the main educator of the children. The all-pervading force of seduction and notions of fidelity thus remain in constant tension. Renata said that 'frustration' might lead some women to pursue adventures 'outside' the conjugal arrangement.

Due to this tension 'betrayal' itself becomes a form of play, which impinges on established matrimonial relations by introducing a tacit measure of uncertainty into them. For example, a female interlocutor told me that a romantic relationship (*namoro*) did not even require liking the *namorado* (boyfriend) and described *namoro* as a perpetual game of mistrust! This posits a local problem that requires attention. By 'problem' I do not mean that seduction or infidelity threaten hegemonic images of 'masculinities' and 'femininities' (de Almeida 1996, Hautzinger 2007). I mean that infidelity (namely, its sudden visibility rather than actual transgression) gives precedence to the proliferation of intimacy over the anchoring of relations in the fixed symbolism of the house. This tension is culturally inscribed in playful performances of control, as I now turn to demonstrate.

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[63] Hautzinger (2007) argues that at times older women are the source of younger women's subordination and abuse within the extended-family house. She thus provides a fascinating glimpse into the complex relations between the *sogra* (mother-in-law) and the bride/girlfriend, so cogently presented in this drinking toast. See also Rebhun (1999) on the notion of transforming models of love-images in Northeast Brazil.

Performances of Control: Ethics and the Restricting Power of *Ciúmes*

The 'play-form' of betrayal in Maranhão is a serious business. Gossip circulates in bars and kitchens, suggesting that a good spouse should always keep an eye open and publically display *ciúmes* to secure marital fidelity. *Ciúme(s)* translates as jealousy or envy. In Portuguese it means: 'painful sentiment owing to the exigencies of an unquiet love; the desire to possess the beloved person; the suspicion of or the certainty that a spouse's infidelity may come about; competition, rivalry' (Novo Dicionário Aurelio 2010). I will use the original Portuguese so to maintain its double-edged meaning, indicating simultaneously the possessing of and caring for a person.

In the context of Santo-Amaro, *ciúmes* usually denote intolerance towards any sign of transgression. For example, many of my friends, men and women alike, read their spouses' text messages and survey the dialled numbers on their mobile phones. I even know a guy who broke into his girlfriend's email account after the 2010 *carnaval* because he suspected she was being unfaithful to him. He found out he was right. I also know a woman who kept ringing her common-law husband literally every half an hour while he was out in town drinking with his friends. Although *ciúmes* is sometimes regarded as obsessive or exaggerated, in most cases it is considered to be a 'healthy' (*saudável*) element of romantic relations. As Renata cogently explained: '*ciúmes* is coupled with sentiment, it only happens when the person likes (you). When it is not sick (*doentil*), *ciúmes* is really cool. For example, you go out with your boyfriend… and you see that he gives attention to someone else... This is a good sentiment that you do not even have to show…'

Despite this positive aspect of *ciúmes*, both men and women attempt to sustain at least the public appearance of fidelity. This is so partly because elaborate networks of informers effectively extend supervision to the public sphere. For example, a friend once recounted how he refrained from talking to a woman who was staring at him on the bus, only to find out later that that woman was a 'colleague' of his wife who was 'testing' his fidelity. Surveillance, gossip and contestation even go beyond conjugal arrangements. For example, an interlocutor called Iara felt *ciúmes* towards her mother, which mirrored the *ciúmes* her mother felt for Iara's father. Iara said:

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…Once my father had a case with a woman… My neighbour saw them together in the car and told me… So I took a small knife… and asked my brother in law (*cunhado*) to come with me. We arrived to her house and I told her the truth: 'if you don't dump (*largar*) my father I will beat you up wherever and whenever I encounter you'… I did it because I don't like to see my mother suffer… This is what happens when you are with *ciúmes* – on the one hand you like (the person) and on the other hand you suffer.

Iara said that what complicated the affair was not infidelity itself but the fact it had become explicit. While her father tried to conceal prior 'cases' (*casos*), he assumed public status with that particular lover. People began to 'comment', as Iara put it, which made such disclosure disrespectful towards Iara's mother. By exhibiting *ciúmes* Iara contrasted the potentially destructive consequences of disrespect, thus taming and reducing its detotalizing efficacy. C*iúmes* here ultimately enables 'taking control' over the situation, as Renata told me:

Here nobody demonstrates real sentiments: even the elderly taught us never to say to a man that we really like him because later on he will use it as a weapon against you, so he could control you. That is why so many people think that it is easier to pretend (*fingir*). You only reveal real sentiments when you know that the other person feels more for you than you for him. This way you already know that you are in control.

Renata seems to claim that personal integrity turning on 'control' is achieved by make-believe performance, whose sole aim is to deceive and manipulate. It would be wrong, however, to assume that 'pretention' (*fingir*) is detached from 'real sentiments' (ibid). Firstly, this is so because control-play invites interlocutors to *really* perform back (Schieffelin 1985 and 1998:197-8). For example, when Dona Maria talks to me in the *terreiro* I must 'pretend' she is *Dona Maria* rather than Carlos in disguise. If I am not to negate the 'seriousness' of the situation – and thereby treat Carlos as a charlatan – I too must 'embrace a role' in order to act ethically (Goffman 1961:106). Secondly, through control-play persons *really* establish new ethical criteria after core social values were challenged (Zigon 2013). C*iúmes*, for example, enforces moral indebtedness after 'betrayal' renounced values associated with familial responsibilities. It thus 'recalibrates' (Lambek 2010b:55) the breached ethical register by invoking the moral force of conjugal commitments.

I therefore contend that once 'pretending' becomes the rule of thumb it loses its deceptive sting; for it is considered an *expected* form of interaction that entails real ethical consequences. Although they always inform mundane decision making, idealized social values (such as love or respect) are in that sense reformed and fragmented into new ethical configurations through various types of play. By this I mean that play *redefines* the ethical drift of interaction, as well as the possibilities for conformity or defiance. The following example further elucidates this claim.

In her monograph on love in Northeast Brazil, Linda-Anne Rebhun (1999:29) argues that emotions are playful both in the sense that they can be utterly spontaneous (i.e. they play on you) and that they may be performed (i.e. you play them out). Rebhun (1999) explicate that with a case of two women who had had an attack of *nervos* ('nerves') upon discovering their respective husbands' infidelities[64]. She argues that these women 'deep acted' (Hochschild 1983) in order to self-inflict medical symptoms onto their bodies. This created a scandal, which publically revealed the social positions these women and their husbands occupied in a 'web of emotionally charged relations' (Rebhun 1999:34) that included relatives, friends, and neighbours. Rebhun argues:

Like children's play, adult play is characterized by flow… Attempts at manipulation are forays that, if effective, bring forth further attempts on the new situation created; if not effective, they require regrouping for the consideration of new tactics. The actual social situation constructed is a fluid result of multiple, competing attempts at construal as well as competing points of view (Rebhun 1999:34-5).

Rebhun correctly emphasizes that play is inherently relational (Bateson 2000). I contest, however, her association of vertigo play (Caillois 2001) like *nervos* with tactical manipulation[65]. Here *nervos* is considered a conscious vehicle by which persons detract from or add to fixed moral

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[64] *Nervos* translates as 'nerves'. Rebhun treats this as a 'folk medical symptom' compared with *susto, peito aberto* and other 'culturally bound syndromes' (cf. Mayblin 2010:76). Yet, '*susto*', '*nervos*', 'panic attacks' or 'depression' are primarily tropes. All somatic manifestations of emotional distress are 'cultural syndromes' that regard. I do not see how Euro-American forensic definitions encompass these multiple tropes.

[65] Rebhun claims that her interlocutors manipulated emotional communication as instruments of power (Lutz 1986:288). This builds on the cultural distinction in Brazilian Portuguese between actively experienced emotions that denote elicitation (*emoção*, *sentimento*) and passive sentiments that denote unwitting 'capture' by certain affective states (*paixão*, *exitação*).

convictions. Consequently, Rebhun *reduces* play to something that merely serves prevailing binary oppositions. These turn on the positive and negative values associated with familial responsibilities and their breach (Wilson 1995). The fluidity and process of play are subsumed within the omnipresent authority of a structured 'moral order', which is seen as rigid, constant and impelling.

But morality does not consist merely in representations of such ideals as good and evil, right and wrong, or in regulative social norms (Laidlaw 2002). I already demonstrated, for example, that *ciúmes* is an ethical action in its own right that averts these polarizations, projecting at once the caring for and the possessing of another person. Surely, the possible continuity between a 'serious' health problem and a 'harmless' scandal impinged on the ethical character of the *nervos* event. *Nervos* could have been one thing and another, both, or maybe neither (Handleman 1998). Under this framework the efficacy of *nervos* as it was played out was inseparable from its elusiveness. As Michael Jackson (1998:28-9, original quotes) argues:

The existential imperative to exercise choice in and control over one's life is grounded in play. If life is conceived as a game, then it slips and slides between a slavish adherence to the rules and a desire to play fast and loose with them. Play enables us to renegotiate the given, experiment with the alternative, imagine how things might be otherwise… What we call freedom is found in our ability to gainsay and invent, to countermand in our actions and imagination the situations that appear to circumscribe, rule, and define us.

This inherent transmutability of play also applies to the ways women and men in Maranhão get 'caught up' in love-magic; the 'pretentions' of seduction and the bickering of *ciúmes*. The intrinsic capacity of play-forms to obscure social boundaries (Douglas 1975:148-9) suggests that just as much as 'control' is strategically used to reinstate 'moral order' it may also relativize that order (Baecker 2001:60). After all, through *ciúmes* Iara appears at once as the loving daughter and the aggressive bully. Or, due to 'pretentions' Renata appears at once as strong and weak. Only by thinking through this dialectic, the local force of these forms of play may be presented in its full complexity. It is to this task that I now turn.

The Paradox of Play and the Shifting of Moral Boundaries

Veena Das (2012:136) argues that ordinary actions entail the exercise of ethical judgment, which contextually determines minute boundaries between conformity and transgression. Once it is established, the ethical 'boundary' can be discontinuous or paradoxical (Handelman 1998:240-8). Discontinuity organizes the phenomena it compartmentalizes through segregation (Lamont and Molnár 2002:168-9), while paradox conjoins prevailing oppositions (Handelman 1998:246). In this latter case the internal constitution of boundary emphasizes process, fluidity and gradation rather than division or exclusion. Handelman (ibid:246-7) argues:

The boundary itself is of a different property from whatever it divides, since it is an amalgam of whatever disjoins it… (It is) composed of contradictory sets of attributions: top/bottom, known/strange, inclusion/exclusion… Paradoxically, if a boundary is of the inside, then it also is of the outside, like a moebius strip. These contraries are not resolved, in and of themselves: instead, their figure-ground relationship continuously shifts… The internal paradoxality (sic) of the boundary is overcome by treating it as a homogenous unity – as an artefact of perception that is portentous for the moral security of the mundane[66].

In Maranhão the manifestations of play in joking relations, 'pretentions', *ciúmes*, seduction, betrayal and so on, produce ethical boundaries that are characterized by such uncertainty and paradox. By this I mean that during play persons are provisionally entangled with and through one another's performances, and hence that ethical judgments effectively shift in the course of this process. Like comic interruptions to everyday flow of events, play reshapes the conditions governing 'expected' behaviour (Goffman 1961:104-5, Bergson 2008[1911]). It is thus possible to temporarily ignore, for example, cultural inhibitions against 'betraying' your spouse. Ethical boundaries are 'recalibrated' in reference to, and in accordance with, playful actions and reactions during mundane encounters (Lambek 2010b). The following example elucidates this claim.

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[66] Speaking on 'symbolic types', Handelman (1998) claims that clowns are epitomes of paradox. Clowns do not break the moral precepts that distinguish between seriousness and play, or between the sacred (intimate, transcendental) and the profane (crude, earthly). They dissipate the boundaries between these oppositions. Like a mobeius strip, their figure-ground relationship is constantly shifting.

Traditional midwives (*parteiras leigas*) in Maranhão explicitly claim birth-giving a time of uncertainty, during which 'everything is with God'. To get a measure of control over this dangerous, sometimes deadly liminal space, *parteiras* use home-made 'bush' medicine (*remédio de mato*), consecrated prayers, magic-spells and massages (Macêdo 2008). At times of intense risk – for example, when the fetus is upside-down (*criança atravesada*) – *parteiras* introduce modes of ritualized play. One tactic, for example, is to walk in circles around the house with a pestle (*mão de pilão*), shouting occasionally – '*E aí, Maria já pariu? – Não!*' (So, has Maria already given birth? No!'). Through every negative response the *parteira* would pound the ground with the pestle until the placenta is out. Other methods include dressing the woman with the hat of her husband, beating on her waists with her husband's sandals, or wearing a sweaty masculine shirt outside-in.

These playful techniques employ social uncertainty (burlesque, ambiguity, irregular movement) in order to defeat cosmic uncertainty (the woman's dire straits). Play here ridicules binary oppositions (dead/alive, risk/safety) and turns them into a circular process. In this way the *parteiras* come to symbolically embody both 'moral order' in its widest scope (the well-being of the mother and foetus, the almighty power of God) as well as its ethical refashioning. Like clowns, tricksters and witches, *parteiras* acquire symbolic ambiguity that questions discontinuities by presenting a homogeneous image of a continuous mock-order. This continuity is isomorphic with *parteira* public personhood, so that invoking play becomes an explicitly ethical phenomenon.

The point is that conjoining oppositions has a generative force (Simmel 1971:354-5). In that sense persons often invoke elements of play to mediate internal inconsistencies between two models of relatedness – one based on affective transfer and another on moral indebtedness – that are interlocked in everyday life. Play like *ciúmes*, for example, demarcates a space located between reproductive moral injunctions, and by doing that it projects a profound ethical statement. Play implicates the 'serious' affective discharge underpinning structured relationships while allowing to avoid overt dispute. My friend Leilânde conveyed that in relation to intimacy:

…Here we do not have the art of misleading (*enganar*). Here it is the art of going around things (*contornar*). For example, I have my family and you are a new person living with us… You can take part in our daily lives but this doesn't mean you take part in our intimacy. Nobody will make a clear boundary (*uma barreira nítida*), as if 'when Matan arrives we change the subject'. They will just find a way to go around it.

I did eventually create intimate ties with several persons throughout Maranhão. I managed to do that once I learned to shift ethical boundaries in the public sphere. Beyond the forms of play I surveyed above, the most common local way to do that was to conceal some facts of everyday life. The gist of actively making some of your actions 'invisible' consisted in producing a space by which you could inhabit two conflicting social values at once and thus potentially *avoid* contradicting moral imperatives. I now turn to elucidate this claim and exemplify it ethnographically.

Play and the Production of Invisibility

Anticipated acts of play in Maranhão supply concrete form to everyday ethical labour (Simmel 1971[1910]:134, 137-8). By this I mean that forms of play such as betrayal, seduction and *ciúmes* are structurally two-folded. On the one hand they enforce sanctions through performances of 'control'; while they simultaneously conceal certain acts that challenge the moral authority of that sanction. This inherent conundrum – which turns on the dialectical visibility and invisibility of actions in the public sphere – enables persons to alternate between the two models of relatedness on which I elaborated in chapters two and three. The following vignette begins to elucidate this:

We sat at a bar table in the *praça*: Isabel, Neia, Eva, Maria, Fabio and me. I was talking to Isabel when she suddenly turnedaround, asking Neia what she had just told Eva. Eva responded that from Neia's talk it appears that Paulo (Eva's husband and Isabel's brother), is 'eating' (*comendo*) Marluce, who lives in Paulo's family's household and works as the caretaker of the child of one of Paulo's sisters[67]. Isabel was stunned since she and her sister Amanda have been stalking Paulo for some time now, suspecting he was indeed 'eating' Marluce. Neia exclaimed that she couldn't believe that Marluce still 'shows her face' at Eva's

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[67] 'Eating' is an idiom widely used in Brazil to indicate sexual intercourse (cf. Parker 1991).

house – where Neia, who is the common-law wife of Eva's brother – also lives with her children. Our friend Robson, who hung around in the *praça* and heard the argument, entered the house to tell Paulo what had happened. Paulo came out very angry. He accused Neia of slandering him. Neia began shouting that everybody in the household knew about this affair, and that they did not say anything to Eva in order to protect him. Then the fight began.

Paulo's ostensible transgression foregrounded the shifting ethical boundary of this situation. When possible infidelity was unknown to Eva, it simply did not pose an ethical problem. This coincided with the fact that Paulo's sisters decided not to tell Eva about their suspicions. When Neia provocatively revealed these suspicions, Paulo's ostensible infidelity had suddenly become relevant. It instantly threatened the ethical weight of prior commitments that defined the interconnectedness of these aggregated sets of relations until that point.

This shift of register, however, was hardly about Paulo's infidelity. For, it was obvious to everybody that Paulo would deny. Even Eva expected him to do so, as she told me in a follow-up conversation. 'Admitting' would convey disinterestedness in Eva, and maybe bring about the end of their relationship. Neia's calculated disclosure was therefore meant to undermine notions of trust and amity that existed for years between Eva and both of Paulo's sisters. Exposure of an ostensible secret alliance taking place behind Eva's back could change the balance of power relations, by which Neia could prove herself to be a new loyal friend in a social reality full of cunny traitors.

Neia's actions can be read as an invitation to engage in a competition, which demarcated a play-zone characterized by high emotional fluidity, the adoption of roles and unpredictable outcomes. Paulo, as well as his sister Isabel, responded immediately, and the feud quickly escalated to shouts and verbal abuse. In that sense Neia successfully (although temporarily) enforced a rigid ethical distinction, locating herself and Eva on one side and Paulo's family on the other. The point, however, is that Paulo's and Isabel's denial relativized and dispersed this boundary. Paulo could have 'eaten' Marluce, and he might have not. As much as Neia's allegations totalized relations and introduced hierarchies into them, denial detotalized and dispersed power.

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The fight echoed for some time but eventually had no meaningful consequences. Paulo kept denying his transgression and a while later moved-in permanently with Eva and their nine-year-old son. Marluce continued to work as a care-taker and cleaning lady for Paulo's sisters, who remained in their rented house together with their younger sister, her toddler son, and an older brother. Marluce refrained from setting foot in Eva's family-house for a while. Eva and Paulo's sisters held a conversation to rebuild trust[68]. Isabel and Neia remained tacitly hostile to one another, although on the surface they maintained the appearance of collegial friendship.

My point is that Paulo's intractable denials produced an uncertain space, in which some of his actions *could have been* 'invisible' (cf. Massumi 2010). As a potentiality, invisibility was two-folded: aesthetically it literally removed certain actions from sight (and hence intercepted public scrutiny) while ethically it ostensibly allowed for mutually-exclusive sets of intimate relations to coexist without provokingly challenge conventional moral injunctions (Zigon 2009). This duality qualifies the production and maintenance of secrecy as a major structuring force of intimate aggregations in which Paulo was involved.

Secrecy in Brazilian society has been studied mainly in relation to Afro-Brazilian religious practices (Maggie 1977, Bastide 1978). Paul Johnson (2002) convincingly associates contemporary emphasis on secrecy in Candomblé with West African religious conceptions brought to Brazil by Jeje and Nagô slaves through the 18th and 19th Century[69]. Johnson (2002:63) argues that secretive religious practices were indeed partly a result of the brutal cultural oppression Portuguese and Brazilian authorities endorsed through colonial times (which lasted well into the Republic period; cf. Rafael 2010). Yet, Johnson also stresses that at least three concepts of secrecy were inherent in West-African religious traditions: (1) the segregation between 'superficial' and 'deep' types of

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[68] Apparently, Isabel and Amanda said they had no definite proofs for Paulo's ostensible infidelity and therefore they did not speak out. It is reasonable to claim that Isabel and Amanda remained silent because they did not want to risk the interconnectedness of the two co-residential aggregations.

[69] Nagô is a term applied to Yoruba-speaking people, who were funnelled to slavery in Brazil at the beginning of the 19th Century (Johnson 2002:63-4). Jeje refers to Ewe speaking groups, mostly from the Kingdom of Dahomey that stretched across today's Benin and Western Nigeria (Edurado 1966:47).

knowledge; (2) the differentiation between a public and inner 'head' (*orí*, see chapter five); and (3) the conception of infinity, which holds any knowledge to be 'bottomless' (ibid:59).

In chapter six I will associate play and invisibility in Maranhão with a larger cosmological framework profoundly influenced by Afro-Brazilian cultural style. In that sense, the relationship between visibility and invisibility – as well as the notion of concealment as an ethical practice in and of itself – are indeed fused with historically contingent local knowledge. When it comes to everyday forms of play, however, secrecy acquires a more prosaic dimension focused on utilitarianism. The mundane production of secrecy in contemporary Maranhão – which is suffused with uncertainly – is pragmatically predicated on the idea that it is possible to inhabit contradicting sets of intimate relations simultaneously. I think this underscores Paulo's ferocious denials.

Ramon Sarró's (2009) description of invisible landscapes among the Baga of upper Guinea coast advances a similar argument. Sarró argues that despite rigorous iconoclasm in the 1950s and 1960s, traditional sacred sites and religious objects of the Baga are still present in local custom. This is so because these sites are considered invisible locations that are 'removed from the senses' (ibid:6-7). The 'power of absence', as Sarró presented this in an unpublished paper, is predicated on 'the relationship between visible and invisible realities' (2009:144)[70]. The active creation of 'remoteness' (2009:8) – an experiential sense of belonging to something that used to exist, or maybe not, but in any case its imagery stands 'behind' observed things – is a vehicle by which Baga persons develop the ability to see both the visible *and* invisible landscapes simultaneously. Sarró calls this a 'second sight'. In Maranhão the trick is to avoid the 'cracks' (*brechas*) through which people might acquire precisely such 'second sight', as my friend Rui once explained:

…Society is like that, people only look for the smallest piece (of information) to begin gossiping. But still, nobody speaks ill about me (*ninguem fala mal de mim*), because I do not give opportunities. This is the famous '*brecha*' ('crack'). Nobody will be able to say 'Rui was there fighting in the street' because nobody will

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[70] Paper given at the workshop 'I Know What I Saw', LSE, May 2013.

see this. Even if I am drunk on my way home and I see someone I know I will not stop to converse. I will simply say '*beleza*? *Legal*!' (All well? Cool!), and continue… People that I know more intimately know that I drink, but these are only people that I respect and I know that they respect me. It is always on this level.

Rui suggests that it is more important to sustain provisional invisibility through a measurement of secrecy than to admit transgression. This paradoxically makes it possible to remain faithful even while deceiving or 'betraying' (cf. Weiner 1976:122). I thus take this dialectic emphasis on strategic disclosures and truthful concealments as the generator of further sets of intimate relations. Performances of *ciúmes*, seduction or 'pretention' – as they are played out in mundane practice – produce spaces of invisibility within aggregated sets of intimate relations. This allows persons to be only partially visible from the perspective of each modality of relatedness through which their actions is judged ethically (viz. Das 2012). Take Carla's story, for example:

…While Josimar (her husband) was traveling to Brasilia for work I had a 'fling' (*caso*) with a neighbor who lived next to our house. At that time I used to hang out with a group of women who lived in the street. All of them were 'betraying' (sic) their husbands. One of them was my neighbor's mother, and she always declared that her son had a big penis. He was also married but his mother mediated: she transferred notes between us so no one would suspect. The guy's wife was extremely suspicious and jealous (*ciumenta*) and therefore I was very careful… I hid this affair from everybody, including the women of the street, who certainly would have said something to the man's wife. He used to come to my house at late hours (*madrugada*)… This led to my getting pregnant and to an abortion I induced, telling Josimar it is his child.

Carla's passionate sexual bond 'outside' legitimate aggregations became possible because concealment generated a space of invisibility from 'within'. In order to keep the affair going – and later in order to end it – Carla had to sustain 'pretentions' marking her relations with Josimar as well as her relations with colleagues from the street. This continued even after the affair was over because invisibility here signifies a measure of control in others. Consequently, by making her infidelity 'invisible', Carla managed to act *ethically* both in the concealed world of 'betrayal' she shared with her lover and the visible world of familial responsibilities (contra Parker 1991).

In that sense, spaces of invisibility in low-income Maranhão are forms of 'morality play' (Briggs 1998) that also have a profound aesthetic effect on everyday interactions. I here follow Mary Douglas (1968:365), who argues that 'a joke is a play upon form. A joke brings into relations disparate elements in such a way that one accepted pattern is challenged by the appearance of another, which in some way was hidden in the first'. For example, Renata told me that in a *carnaval* street party her husband once 'disappeared'. When he returned, he was not wearing his wedding ring. 'I lost it', he uttered when Renata inquired. The absence of the ring literally 'played' with the aesthetic visibility of marriage without explicitly breaking its form.

To paraphrase Ulf Hannertz (1996:67), the core of the concept of spaces of invisibility is a combination of diversity, interconnectedness and innovation in the context of everyday regulation of intimate relations[71]. The secrets that spaces of invisibility contain facilitate 'switching' between a frame of relatedness based on collective indebtedness, which turns on the public performance of virtuous personhood (Mayblin 2010); and a frame defined by autonomous agency, which turns on the realization of personal desires. Degrees of intimate sharing are thus *contingent* on the institutionalized generation of invisibility as an ethical action in its own right[72].

Yet, as Handelman and Kapferer (1972:512, brackets mine) argue, even institutionalized frames of play 'are highly susceptible to subversion and destruction as a consequence of processes which emerge from the course of (the) activity (itself)'. In the case of Maranhão this suggests that sometimes acts of play and concealment associated with the maintenance of spaces of invisibility collapse into themselves. In such cases affective transfer is either totalized to one-on-one ('pure', as Giddens (1992) would have it) conjugal density *or* alternatively destroyed altogether. Jackson and Ludmila's story is a prominent example for the calamitous results this may locally entail.

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[71] Hannertz (ibid: 67) argues: 'what is at the core of the concept of creole culture is… a combination of diversity, interconnectedness and innovation, in the context of global centre-periphery relationships'.

[72] I here follow Simmel's (1906) approach to secrecy, which does not focus on what is being hidden as much as it highlights the reciprocity between the person who protects a secret and the person who attempts to reveal it. 'Secrecy' takes its social form in the dialectical creation and breaching of boundaries (but cf. Herdt 1990:365-6).

The Story of Jackson and Ludmila (Part one): Aggregating Intimate Relations

Jackson had met Ludmila in the early 1990s, when she was 9 and he was 14. At the time he was dating (*namorando*) Ludmila's aunt-cousin Nayara[73]. Both Ludmila and Nayara lived in his street in Santo-Amaro. When Ludmila was 16 people in the neighborhood commented that she was simply becoming gorgeous (*linda*), and Jackson thus began paying attention to her. Their love story ensued when Ludmila called Jackson on his mobile. Jackson was welcoming since he wanted to 'eat' (*comer*) her and take her virginity, as he described that to me.

At that time, Jackson worked as a DJ with his own radio program. He had a serious girlfriend (*namorada*) called Elãine, with whom he had been dating for two years beforehand. Jackson's family was pressing him to marry her although it was a 'known' secret that Jackson was frequently 'betraying' Elãine. Rumor has it that Jackson somehow managed to maintain up to 14 girlfriends simultaneously. At some stage, Elãine began contesting Jackson about his affairs. She demanded answers, as he put it (*me cobrava*) by inquiring where he was going, with who and for what purposes. Jackson's own family also criticized him, especially his parents, but he would not listen. He thus began dating (*namorar*) Ludmila in parallel with his serious relationship with Elãine.

Jackson managed to 'deflower' (as he put it) Ludmila nine months after they began their relationship. Ludmila told her step mother (*madrasta*) Dona Elis that she 'lost' her virginity but kept it secret from her father. As Jackson described it, he and Ludmila continued to have quite a lot of sex from that day onwards, sometimes three or four times a day. Several months later Ludmila became pregnant. At the revelation of this, Ludmila told Dona Elis again, who this time reported to Seu Jacinto, Ludmila's father. Consequently, Seu Jacinto demanded that Jackson 'assumed responsibility' by taking Ludmila to live with him in his family house. At first Jackson resorted to 'deceive' (*enrolar*) Seu Jacinto as well as Ludmila by saying he was aiming to find a better job so he

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[73] My analysis is largely based on Jackson's narrative. I could not interview Ludmila because she no longer lives in São Luís. Jackson described Nayara as *tia-prima*, i.e. not a legitimate father's sister or mother's sister but a more distant family member that is thus classified in-between these two categories.

could buy a proper house. Since Jackson worked without a job license (*catreira assinada*) his argument seemed credible. Although he knew that was a temporary solution, Jackson thus managed to postpone the prospective institutionalization of his relationship with Ludmila.

One day Ludmila telephoned Jackson. She was crying. She said Seu Jacinto and Dona Elis were going to force her to have an abortion in a private clinic. Jackson did not know what to do and consulted Jairo, his close friend from the radio business, as well as Seu Odaír, his father. Both of them were against the abortion. Jairo insisted that 'that baby's fate is to be born' and Seu Odaír, like Seu Jacinto, thought that Jackson should take responsibility regardless. Ludmila said that if she will indeed undergo an abortion, it would be all over between her and Jackson.

Jackson eventually decided against the abortion and that same day brought Ludmila into his family house. It was an act that symbolized his public responsibility for the pregnancy. Yet, he was then drawn even more deeply into a vicious cycle of lies and betrayal. Jackson said that both Elãine and Ludmila probably knew of his promiscuous behavior but chose 'not to recognize the truth', as he represented this to me. That was so, according to Jackson, since he was good-looking, good in bed (*transava bem*) and a good 'kisser'. He also said he was kind and nice (*carinhoso*) to both of them, which meant he always gave them presents and made them 'feel good'. According to Jackson, that was enough for both of his girlfriends not to confront his skillful lies.

These lies were weaved together carefully. To Ludmila, Jackson promised they would move into their own house after she gave birth. He excused his frequent nightly adventures as mere work. To Elãine, Jackson said he was keeping Ludmila in the house only because of her pregnancy. He promised that as soon as she gave birth he would send her back to her father's house together with the baby. Jackson's lies were even extended to people in the 'street', a general term he used to describe the maze-like neighborhood networks of relatedness, gossip, and amity ties. To his peers in the 'street' Jackson said he was about to dump (*larger*) both Ludmila and Elãine altogether, and that in fact he was not committed to either of them in any way.

I interpret these lies as a form of ethical labor by which a productive tension between the protagonists of this drama was maintained (Simmel 1906:446). I here use 'ethics' as the reworking of moral codes from within, whether these are associated with 'open end' or 'closed end' sociality. 'In this sense, ethics is far from the presumptions of moral codes and prescriptions and closer to irony, particularly in the sense of recognizing the limits of self-understanding and that one cannot fully know that one means what one says or does. In this formulation… the ironic is opposed to neither the serious nor the well intentioned' (Lambek 2010a:9-10, brackets dropped, quotes omitted). I thus suggest that both Ludmila and Elãine overlooked Jackson's lies precisely because these organized 'ethically' the interconnectedness of their contrasting relationships.

Yet, even the efficacy of lying was limited. Shortly after Ludmila's move into his family house, Elãine resorted to officially terminate her *namoro* with Jackson. She began dating other men while actually still seeing Jackson every now and then, having sex with him, presenting *ciúmes* and demanding him to leave Ludmila. One of Jackson's family members told me that Elãine even once entered into Jackson's family's house to challenge him and Ludmila with a kitchen knife. Jackson said that on another opportunity Elãine caught Jackson alone in the house, took her clothes off and demanded he made a child with her too. Jackson refused and dispatched her.

This came to an end after Emerson – Jackson and Ludmila's baby – was born. Jackson told me that Ludmila's birth-labour pain (*dor de parto*) came suddenly in the evenin. That night Jackson was actually supposed to meet Elãine at her family house, but he did not go since it was raining. An hour later Ludmila was already in labor and they took a taxi to the hospital. Jackson left Ludmila there with his mother – Dona Miudinha – and returned to the main *praça* in Santo-Amaro, where he stayed drinking until dusk with his friend Flávio, happy and euphoric, as he described it to me.

Jackson and Ludmila (Part Two): The Collapse of Invisibility

Several days after she gave birth, Ludmila and Emerson returned to Jackson's family house. Yet, even fatherhood could not change Jackson's patterns. He continued seeing other women, kept

deceiving, and did not stay much in the house. Three months later Ludmila thus decided to return to her father's house. She left Emerson with Dona Miudinha, who was very angry. If Ludmila wanted to leave it was her right – exclaimed Dona Miudinha – but she should have taken the child with her like 'any mother would do', especially as he was still breastfeeding (*mamando*). Precisely on this ground someone from Ludmila's family convinced her to retain the baby two days after she departed. At that stage Jackson began 'persecuting' Ludmila, as he described that to me:

I became unsettled (*transtornado*). I began stalking (*perseguir*) her. I called her on her mobile anytime, I sent her messages, tried to be the best friend of people who were close to her including that *tia-prima* with whom I dated years before. Her father didn't even speak with me anymore; he said I don't need to come there. It wasn't that I liked her so much, as much as I was lonely. I was only dating women with no future, Elãine has already had another guy and all I could think of was that I have my own wife who doesn't want to live with me anymore. I regretted (*me arrependi*) every day everything I had done to her.

Although Jackson did not explicitly use this word, I think his actions can be grouped under the definition of *ciúmes.* Here *ciúmes* does not merely counterbalance affective forms of transfer that destabilize reproductive moralities. Rather, it is a form of ethical play that includes the possibility of transgression, possession, violence and control; practices that in themselves might intensify conflict in family houses on some occasions (as Elãine's actions above cogently imply). The fact that *ciúmes* was tolerated, however, and that most of Jackson's friends and family members (including Ludmia) recognized its ethical value, suggested that Jackson successfully met certain codes of conduct by which to administer their separation. As Jackson said:

…In the end, from insisting so much, she came back to me. We ran away against the approval of her father. I believe that from that point onwards she didn't love me anymore but she came back to me because of the pressure. She began betraying me with more frequency from that point on, but she was probably already betraying me beforehand, when we were still only dating (*namorando*). Her *tia-prima* told me this years later. When Ludmila had the child she became even more beautiful than before and people noticed her when she passed in the street. She knew that and began using it.

At first, Jackson and Ludmila moved to a different neighborhood for several months. Ludmila began attending a technical course paid for by Jackson, who was now working overtime to sustain his family. Jackson said that Ludmila kept disappearing from the house for hours, at different times of the day, saying she was seeing 'girl-friends' (*amigas*) and 'colleagues' (*colegas*). Jackson thus stayed in to care for Emerson and consequently missed work. Several months later they returned to Santo-Amaro and rented a small house. There things only worsened, since Jackson and Ludmila began arguing frequently. Then, Ludmila's father suddenly died. Jackson described that as the last barrier to fall, after which their common-law marriage collapsed:

When we got the news about the death of her father it was late at night (*madrugada*)… I thought that Ludmila would be more submissive to me, but actually she was even freer to do anything she wanted. I think that at that time she no longer cared about me at all… Around that time I took her to a sorcerer (*macumbeiro*) to try to resolve her problems. She thought that all of her problems had to do with *macumba*, that somebody tried to do a *trabalho* (sorcery) against her. The *macumbeiro* read her palm, sent her to bathe in the ocean tide (*maré*) and gave her medicine. I wanted her to believe in that although I myself did not.

Around the time of *carnaval* Jackson began suspecting that Ludmila was regularly betraying him. One day, for example, he caught Ludmila in the city center sitting at a bar with one of her course teachers during the day, while she was supposed to be studying. He came in and simply told her – 'that is how you study?' Ludmila denied there ever was anything going on between her and the teacher, so Jackson left it at that. The second evidence was a message Jackson found on Ludmila's cellular, which read: 'yesterday night was wonderful'. The third evidence came from Jackson's older brother Ignácio, who heard that Ludmila went to a *carnaval* street party and danced there sensually with men. He told Jackson, who preferred treating this as vicious rumors. The final evidence, however, came unexpectedly in a surreal situation, when Jackson was having sex in a *motel* with the girlfriend of one of his work colleagues. That woman looked Jackson in the eyes and told him – 'did you know that your wife is also betraying you?' She personally knew a guy who had had sex with Ludmila. That was a shock for Jackson:

…Nobody had done things 'my way', besides Ludmila. She knew how to lie just as good as I knew, in a way that was simply perfect. She could cry with real tears and begin a fight about nothing only so she could leave the house angry, as if it was because of me, but then go and meet someone in a *festa* or *motel*… She was the best liar I have ever encountered in my life. And she was even better than me, because I always left clues whereas she didn't. I only discovered about this later. The woman always does things more perfectly than the man, always… At that time, while she was betraying me, I loved her; but I was still seeing other women. I never changed. I was sure she would not betray me because I was always imperative with her, but in reality she already lost respect to my words a long time beforehand.

Jarrett Zigon (2009) interprets 'lies' as a contextual privileging of certain embodied moralities on the expense of other prevailing markers of moral value. Contrasting discourses are thus used surgically when a 'moral breakdown' comes about. Zigon (2009:263) claims that such moral breakdowns – which 'occur when for one reason or another a range of possible moralities do not adequately fit the context' – are landmarks for an ethical process of self-transformation[74]. In that aspect lying is a vehicle that enables subjects to endorse actions that are explicitly opposed to external restrictions or even personal inhibitions. In Zigon's prism, lying comes down to legitimizing those actions that lying facilitates (as, for example, why in particular situations it is 'allowed' or 'easier' to lie and in others not). In other words, lying merely serves the ethics of self-refashioning. Zigon considers the act of lying itself as ethical only insofar as it signifies reflection and choice, which for Zigon (ibid) is the creative groundwork for self-transforming projects.

In Jackson and Ludmila's case, however, lies are inscribed within the mundane practices that seem to go beyond subjectivity itself. Lying defined both Jackson's and Ludmila's sense of agency, it was their relational 'way' of doing things. In that sense it is possible to look at lies as performances that are profoundly *ethical* from the point of view of the actors themselves. For, lying could mean many things: an act of deference towards the elderly, an act meant to protect

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[74] For example, in the case of Post-Soviet Russia, which is Zigon's (2009) main fieldsite, moral breakdown came about when the monopoly on official discourse in the public sphere – priory held by the Communist Party – was replaced by a plurality of competing discourses. These range from Neo-Liberal ideologies to Neo-Fascist political movements, new religious doctrines, Western-European lifestyles and so on.

others, or an instrumental act by which to achieve successful transgression. As actions in and of themselves, Jackson and Ludmila's lies were focused on producing the social ethics of invisibility; and these marked the interconnectedness of mutually-exclusive sets of intimate relations.

I thus see these lies as a form of play, by which Jackson and Ludmila shifted across models of intimate relatedness. The production of spaces of invisibility was essential in order to facilitate such shifting, rather than accounting for the moral values each of these models of relatedness promoted. Without those lies, and consequently without invisibility, it would have actually been quite difficult to sustain any meaningful sociability (Simmel 2009:313). In a sense, Jackson and Ludmila's marriage was *dependent* on these lies. Lying was non-consciously acknowledged by Jackson and Ludmila up until revelation meant they could not ignore 'betrayal' anymore.

When invisibility collapsed Jackson thus finally confronted Ludmila, who vigorously denied. He nevertheless returned to his parents' house. Ignácio went to speak with Ludmila, who kept insisting she had never been unfaithful to Jackson. Ignácio thus pleaded Jackson to give it another chance, and he agreed to come back home. One week later, however, Ludmila left the house angry after an argument with Jackson. Several hours later Jackson claims he saw her in a *festa* in the *praça*, dancing. He went home, took his personal belongings and moved back into his family house. That same day Ludmila announced (*assumiu*) her relationship with another man by inviting him to sleep with her in the house she and Jackson rented. Jackson recalled:

When I walked away she cursed me so much but never made the slightest effort of staying with Emerson. I took him and put him in the house with Claudia and *mamãe* (his sister and his mother). And then I wanted to know of everything that had happened since the first day we started dating until that day. I went drinking in all the bars of the neighborhood where I thought I could find information. I wanted certainty of what had happened. I made friends with persons that could have given me information. I was popular in the neighborhood and people passed the information on. I even acquired information about things I didn't know beforehand, like for example that she left Emerson with neighbors and people she hardly even knew in order to go to a *motel* with a guy. One time somebody found Emerson alone in the street, do you believe that?

Jackson and Ludmila (Part Three): Visibility and the Collapse of Aggregations

Jackson and Ludmila's separation brought about a desperate search for disclosure. I do not know if Ludmila had done the same, but I can only assume that she too must have heard (and inquired about) gossip concerning Jackson's 'betrayals'. The point seems to be that while concealment was focused on successful (or 'ethical') shifting between models of relatedness, striving for information signified the collapse of reproductive morality altogether. When spaces of invisibility collapsed, interconnected emotional worlds collided. 'Breakdown' did not even send Jackson on the reflexive ethical path; he merely realized that he actually preferred living in and through the lies that sustained productive contestation with his wife (viz. Bateson 1958). In fact, without lying there was no reason to be ethical anymore, as Jackson affirmed:

...So, part of my madness was that I followed her into all kinds of places and once even entered into our house in the middle of the night since I still had the key. We had sex. After sex she asked me for money to pay the bills. I threw a note of 10 *reais* on the bed and told her – 'take this for your scheme' (*programa*, a euphemism for prostitution scheme). After this, things became difficult for me, I could not really function. I was drinking too much, smoking, spending lots of money on people who took advantage of me.

In his attempts to recover information Jackson learned that it had all began long before they were actually living together. This led him to suspect that Emerson might not even be his child. He preferred suppressing that thought and on another occasion told me that he was sure that Emerson is 'his' since he has Jackson's facial features and 'his general behavior resembles mine', as Jackson phrased that. However, the impact of those revelations on Jackson was awesome:

My sister told me I needed treatment and Ignácio blessed me (*me benzeu*). So I went to talk to a *macumbeiro*, who told me my entire life story without me saying a word… He even offered me to make sorcery (*trabalho*) against Ludmila, but I refused. That night I had a nightmare and I woke up shouting. I dreamt that something is trying to strangle and kill me… When I woke up screaming everybody (in the house) woke up too. I felt as if my soul was leaving my body, I trembled of fear, I felt empty inside. Ignácio made an *oração* (prayer to God) for me, holding my hand, until I calmed down.

Jackson's 'madness' came to a climax several months after this emotional crisis, during the Bumba Boi festival of 2005. Jackson by then had decided Ludmila would never be his and that therefore he must be her enemy (*inimigo*). He testified he felt humiliated, and only wanted her to leave the neighborhood. He recalled arriving to her house and seeing her crying at another guy's shoulders while listening to an evocative reggae song that Jackson himself had burnt for her on a CD. Ludmila let Jackson in, sending her boyfriend away. Jackson described that last meeting:

The last contact was in her house. I came and asked her to get back together for the sake of Emerson. I said that I don't want Emerson to grow-up away from his mother. I said I am not angry with her, since it is I who should be blamed. (But) she said she doesn't want to come back, not even for the sake of Emerson. At that stage I promised her I will never try to look for her again but that from now on she has an enemy in the neighborhood and she needs to get out of here…

Not only did Jackson demand that Ludmila leave Santo-Amaro, he also insisted that she depart from São Luís altogether. He even issued a legal procedure against Ludmila to regain the house utensils he had bought for them over the years. During that time, Emerson was mainly taken care of by Dona Miudinha and Jackson's sister Claudia. Jackson's parents and relatives assumed he was requesting custody of the baby only in order to hurt (*ferir*) Ludmila, but he denied it and still today sticks to his version that he was only considering the good of the baby. He concluded:

…Eventually I gave her a deadline (*prazo*) to get out of the house and return all of my belongings. She brought it all back before the end-date, and according to the agreement we made I gave the utensils to her aunt and her great-grandmother. She passed-on to me the keys for the house and left São Luís to live with relatives she has in São Paulo… Today I live for Emerson. Maybe one day he will look for his mother but I am sure that she will never have with him what I have; she will never be able to be his mother.

The Break of Social Ethics in the Absence of Invisibility

Jackson and Ludmila's story is a social drama suffused with symbolic elements that mark possible trajectories of fatherhood and motherhood in contemporary Maranhão. This includes

adventurous circumventions of a hegemonic model of relatedness, by which intimate relations are actively anchored in the symbolism of the house; but also the continuous dispersal of affects in ways that bring about the proliferation of intimate linkages beyond the confines of domestic arrangements. Jackson and Ludmila tried to incorporate both these models of intimate reciprocity into everyday practice, and redress fallacies along the way through intense forms of play. Most notably, they lied. When this was no longer effective, revelation entailed rupture (cf. Turner 1969). As Simmel (et al. 2009:313-14, brackets mine) argues:

…The knowledge about one another… positively affects relationships… though not really for itself alone— (it also includes) a certain ignorance, an immeasurable changing degree of mutual concealment. The lie is only a very crude… often contradictory form in which this necessity comes to light. Though it may often destroy a relationship, as long as it existed it was still an integrating element of the nature of the relationship. One must take care not to be deceived… by the negative evaluation of the lie over the completely positive sociological significance that it exercises in the formation of certain concrete relationships.

The ethical play of invisibility here rests on the assumption that extra-marital relation always loom large and that competing sets of relations (e.g. husband::wife::lover) may temporarily coexist in parallel to one another. It is precisely this state of emergence that makes betrayal so powerful and intimidating. For, as I demonstrated in chapter two, it is not only the appeal of erotic transgression or the pursuit of sexual pleasure that sustain 'betrayal', but the consistent proliferation of intimacy itself (contra Parker 1991).

The performances that marked Jackson and Ludmila's story were not merely about seduction, control and sex, or even about love and passion more generally; they were about the desperate endeavor to try and maintain mutually exclusive models of intimate engagements merged together. When the secrets that outlined spaces of invisibility came to light intimacy itself collapsed. Breaking away with these forms of concealment also meant the internal destruction of all aggregated sets of interconnected intimate relations. Ultimately this brought-about public death to the relationship, as well as to the familial and domestic arrangements that surrounded it.

Conclusion

Play permeates through various spheres of everyday life in Maranhão, marking engagement with both 'sense' and 'nonsense' activities. From dance parties to joking relations, from magic birthing tactics endorsed by midwives to performances of control, play denotes measures of predictable uncertainty that appears to repeat in different forms (Handelman 1998, Bateson 2000). Play becomes crucial for ethical shifting of boundaries in mundane encounters because it conjoins oppositional moral injunctions through uncertainty and paradox.

In play, an interaction, a long-term relationship, and even a whole aggregation of sets of intimate linkages may turn out to be something they are not or a disguise for something else. That is why spaces of invisibility undermine legitimate hierarchies without necessarily breaking them apart (Sarró 2009:120-1). The scope of invisibility becomes simultaneously protective (in the sense that it holds together structured social relations) and destabilizing (in the sense that persons expect uncertainty or a measure of distrust from within those same structured social relations). This tension, I argue, is intrinsic to the cosmology of relatedness in Maranhão (see chapters six).

For that matter a homologue can be made between social and cosmic orders, and between forms of playful uncertainty and spaces of invisibility that underpin each of these cultural imageries respectively. For example, within the context of prevalent religious rituals in Maranhão I see clear elements of play. These manifest in the dominance of *oração* (prayer) among Evangelical Christians, being a rhetoric device that simultaneously approaches God and peers; in the public rituals enacted for paying-off promises to Catholic saints, which produce subordination to the saint side by side disclosing the supra-ordinary position reserved for the owner (or patron) of the *festa* (see chapter six); and in possession-trance ceremonies in Afro-Brazilian *terreiros*, during which persons temporarily become other to themselves (cf. Halloy and Naumescu 2012). In the next chapter I will engage with these rituals, demonstrating how the ordinary ethics of play and invisibility mark the cultivation of affective relations with otherworldly forces.

Chapter Five: Ritual, Personhood and Ordinary Ethics

Rituals in Their Own Right in Maranhão

In Maranhão mundane life is commonly entwined with an array of otherworldly forces. These range from a monotheistic God, His Son and the Virgin Mother, to the vast arsenal of enchanted spiritual entities (*encantados*, cf. M. Ferretti 1994), spirits of the dead (*oguns*), 'spirits of light' (*espiritos de luz*; cf. Bastide 1978), angels and demons. Rituals set-in-motion exchange relations with some of these forces while excluding others (cf. Assman 2006). In this chapter I will focus on ritual processes pertaining to two of the central cosmogonic disciplines in Maranhão. These are possession-trance sessions in the Afro-Brazilian context of Tambor de Mina; and 'orating' (*oração*) ceremonies in the context of local Christian-Evangelical congregations[75].

I chose to focus on these rituals because they were the most common forms of contact with divinities I encountered in Maranhão. The regular engagement with *oração* and possession was a major cosmogonic activity for practitioners, both on the personal/experiential and on the social levels. I will further demonstrate this below. For now I merely wish to assert that I attribute cosmogonic traits to these activities because they are locally seen as essential for the renewal of both social and natural worlds (Schrempp 1992:17). The reckoning of a sociocultural (rather than a physical) cosmos necessitates (1) a myth of origin, (2) knowledge of external boundaries or zones (beyond which lies otherness), and (3) concrete rituals or practices by which persons invigorate and secure the continuity and integrity of that cosmos (cf. Handelman 2008, Assman 2006). I treat as 'cosmogonic' the local doctrines that adhere with this analytic precept. In this chapter I will analyze cosmogonic events in Maranhão using Don Handelman's insightful methodology.

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[75] I wish to note two points. First, in contemporary Brazil the term 'Evangelicals' (*Evangélicos)* commonly refers to Pentecostal, Neo Pentecostal, Fundamentalists, Charismatic and Conservative Protestants. I will use this concept throughout this chapter. Second, whereas Afro-Brazilian and 'Evangelical' lifestyles involve frequent ritualized episodes, by which otherworldliness is engaged into the mundane, most of my Catholic interlocutors did not regularly engage in religious rituals (beyond the major Catholic holydays). In chapter six I deal more extensively with a Catholic cosmogonic practice in Maranhão.

Don Handelman (1998 and 2004a) studies rituals 'in their own right' (hereafter I will abbreviate this as RITORs). For Handelman, the concept of RITOR requires 'detaching' certain events from their sociocultural foreground/background. It is then possible to relate directly to that which is happening 'within' them. This perspective relies on the concept of self-organization or 'autopoiesis' (Luhmann 1995, Baecker 2001). Robert Kay (2001, 466) argues that 'autopoiesis… requires that the components of the system, through their operations, further produce the components which constitute the system' (cf. Bausch 2002:601). Adjusted from biology to social theory, autopoiesis means that the foundational moral principles of everyday sociality are both reproduced and transformed within the process of routine practice (Sahlins 1981).

Seen as self-contained systems, rituals thereby become structured frameworks that compel certain degrees of self-organization (autopoiesis) and self-transformation. For Handelamn 'Self-organization' means the tendency of the ritual to achieve levels of complexity from within itself in ways that cannot be reduced to the desires and intentions of its makers (Handelman 2004a:10). Complexity is measured by the techniques that participants enhance or invent ad-hoc, as well as the intensity of mental and emotional states produced within some rituals as opposed to less intense passages in other rituals[76]. For Handelman 'self-transformation' suggests that ritual prescriptions also change through time with reference to the internal dynamics of the event, rather than only through external constraints (e.g. radical socioeconomic change, immigration etc.).

Handelman claims that the more a ritual is self-organizatory ('autopoietic'), the more it is inclined to achieve stronger levels of 'closure' and 'integrity' from within itself (2004a:12). 'Closure' and 'integrity' are properties of complexity, which Handelman represents on a topological scale imagined as 'curving'. Thus, the 'curve' ranges from a straight line (for the less complex rituals) to moebius-strip loops (for the most complex ones). Focusing on this motion allows analytic

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[76] For example, the level of complexity achieved in a packed football stadium is probably higher than that achieved during a university-hall lecture; which in itself has a higher complexity than that achieved while waiting on a queue somewhere. Ultimately, as I further demonstrate below, degrees of complexity are linked with the possible transformation a ritual can operate on its social 'surround'.

distinction between different levels of self-organization in rituals. It also enables thinking of those rituals that register higher degrees of self-organization and complexity as rituals that are prone to mold the experience of participants more profoundly than 'simple' rituals. Crucially, Handelman insists that highly autopoietic rituals must be self-referential in order to directly operate on their environment. Handelman (2004a:11-12, original brackets and emphases) defines this as follows:

…Self-referential distinctions… are reintroduced within the phenomenon itself as integral to its self-organizing properties… In another terminology, the social phenomenon includes the other or otherness within itself… This is a matter of degree, shifting between the possibilities of the other as representation and the other as the emerging grounds for the transformation of being within ritual. This is what enables some rituals (which I will call more complex in their organization) to act on their social surround: in the very practice of separating itself from its social surround, the ritual contains the surround, thereby acting on the surround through what is done within the ritual.

Niklas Luhmann (1995) defines self-reference as those operations within a system by which the system distinguishes itself from its environment (Baecker 2001). In order to avoid unnecessary abstractions, I simply use self-reference here as a vector for local definitions of religious alterity. In that sense, there is something intrinsic in any ritual practice by which self and other are distinguished (Kapferer 1983:180ff). In possession trance ceremonies in Tambor de Mina, for example, mediums change their clothes in accordance with the type and identity of the entity that incorporates them. This is a self-referential sign by which not only the medium and her spirit are distinguished as Others to one another but by which the spirit also distinguishes itself from its enchanted (*encantados*) kinsfolk in the invisible world of *enacantaria*.

Self-reference is an important heuristic (and not just analytic) concept for two main reasons. Firstly, many of my interlocutors were engaged in some kind of religious activity on a regular basis across social domains, rather than practicing rituals exclusively in designated spaces. In all local religious doctrines, practitioners enacted cosmogonic activities in the house or the public

square in ways that emulated activities enacted in church or *terreiro*. Obvious examples are Chritsian paryers and Afro-Brazilian spirit-possession, two activities that take place both inside as and outside official religious space. Both These activities include self-referential indications that heuristically demarcated them as differentiated from regular activities of their 'social surround'.

Secondly, practitioners often describe their religious practices as mutually-exclusive. Persons living in one house can be affectively interconnected on the basis of co-residence or kinship linkages but intrinsically disconnected 'spiritually', depending on their cosmogonic convictions and degrees of commitment to ritual practices. Self-reference here becomes a property of relatedness rather than merely being a marker of cosmological boundaries. Especially in the case of 'conversion' to Evangelical doctrines, it was important for my interlocutors to signify that their engagement with new Christian ideals redefined aspects of their public personhood.

In what follows I will demonstrate ethnographically that possession and *oração* are characterized by different types of self-referential dynamics as elements of their self-organization. Consequently, possession and *oração* transform their 'surround' (i.e. push towards cosmogenesis of relatedness) in different ways. Yet, I will argue that despite structured differences between them, possession and *oração* appeal to a similar model of ethical personhood. This is so because both these rituals include forms of invisibility and play. My point is that inclusion of invisibility in both these rituals hints at a common sense of ethical personhood in Maranhão that permeates religious phenomena just as much as it informs models of relatedness and affective relationality at large. I will begin by demonstrating the methodological reasoning of the terms elaborated so far.

Self-Reference and 'Curving' in a 'Jewish' Wedding in Maranhão

About six months into fieldwork an interlocutor from São Luís called Josias married his girlfriend Luciana in a ceremony that mimetically followed an orthodox Jewish wedding he downloaded from YouTube. The setting included the national flag of Israel, a Jewish wedding

canopy *(hupa)* and a Jewish wedding contract (*ketuba*) especially delivered from São Paulo. The ceremony was administered in broken Hebrew by our mutual friend Wilson, who is a Presbyterian Pastor. Both Wilson and Josias wore yarmulkes and Jewish prayer shawls. Wilson improvised arabesques to sound 'Jewish', but opened the ceremony in a typical Pentecostal style:

Shalom everybody, *amen?*...In Genesis [God] narrates the story of beginnings and he shows us… a divine standard for humanity, which is the family… And [this standard] is so indicative (*marcante*), that even our Messiah *Yeshua* – Jesus – was invited to a wedding and realized a great miracle there – they lacked wine and wine is the symbol of joy (*alegria*); Jesus did not let that wedding [be] in frustration, and he entered with providence. This is what *Yeshua* will do in every incidence (*lance*) of your lives*. Amen?*

Josias set up a Jewish Wedding because he had been procedurally 'converting' to Messianic-Judaism during the previous few years. What initiated this process was Josias' conviction that Judaism is 'contained' in his blood. As Josias told me, his grandmother used to light candles every Friday night – not knowing this is a traditional Jewish custom – and 'as a family we have always been good in business'. Before his 'conversion' Josias was a rigorous Neo-Pentecostal practitioner in several congregations in São Luís. He thus designed his wedding to integrate traditional elements of Judaism, transforming them, however, to be consistent with the larger Evangelical contextual frame.

For example, whereas 'Jewish' symbolism (Star of David, the *ketuba*) expiated common Christian aesthetics, the gospel of Jesus Christ was pronounced before the *hupa*. Whereas *Shema Yisrael* and other traditional Jewish tunes (such as *Hava Nagila*) were played during the wedding, no alcohol was supplied to the predominantly Evangelical guests. Whereas Luciana covered her face with a white veil, no separation between men and women was imposed. Finally, whereas at the beginning of the wedding the couple walked to the *hupa* to the sounds of *Hatikva* – the Israeli national anthem – at the end of the ceremony Luciana threw her bundle of flowers to the group of unmarried girls that gathered behind her 'as if' it was a regular Christian ceremony.

The design of the wedding thus included fusion of both 'Jewish' and Evangelical symbols in ways that increased its level of internal 'complexity' in comparison with commonplace Christian and civilian ceremonies in Maranhão. In order to mix and match Jewish and Christian models effectively, the wedding was also accompanied by simultaneous translation in Portuguese. Josias' Best Man Fabio read this on the microphone. The ceremony achieved a measure of self-organization through that self-referential (or reflexive) commentary. This is so because the commentary clearly instituted the boundary between the ritual (by explicating what was happening 'in' it) and the 'Christian lifestyles' most of the guests upheld in their daily lives.

Self-reference – locating distinction between the 'Jewish' event and its 'Christian' surrounding as a property of the self-organization of the event – thus entailed a 'curvature' of time and space (Handelman 2004a), which advanced potential transformation beyond the ritual context itself. Transformation is related to the fact that for more than two years prior Josias had been running a 'Jewish Learning Group' that included some of his and Luciana's relatives, as well as former Evangelical practitioners Josias knew from his days in the church. Under these terms Josias can be seen as an entrepreneur striving to establish his prestige as a spiritual leader in the religious marketplace (Hess 1995; cf. Selka 2010, Chesnut 1997).

It is important to note that Josias did not explicitly try to convert his guests or even justify his own distancing from Pentecostal circles. Consequently, the wedding successfully related 'Messianic Judaism' to the proliferation of intimate sets of relations surrounding Josias and Luciana's union. The aesthetic features marking Josias' wedding ultimately indexed the categories of 'Jewish faith' and 'Christian family' as *continuous* with the logics of connectedness (Handelman 2008) marking Josias' conversion. By that I mean that the wedding maintained a 'sense of rightness not in moral terms but in the sense of how one does that which one does' (Handelman 2004b:197).

Although moral and theological debates among proponents of differing religious doctrines do arise every now and then, differentiation between them boils down to contrasting typologies of

otherworldly entities and forces with whom practitioners create viable exchange relations. Pragmatically this means that practitioners distinguish between images of cosmic vitality through the phenomenal self-organization of the ritual practices that underscore them, rather than through profound ethical reflection (cf. Das 2012:134). One of the most salient cultural scenarios in which this continuous comparison locally takes place is that of possession-trance, to which I now turn.

Possession in Tambor de Mina: Intense Affective Interchange with a 'Deep' Curvature

Tambor de Mina (hereafter Mina) is the most pervasive Afro-Brazilian religious doctrine in Maranhão (Eduardo 1966, Bastide 1978). It is an initiatory doctrine predicated on the exchange of sacrifice, food, alcohol and presents with 'enchanted' entities (*encantados*) during possession-trance ceremonies (Prandi 1997, M. Ferretti 2000a). Here I will look at possession as a RITOR with a 'deep' curvature, which gradually transforms aggregated sets of intimate relations both within the *terreiro* (worship house) and across wider networks of sociability that surround it.

Religious sessions in Mina draw on deities that are classified into several 'lines' (*linhas*) or 'nations' (*nações*) of descent. Each 'line' stretches hierarchically from African *Orixás* and *Voduns* at the top; through Catholic saints and enchanted European noblemen referred to as *gentís*; to spirits of the dead (*eguns*) and indigenous *caboclos* at the bottom (cf. M. Ferretti 2000b). Each of these categories in itself is ramified to include complex internal kinship clusters that intersect in the invisible world of *encantaria* (Cunha 2011). I here focus on practitioners' relations with *caboclos* because they are the most common type of entity that manifests itself in *terreiros* across Maranhão. Mundicarmo Ferretti defines *caboclos* as:

Spiritual protectors of an inferior hierarchic level to the *voduns* and *gentis* that are never confused with these latter entities or with Catholic saints. *Caboclos* in Mina are neither considered to be indigenous spirits (*indios*) nor spirits of the dead (*eguns*) although they have had terrestrial life and, sometimes, have links with indigenous groups. Although many of them are of a noble origin they are generally associated with the *aldeias* and are known as 'outsiders' to the palaces (Ferretti 2000b:74).

Like other entities, *caboclos* are grouped into families finely differentiated by name, 'national' origin, kinship relations, tenure in the world of *encantaria* and even individual qualities (Halloy 2012:180). The more *caboclo/a* performs magic, the higher he or she advances in the hierarchy of the *encantaria*. The more tenure, the more respected they become and the more powerful are their magical capabilities. Through time *caboclos* gain status, wealth and better quality of living. Once a certain caboclo/a has chosen a medium as the 'horse' (*cavalo*) on whom it will 'ride', her entire 'family' is permitted 'passage' 'on top' (*acima*) of that medium whenever they desire to do so. These deities thus form what practitioners relate to as interconnected 'chains' (*correntes*), which cut across descent lines and are referred to as that medium's 'people' (*povo).*

Possession is the pivotal point of connectivity and the site for productive communication with one's 'people'. Mina practitioners relate to possession as phenomenal in two senses. First, mediums are said to have a predestination to 'receive' entities, but they cannot simply choose the time and location of possession. The entities themselves are said to compel mediums to abide by their eschatological calling. When possession suddenly strikes it is therefore treated as inevitable. The medium then has to address the problem, usually through official initiation. Ignoring recurrent manifestations of spirits may bring about illness, madness, discontent and even death. Possession is therefore a communicative ritual with otherworldly forces (Stoller 1997) whose social implications differ significantly according to the medium's position within or outside Mina.

Second, possession is differentiated from regular affective interchange in everyday life both aesthetically and ethically. The aesthetic features of possession include violent muscular convulsions, unselfconscious verbal communication, disoriented movement through space, and reports of interior-bodily saturation with intense otherness. Ethically, possession implies literal incorporation into hierarchical 'chains' in the world of *encantaria* and kinship 'networks' in the world of humans. When they are possessed, initiated mediums assume new ethical commitments towards both peers and spiritual entities, which take shape through bestowals and ritual duties.

The life-history of Pai de Santo Carlos, at whose *terreiro* in São Luís I learnt about Mina practice and cosmology, demonstrates these points. Carlos was born in the *interior* of Maranhão in the mid-1980s and from a young age suffered from mysterious illnesses. These were quickly identified as Carlos' propensity to 'receive' entities. He told me:

…People say that my pregnancy-belly was monitored by a *vodum*. When I was inside my mother, it was the *vodum* who took care of me… When I was born I almost died, had many health problems that appeared from one hour to the next. In reality I was affected by the question of spirituality, I was already receiving entities at the age of one and two. My vital energy was weak since I was only a baby, and they had vital energy more powerful than mine. This affected my body, the function of my organism.

When he was five Carlos was sent to live with his parental grandmother Dona Silvanda in São Luís. Dona Silvanda arranged for Carlos to be baptized at the Mina *terreiro* in which she served as *filha de santo* (an initiated dancer). *Julho Curador* (Julho the Healer), the local *Pai de Santo*, consequently performed a 'service' (*serviço*) that stabilized Carlos' health problems. Nevertheless, when Carlos was seven he experienced his first recorded possession. He took blessing (*benção*) from Seu Manezinho – a *caboclo* from the enchanted Legua family – and suddenly 'fell' (*cair*) into fissures. Carlos described the experiential potency of possession as a form of synesthesia:

…It is like you fell into a bottomless pit, no light, nothing, as if your heart is about to explode from so much acceleration. But at the same time, after this pain goes away, you feel peace, you feel as if you have taken a woman to bed… Then you feel that thing, that pleasure, that relaxation… It is like the ground has been cut-open, as if you try to touch the wall and it turns into water, everything escapes from you… it always begins with dizziness which just gets stronger and stronger. When this happens *that thing has already taken you*, and then it goes by the stages until you are totally possessed.

Carlos continued to suffer from intermittent (and at times violent) possessions. When he was 15 this had become so frequent that he had to stop working. At 19 Carlos was drinking heavily and had by then left his teenage wife with the care of their two babies. Then his life changed:

At that time I was very crazy (*doido*), I didn't know what I was doing. One day I left the house and went roaming through the streets of the city center like a madman. I had no destination. I stopped in front of a house… and a person [who stood there] told me – 'I will take you to a house of one person there'. So I went to the house of the person who is today my Padrinho de Santo – Arão. There was an entity on top (*acima*) of him, called Maria Légua. She told me – 'I have been waiting for you here'… Then she told me my whole life story since I was born until the time I arrived there at the house… she said I had a 'burden' (*carga*), I am a person that has a position (*posição*), and I need to look for a *pai de santo* to make an Orí.

Orí in Yorubá means 'head' (Johnson 2002). It is an initiation ceremony that both reveals and delineates the main entities responsible for the medium's destiny, personal characteristics, and future worship obligations (S. Ferretti 1996, Maggie 1977). In Candomblé and its closely related Mina Jeje-Nagô, it is conducted to 'organize' the medium's 'head' (*cabeça*) and heighten his/her capacities to 'receive' (*receber*) entities[77]. A head is 'owned' by three main *orixás*; various kinds of *voduns* (who represent aspects of the *orixás'* personalities and serve them through the enactment of magic); and an infinite number of *caboclos* (M. Ferretti 2000a, Cohen 2007). By incorporating Carlos to a designated flow of *caboclos* and *voduns* of his chain (*corrente*), Orí publicly confirmed that a transmission of knowledge and symbolic powers has taken place (cf. Favret-Saada 2012).

Carlos' narrative indeed suggests that possession generated 'deeply interior recursivities of considerable complexity within the person, while limiting the influences of the social surround' (Handelman 2004b:218). The 'curvature' of possession can be imagined as having two phases. First it curved 'inwards' to evoke self-transformation that could be glossed as an ethical reworking of the self (viz. Zigon 2007), and then it emanated 'outwards' to sweep through aggregated sets of relations and alter them. This movement engendered discernible forms of intimate linkages, which rested on affective knowledge. Handelman imagines this double movement as 'torqueing':

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[77] As a specifically 'Afro-Brazilian' doctrine, Tambor de Mina originated in the states of Maranhão and Pará in the middle of the 19th Century (M. Ferretti 2000a:25-7). *Casas de Mina* in São Luís were initially separated between Jeje and Nagô 'nations', including their distinctive ritual observations (which differed only slightly). In contemporary Maranhão, the denomination Jeje-Nagô refers to religious syncretism in Tambor de Mina. This pragmatically means that Mina practitioners include both Orixá and Vodun divinities in their 'chains'.

The self-referential existence of cultural forms, their degree of self-organization and self-integrity, is intimately related to issues of recursion. Bateson gives a simple physical example of recursion: a smoke ring, a torus, turning in upon itself, giving itself a separable existence. 'It is, after all,' writes Bateson (1977:246), 'made up of nothing but air marked with a little smoke. It is of the same substance with its 'environment.' But it has duration and location and a certain degree of separation by virtue of its own in-turned motion.' This torus is an in-curving form containing the beginning of elementary self-reference, the hallmark of integrity, and so of self-organization, itself existing through recursion… The social torus is constituted through a double movement: curving inwards, torqueing outwards… (Handelman 2004a:12-13, original quotes).

Carlos was conscious of the role of possession in transforming his own life as well as the lives of meaningful others around him. For example, soon after his encounter with Dona Maria Légua, Carlos moved-in with his new girlfriend Cleidiane. He began practicing purification and possession rites in Cleidiane's house. In parallel, Carlos also started dancing in an established *terreiro*, where he made new contacts[78]. By making his possession episodes a public matter, Carlos managed to create a constructive linkage between his 'internal' world (which includes his relations with the vast array of entities grouped together in his 'chains') and the 'external' social world that surrounded him. In Handelman's (2004) jargon this dynamic suggests highly complex autopoiesis that leads to 'self-closure'. By this Handelman means a movement that completely isolates the ritual phenomenon from its 'surround' only to 'open up' again and expose the transformation it facilitated. The connectivity of 'internal' and 'external' worlds has thus become inseparable from the incessant torqueing of possession, which linked them together. As Carlos said:

…I used to arrive home and Dona Maria Légua used to give me instructions... Sometimes she arrived in my dreams, sometimes when I was half-awake. She used to wash my head with coconut-water, with herbs, making all the baths. That is how my chains (*correntes*) became aligned, my people (*meu povo*) began taking the right path, they started working!

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[78] Carlos had spent most of his childhood and adolescence as a batezeiro (drummer) at Julho Curador's terreiro, which is located in Dona Silvanda's street. When he was more or less 15 Dona Silvanda had an argument with Julho Curador and consequently left the *terreiro* together with several family members. When he was initiated, Carlos therefore chose to dance in a *terreiro* located an hour bus drive away.

In fact, Carlos' *encantados* worked so well that three years after his initiation he managed to build a *terreiro* of his own in Dona Silvanda's garden. Carlos says it was all a plan of 'his people'. It began with Dona Maria Pomba-Gira, who received money and gifts from Carlos's clients and stored this away from his conscious reach. One morning *cabocla* of the Légua family called Dona Teresa possessed Carlos and revealed the 3,600 Reais accumulated to that point. Dona Teresa then passed the money on to Carlos' kinsfolk and ordered that construction begin. Every morning she possessed Carlos to instruct the builders and even personally travelled 'on top' of Carlos to purchase materials in stores. Within three weeks the *terreiro* was erected[79].

By institutionalizing his recurrent possessions Carlos managed to transform negative, harmful or distressful linkages with his entities to productive ones. The 'curvature' of possession initially separated Carlos from everyday sociality in ways that were considered dangerous but then, when it was institutionalized, it 'torqued' back into its social surround to transform it. Possession in and of itself thus pushed towards the proliferation of intimate linkages, diverting the potentially destructive force of the *encantaria* towards personal and collective growth in the mundane.

I wish to further exemplify this notion of proliferation through the following case, which strikingly demonstrates how the autopoiesis of possession – its self-generation and self-organization – is dependent on 'torqueing'. 16 year old Dora – who is Carlos' FZD – lived next door to Carlos' *terreiro* and often participated in the ceremonies as an assistant (who does not 'receive' entities). Dora was 'supposed to be' one of Carlos's *filhas de santo* since she was thought to have the 'sight' (*visão*), that is, she could feel, see and communicate with spiritual entities. Yet, Dora's mother Teresa disapproved her initiation 'before Dora decided what she wanted to do in her life'. Teresa therefore paid Arão to 'tie' (*amarrar*) or 'divert' (*desviar*) Dora's chain to his chains, and thus temporarily 'deactivate' the potentiality for a sudden possession.

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[79] Through the years Carlos' *terreiro* continued to grow. During my fieldwork in 2009-10 Carlos had 5 *filhos* (sons and daughters) de Santo whom he had initiated into Mina; 3 *irmãs* (sisters) de santo, who followed Carlos from the *terreiro* in which he was initiated; several helpers and one *mãe de santo* (Carlos's paternal grandmother Dona Silvanda).

During one of the *festas* I attended at Carlos' *terreiro* Dora was nevertheless possessed by a mysterious child-*cabocla* called Menina Juçareira (the 'Juçareira Girl'). The entity remained 'on top' of Dora for a good hour, violently smashing her body against the walls. She demanded to speak with Arão, the 'owner' of Dora's chain, proclaiming that 'they' (i.e. the entities grouped in her chain) wanted to 'descend' through Dora. Several days later Dora had a dream in which Menina Juçareira demanded that Dora's mother Teresa prepared a doll for her to play with.

Here, as in Carlos' case, possession supplied simultaneous access to 'chains' in the *encataria* and 'chains' in everyday reality so that structured kinship relations, neighborhood sociability and the sociality of the world of *encantaria* were fused together. In fact, possession *collided* (or fused together) sets of relations previously isolated from one another (e.g. Menina Jussareira-Dora with Dora-Teresa). Its 'curve' became a form of relation in and of itself that 'torqued' back into mundane life and into the wild blue yonder of the *encantaria*. It thus modified the hierarchies imbricated in both these cultural milieus.

Ultimately, complex sets of bestowals between kin and kindred, contested memories, amorous involvements and relations with deities all mixed and overlapped during the temporalities of Carlos' and Dora's possessions. The focal points for this overlap were the *festas* in the *terreiro*. Here whole 'chains' from the world of *encantaria* inhabited bodies just as much as different types of relations crossed through particular houses that served as their hubs (see chapter three).

Rather than neatly divide social reality into structure and anti-structure (Turner 1969), the ritual context in which possession was practiced oscillated to transform sets of intimate relations. Don Handelman (2004a:14, brackets mine) imagines this as 'the opening... of space/time, since the movement of living is neither stopped nor blocked, but shifted into itself, enfolded, reorganized, and thereby made different, minimally, partially, utterly, from the movements of whose courses the opening is but a moment'. In the next section I will further elucidate this point by examining the relational engagement of Mina practitioners and their *caboclos*.

Metonymy, Affective Transfer and 'Torqueing' in the Practice of Possession

Carlos and other practitioners indicate that the more they practice possession during *festas* the better they *learn* the character of their *caboclos* (cf. Halloy and Naumescu 2012). Learning is a property of possession that signifies mutually inclusive relationships by which 'this world' and the world of *encantaria* become intra-connected. I claim that this is so for two main reasons.

First, young mediums encounter difficulties in controlling the energies of their entities. Whereas more experienced mediums manage to dance in the *terreiro* for long hours 'under' their entities, at times even 'under' several different entities that 'take turns' in possessing them, younger mediums often lose their balance and are thrown against walls or in the air uncontrollably. Likewise, entities themselves are suspicious of their mediums. *Caboclos* rarely speak through young mediums and it takes them months on end to begin communicating with other visitors of the *terreiro* (Goldman 2007). Only when *caboclos* feel comfortable enough, do they make alliances. This symmetry reflects a process of mutuality similar to everyday sociability, by which relations are instituted through time. It thus relativizes and contextualizes the manifestation of *caboclos* in accordance with individual cases. In fact, practitioners cannot presuppose a structured, predictable form by which their *caboclos* will become a part of theirs and their kin and kindred's lives. As Carlos once exclaimed: 'everything exists in Mina, but everything depends on each head (*cabeça*), each person, each Orixá. If there is a *caboclo* right here he could descend (*descer*) through another person and be completely different, to like completely different things'.

Second, although some *caboclos* are known to be tricksters, malevolent, vengeful or manipulative, most of them end-up proving that they are fun loving and friendly. They usually 'stay' in *festas* after the *voduns* have already 'ascended' back to the *encantaria*, walk between the visitors, greet, speak, and laugh, sometimes drink or smoke; and altogether 'pay compliments to their assistants in a more affective mode and less formal than that of *voduns* and *gentis*' (M. Ferretti 2000a:5). In fact, more often than not *caboclos* present themselves in an egalitarian

fashion rather than as autocratic or intimidating figures. Seu Manezinho Legua, for example, is known to be reckless and vulgar but while he manifests 'on top' of Carlos he is quiet and restrained. This is so, as Carlos indicated, simply because Seu Manezinho knows Carlos 'doesn't like these things'. In the process of transmission of religious values *Caboclos* thus *acquire* (or 'earn') relationships rather than impose them on their mediums and their kin.

This emphasis on mutuality and 'learning' suggests that during the temporality of possession, relations between humans and entities are just as historical and ethically contested as the relationships between humans themselves (Boddy 1994). Evidently, both these kinds of relations are overwhelmingly performed and sustained through affective transfers. They include light-hearted conversation, play (*brincadeira*), joking relations, demonstration of 'respect', the sharing of food and drinks, and some forms of somatic interchange (some entities even marry flesh and blood partners, which suggests they sometimes have sex). Ultimately, entities and humans invest affects in one another in ways that enable the divine to divulge itself through the mundane just as much as the mundane can enunciate itself through the divine. Likewise, while humans adjust to the caprices of *caboclos,* the latter also must learn to accept the caprices and idiosyncrasies of their mediums (cf. Cunha and Simão-Junior 2011, Documentary Video).

Under this framework it is possible to argue that the manifestation of *caboclos* during possession is metonymic to the sets of relations it interrupts. Primarily, this is so because the relations medium-*caboclo* makes part of the larger scope of relations between the medium and his or her peers, as well as those between *caboclos* and their enchanted families. Possession is an open 'valve' that enables these types of relations to come in contact. Secondly, rather than emulate one another, medium-kin relations, medium-*caboclo* relations and *caboclo-caboclo* relations all belong to *the same template* of affective interchange; including their contested histories and gradual recognition of intimate familiarity (Ochoa 2010). As a relation in and of itself, possession thus contains this *entire structure* within itself.

Caboclos thus conceptually become an intermediary category between humans and spiritual entities at large. Their manifestation signifies the permanent incorporation of a particular medium to a particular chain of entities, whose members become concrete actors in the mundane (M. Ferretti 2000a). Symmetrically, the mediums are affiliated to their entity's families as their respective sons or daughters (*filho/a de santo*). Formal kinship linkages thus entail incest prohibitions and other obligations, which interconnect these ritualized sets of intimate relations with everyday sociality[80]. Relations between mediums and their *caboclos* become intrinsic to the larger matrix of interconnected sets of intimate relations in which the medium is aggregated.

During possession *caboclos* flow across mundane and divine contexts freely, and this instantiates a channel of connectivity between these worlds. Possession may thus be seen as a 'pocket of order that otherwise would be dismissed as 'aberrations' or 'disorder'' (Mosko 2005:12, original quotations). Over time the aesthetic properties of recurrent possessions become routinized as a bodily practice that takes part in the shaping of all types of relations surrounding a medium/person, with both humans and entities (viz. Mauss 2002[1936], Bourdieu 1990). Potentially violent 'torqueing' is thus routinized, controlled and shaped socially.

As opposed to the somatic climax exhibited through possession RITORs, Evangelical Christian rites in Maranhão work to *reduce* possibilities for ecstatic sensory alteration. Through participation in sermons and gatherings – which overwhelmingly emphasize the speaking-out of and listening to the Word of God (*a palavra de Deus*) – practitioners are procedurally expected to stop drinking and smoking, begin wearing modest cloths and try to be sexually modest. I will now turn to deal with prayer RITORs in Evangelical contexts in Maranhão, which emit a different kind of 'torqueing' towards such generation of a 'Christian Conscience'.

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[80] For example, there is an imperative for inclusiveness and mutual assistance between dancers in the *terreiro*. Sexual relations between *pais/mães* and *filhos/filhas* de santo, as well as other 'grades' of intimate relations in the terreiro, are considered taboo. Obligations indeed include ritual prescriptions to divine entities but also the acceptance of hierarchies within terreiro routine lifestyle (e.g. cooking and serving food to the *pai/mãe de santo*).

Generating Conscience through *Oração:* Christian-Evangelical RITORs in Maranhão

Evangelicals in Maranhão distinguish between different types of oral performances (Harding 2000:42). These are *orar/oração* (orate), *rezar* (pray/prayer), *louvar* (praise/glorify), and *pregar/pregaçã* (preach/witness). While *oração* can be carried out virtually everywhere and by anyone, the other formulations are associated with figures of authority and instituted ritual context (referred to as *culto* or 'service'). Here I focus on *oração* as a speech-act RITOR whose relatively 'flat' curvature entails a slow transformation of intimate relations in the mundane through time.

Take the following *oração* as a typical example. It was carried-out by the Presbyterian Pastor Darci facing the sickbed of 40 years old Genilson, who in year 2000 had become quadriplegic after he was shot in the back of the neck by a robber while he was living in São Paulo. Since then he has been living in his parents' house in a village in the *interior* of Maranhão, completely helpless and with a notable depression. We stood around Genilson's bed – Darci, Pastor Wilson, Genilson's father and myself – and closed our eyes. We listened to Darci's deep, secure, voice:

Oh God. God of mercy, God of all-mighty power, you are our sovereign, you are our creator… Now, Lord, you know your stakes in relation to Genilson your son, who has already confessed to you… and is journeying with you in his heart. Lord, *help* Genilson, oh Father! Take responsibility over this life, my God. Oh, beloved God, strengthen his organism, his body, and strengthen also his *conscience*, his thinking, his ideas, his heart. Beloved God, give him comfort, give him stability, give him assurance (*confiança*), plenty of faith, perseverance my Lord, (in) your ways and your greatness, so that he will always be able to talk to the Lord. With joy we thank you, it is happiness to praise you, and in moments of difficulty, Oh Father, (moments) of pain and tribulation, that he be able to direct his gaze to You… so that he will see your bliss; Oh Lord, pour from your bliss, (and some) consolation… over this life. Prevent all discomfort and pain, so that the Lord will be helping Genilson in everything. God! Look at the other people that reside here and take responsibility, oh my Father (*toma conta meu pai*)! Help with grace, strength and health to your children my Father, take responsibility over this house, this environment here, the garden [*sítio*], the lands, everything that they grow, Father, HELP! Pay attention God, and bless them. We thank you in the name of Jesus your Son. Amen.

I will use two levels of analysis to include both the textual form (syntax) and its ascribed content (semantics). Textually, this *oração* demarcates a time and a space for experiential immersion with the positive affective force-relations shared vertically with God. It is rhetorically characterized by a fusion of tenses, pronouns and speech styles, intertwining pompous and formal Portuguese with down to earth, everyday Maranhense slang (viz. 'now, Lord, you know your stakes…' or '*toma conta*', which is a highly informal statement). This introduces a heteroglot quality to Darci's monologue (Bakhtin 1994[1981]:74-80), which invokes an ideological polyphony shrouded under the authority of a unitarily authoritative voice (De Certeau 1980:8)[81]. The different 'socio-ideological groups' (Bakhtin 1994:75) imbued in the text (Faith Culture followers, peasants, 'humanity', Genilson's family) ultimately compete over the appropriation of the emotional harmony which is God, rather than simply absorb it effortlessly. This underlying contestation signifies active enhancement and a certain pragmatism that manifests in such practices as gazing at and speaking to the Lord. The call for God to 'take responsibility' ultimately constitutes Him as omnipresent *responder* rather than as indifferent, passive or silent bystander to the *oração*.

Within the acceptable morphology of *oração*, words are not merely indicative in the sense they do not only convey certain propositions about God or even about indwelling Christian Faith. Rather, approaching God by means of *oração* also necessarily serves as an indirect speech-act that targets the crowd of listeners (especially Genilson). As with Fundamentalist witnessing in the USA, the speaker's monologue reinstates 'a relationship in which the performer assumes responsibility for a display of competence, indirectly instructs the listener about how to interpret messages, and invites, elicits, participation' (Harding 2000:42). This way, as Coleman (2000:131) has it, 'words come to create the very reality they purport to describe. Words of joy create happiness, and those of defeat result in despair' (cf. Crapanzano 2000:14 for a similar argument). Beyond devotion itself, Darci thus tried to use the power of words in order to evoke some sense of 'joy' in Genilson.

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[81] By *heteroglossia* Bakhtin aims to describe the coexistence of distinctive varieties within a single narrative. It is possible to decode various different subject-positions 'hiding' under a single speech style.

Crucially, I am not claiming that words *always* create reality. There are instances in which words are merely empty vessels or floating signifiers. In this context, however, words seem to have a generative power as the medium by which affective linkage with God becomes experientially possible. This creative rhetoric force is locally seen to constitute a Christian 'conscience' and self-control; two aspects of a Protestant representational moral economy that Webb Keane (2002:74-84) characterizes as 'embodied dematerialization' focused on sincerity, authenticity and subjective freedom (cf. Asad 1993)[82]. Darci's oração could only become meaningful for Genilson through this active pursuit of conscience, freedom and spiritual growth.

The congenial style advanced by Darci ultimately produces the immanence of complacency, consolation and perpetual benevolence as a property of continuous affective relations with God. Oração precipitates the appropriation of Darci's discourse as a mediator of relationships between self and other (Bakhtin 1994:77). At the same time it repetitively cites the sources and conventions of spiritual authority (viz. 'in the name of Jesus your son') as preconditions for the work of conscience (Butler 1993:12-16). Through redundant *orações* (as either speaker or listener) 'the Holy Spirit penetrates the conscious mind and becomes a voice, a real person, who begins to recast [the practitioner's] inner speech… [This] seems to alter the very chemistry of desire' (Harding 2000:47, brackets mine). Such process of emulation must consummate in the development of an independent, self-conscious, inner voice. As Bakhtin (1994:79) brilliantly puts it:

Consciousness awakens to independent ideological life precisely in a world of alien discourses surrounding it… when thought begins to work in an independent, experimenting and discriminating way, what first occurs is a separation between internally persuasive discourse and authoritarian enforced discourse, along with a rejection of those congeries of discourse that do not matter to us, that do not touch us… one's own discourse and one's own voice, although born of another or dynamically stimulated by another, will sooner or later begin to liberate themselves from the authority of the other's discourse.

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[82] John Langshaw Austin (1962:12) argues that everyday life is replete with situations 'by which saying something is doing something'. By saying 'I do' in a marriage ceremony, for example, a person is not merely reporting on reality but actually producing it.

This leads to 'content'. Tropes such as 'the hands of God', 'journey with God in one's heart', 'strengthen his ideas', or 'pour your bliss' constitute semantic contingency between figurative images and affective states of being (cf. Oswick, Putnam and Keenoy 2004). This consorts distinctive empirical domains of thought and experience. 'Not only is meaning constructed in such a process through the interplay of distinct tropes, but the same symbolic elements… figure in different tropic capacities at different levels of the structure of the same ritual, myth or other type of meaningful construct' (Turner 1991:150). For that reason 'a metaphysical concept of consciousness is essential for explaining how the many fragments (of discourse) come to be construed as part of a single self-identifying (Evangelical) subject' (Asad 1993:15, brackets mine).

In that sense *oração* cultivates commitments to meaningful others – who include the Divine Grace – and it thus becomes equivalent to ethical labour (Lambek 2010b:55, Arendt 1958). Through time the tropic features of *oração,* as well as its structural redundancy, are appropriated as modes of communication within a community of speakers and listeners (Harding 2000). This elicits gradual self-liberation from competing authoritarian discourses. The newly converted Christian then truly makes part of the consistent becoming of the Kingdom of God (Van der Veer 1996:14-18).

My point is that both the syntax and the semantics of Darci's oração deploy affect-driven logic (Massumi 2010:55), that is, a logic characterizing certain on-going affective relationships as *intrinsic* to salvation (e.g. Genilson and God, Genilson and his family, and indirectly them with the congregation). In that respect, repeated *orações* also relate 'biblical' reasoning to everyday events through a collective 'we'; which includes simultaneously the speaker, his/her audience and God (Coleman 2000:124). Since both common practitioners and pastors engage in *orações* far more frequently than any other religious activity, these speech-acts gradually prescribe the acquisition of a particular kind of affective force-relations in everyday life (Seigworth and Gregg 2010), rather than merely represent an 'internal' conviction. It is to the analysis of these particularly 'Evangelical' affective relations that I now turn.

The 'Curve' of Oração: 'Conversion' to Evangelical-Christianity

For most of his childhood and adolescent years, my friend Wilson was a devoted Catholic and a member of the Youth Groups of the Catholic Church in Santo-Amaro. He was even appointed to be a Catechism teacher as early as 15 years of age and consequently joined a preparatory seminar for youth aspiring for sacerdotal service. Around that time, however, Wilson started questioning his teachers about idolatry and its literal contrast with the scriptures. Consequently he was dismissed from the route to priesthood. He told me:

I began feeling that God wanted more from me… I was there (in the Catholic Church) but I didn't belong anymore to their way of thinking… when I was 14 I had a very intense dream (*um sonho muito forte*). I dreamt that all the images (of saints) that were hung on the columns of the Church (in Santo Amaro) left their spots to attack me. First they tried to seduce me to admire them and when this didn't work they began attacking me. I began running away from them.

Wilson nevertheless remained in the Catholic Church for several more years. He took part in regular youth movement activities and taught catechism. When he was 20, however, he went through the single most important experience that was to become foundational to his eventual 'conversion'. I quote Wilson's story at length:

I served in the army base in Alcântara (across the bay from São Luís, about three hours sail away), so I used to come back home by boat every weekend... In one of these journeys all of a sudden we saw white smoke coming up, which quickly became black… It was in the middle of the ocean, about five kilometres from the shore. When I tried to enter the cabin to take a life-jacket, it was all black with smoke… so I stayed on the deck and began orating (*orar*) to God in a loud voice. I said: 'my lord (*Senhor*) Deus, I know that there is no other God but you – I know that Maria cannot hear me, I know that João cannot hear me, I know that São Pedro cannot hear me, I know that none of the saints can hear me – but I know that You can save me, Jesus. And if you save me, I will serve you, I will become a *crente*[83]. Around me there was shouting and panic. I

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didn't want to jump into the water because I don't know how to swim… (but) the flames were closing in and you could already feel their heat… In that moment I cried out loud: 'Father, my life is in your hands'. I climbed to the other side of the fence, holding, preparing to throw myself, imagining that something must happen so I will be saved. All of a sudden I felt something next to my leg. It was a life jacket hung right there from the external side of the deck. I pulled it towards me and threw myself into the water.

Wilson stayed inside the water for an hour and a half before he and others were rescued by rescue ships. Their original ship sunk, causing the death of four passengers. When he arrived on the shore Wilson was exhausted and overwhelmed. He went directly to the Catholic Church, which he says had been at the time 'the only religious reference I had'. He described that experience:

I entered, soaking wet, barefoot but with a uniform... I kneeled down and thanked God. I cried… I have never been in such intense situation (*tão forte*), in such salvation. It is a time of doubt – you deposit your faith but at the same time the demon (*o demônio*) takes charge over you at a certain moment... Despite of all that fear, something created an impulse in me (to believe that he would be saved). When I felt that life-jacket next to my legs I immediately said 'thank you, my Lord'… I had the certainty that there was no other explanation for me finding a life jacket exactly there. There was no other life jacket fixed in such a way from the outside of the deck around the whole boat. And there were so many people there, how come none of them saw that life-jacket before me? I think it was a miracle done for me.

After that awesome experience, Wilson decided that he would look for an Evangelical congregation in which to serve God. In the following year Wilson and his wife Tati thus began attending sermons and commemorations (*cultos*) in different Evangelical churches in Santo-Amaro. They sought the most suitable for their own spiritual convictions. During this time Wilson was continuously communicating with God through daily episodes of *oração*, asking for the strength to make the right choice. On Holy Friday the next year Wilson and Tati attended a *culto* at the charismatic church *Assembleia de Deus* (Assembly of God) in Santo-Amaro (see Chesnut 1997). When the local pastor began singing about depositing your life to Christ, Wilson remembered the promise he had made in the ocean. He told me of what followed:

I realized that in the very moment I had done that *oração* (at sea), something different happened. I was desperate and that moment gave me peace, it gave me some equilibrium at the very least. So when they appealed to people to come forward to the altar and hand their life over to Jesus, I went along. Actually my handing-over (*entrega*) was there on the boat, but at the church it was a public testimony… I felt a huge force from within me, like a magnet that pulls you. It was exactly the same feeling I had felt on the boat when I did that *oração* to Jesus. I felt shivers throughout my body, I do not know how to describe it, you feel something that is touching you and as if 'penetrating' into your life. At the same time you also feel something flowing (*fludindo*) from you… You begin to cry and at the same time you feel a great peace, a great relief.

The self-referential constitution of a Christian 'conscience' is the pivotal aspect of Wilson's process of conversion, which is methodologically inseparable from the appropriation of *oração* as effective medium of communication with God. The official stamp was celebrated publically in church but that merely represented an 'internal' emotional shift that has been taking place over a long period of time. Sequences of *orações* that lasted for years were intrinsic to Wilson and his wife's evolving 'conscience', as well as to their decision to join the Assembly of God. Wilson told me that *orações* also underscored their decision to *leave* the congregation some years later and join the Presbyterian Church. Crucially, this crawling process swept through and rearranged aggregated sets of intimate relations. For example, Wilson and his wife's 'conversion' influenced Wilson's parents and some of his brothers to join Evangelical circles. On the other hand, distancing from the Catholic congregation (and later from the Assembly of God itself) also meant the suspension of ties with old friends.

In the case of *oração* change is slow, but nevertheless profound and autopoeitic. Unlike possession – which evinces a 'deep' curvature that leads to 'closure' – the curvature of *oração* is relatively 'flat'. Its performativity simply is too contiguous with everyday discursive dialogues so to create a complete 'vortex' inwards. Hence it does not bring about full closure or anti-climax. Yet, the accumulative experience of emotional passages through years of *orações* can ultimately be imagined as a slow movement of torqueing, 'recognizing itself within itself, and on the basis of this

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self-integrity moving outwards, driving into broader cosmic and social worlds' (Handelman 2004a:13). If both *oração* and possession RITORs take part in the cosmogensis of relatedness despite their differentiated 'curves', a comparison between the ethical subjectivities produced by *oração* and those produced by possession RITORs is required. It is to that task that I now turn.

The Play Form of *Oração* and Possession: Invisibility as 'Ordinary Ethics'

As public events, the RITORs I surveyed above convey new ethical prescriptions for 'being with' others in the course of daily events (Pyyhtinen 2010). Robbins (2004a) calls such a process 'moral reorientation', which manifests in the adoption of new tastes and preferences. For example, balancing between doing good (*fazer o bem*) and doing evil (*fazer o mal*) becomes crucial to forms of subjection associated with an Afro-Brazilian religious lifestyle (Selka 2010:304). For Evangelicals, avoiding temptation becomes necessary to achieve a sense of spiritual growth (Harding 2000).

Across Brazil, Christian-Evangelical and Afro-Brazilian practitioners treat their cosmogonic disciplines as mutually exclusive on these moral grounds (Gonçalves da Silva 2007). While Mina practitioners, priests and healers (*pajés*) speak about possession as an event that marks intimate connectivity with spiritual entities, Evangelicals in Maranhão describe possession as profoundly 'foreign', impersonal, or alienating (cf. Lamberth 1999). Under these terms possession is seen to be the work of demons, who seek to 'steal, kill and destroy' (*robar, matar e destruir*), as well as to 'deceive' (*enganar*) the righteous. They do that by suspending a person's 'rationale', 'consciousness' and 'personality'. Pastor Wilson, for example, made the following comparison:

My faith in Jesus and another's faith in various entities that possess him are antagonistic… Whoever receives these entities later don't remember what happened to them… You can see that these people are outside of themselves and their own intellectual domain… Now, I am a channel of God when he manifests in the world (e.g. glossolalia) but this does not invade my intellect. God doesn't change my personality, he waits for me to work it out. He gives me tools… but he does not turn-off that person who is me.

Wilson insists on a clear distinction between Evangelical and Afro-Brazilian rites, which corresponds to the relation malevolent:unselfconscious::benevolent:self-conscious. The alleged disembodiment of self during possession here becomes the major aspect marking the *radical* discontinuity of this event from its social surround, as opposed to a more subtle, informed discontinuity, underscoring Evangelical immersion with the holy spirit (cf. Robbins 2004b:127).

Mina practitioners often condemn Evangelicals as righteous, conservative and hypocrites. Carlos even told me that those practitioners of Afro-Brazilian doctrines who also frequent Evangelical churches are 'serving the enemy'. He did not explain what that meant. On the other hand, affiliation with Catholicism is not considered problematic. Analysing why that might be so is beyond the scope of this work. I will suffice with mentioning that according to Mina cosmology, a monotheistic Catholicized God is hierarchically located above all other entities, including the *orixás*, and that many African *vodums* have been creolized with Catholic Saints (cf. S. Ferretti 1996)[84].

I claim that both these polarized moral discourses do not in fact break away from hegemonic models of relatedness (Selka 2010). Firstly, this is so because in the context of low-income Maranhão the 'religious' domain cannot be seen as radically separated from those of kinship, economy or other spheres of everyday life (Berliner and Sarró 2007). Family members and house aggregates regularly frequent churches or *terreiros* so that exchange relations and affective transfers in these domains engender domestic and public spaces, profane and ritual temporalities, mundane and pious speech styles. Moreover, many Evangelical churches, like Carlos' *terreiro*, are located in back yards or in close proximity to residential houses. These buildings are permeable to noise and are semi-open to 'the street' (see chapter three). During ceremonies it is common to hear loud music from a nearby house or even a sermon given in a nearby establishment.

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[84] For example, in a healing ritual I once observed in the *interior* of Maranhão the local *pajé* (healer) began the ceremony with a collective reciting of *Pai Nosso* (Our Father). Before the emergence of 'hyphenated identities', hybrids' and 'cyborgs' in social theory, Edurado (1966[1948]) related to the religions of Maranhão as Afro-Catholic. Working with the analytic framework of 'acculturation', scholars of the time (e.g. Freyre 1960, Bastide 1978) were preoccupied with describing the synchronization between African and European derived cosmologies. For criticism on 'syncretism' and 'acculturaion' see Stewart (2010) and Hannertz (1996).

Secondly, most of the vocabulary practitioners use to describe their relations with the divine through both possession and *oração* coincides with those forms of transfer I grouped under the term 'affective knowledge'. In that sense the practice of new cosmogonies contingently evokes *commonplace* imageries of intimacy, ethics and interconnectedness (Moore 2011); rather than entail completely novel emotive styles (Reddy 2001) and tropes.

'Conversion' and initiation certainly are major life crisis events, but in the context of Maranhão they employ discursive epiphanies and ubiquitous scripts that are overwhelmingly familiar in mundane sociality[85]. In that sense, both *oração* and possession are embedded in routinized forms of ethical labor. I here follow Veena Das (2012) and Michael Lambek (2010b), who describe the habitual and ordinary tasks of routine living as the space in which persons reconstitute the ethical criteria that interconnect them with meaningful others. Especially salient after crisis, loss, or rupture, everyday life 'provides a therapy for the very violation from which it suffered' (Das 2012:146). This can be applied to the adoption of possession and *oração* RITORs as 'ordinary ethics' in the incessant becoming of religious personhood. In both life-history cases presented above, for example, my interlocutors reported they achieved a sense of emotional and moral integrity only when these forms of communication with intense otherness were institutionalized.

It is evident that practitioners increasingly engage in public episodes of *oração* and possession as they visibly embrace a 'cosmogonic' lifestyle. By that I mean that ritual actions indeed 'reflect' the appropriation of new commitments towards kin and deities (Lambek 2010a:18); but these same commitments also produce new criteria by which to evaluate ritual action itself. Michael Lambek (Lambek 2010b:56) masterfully captures this subtlety, claiming that 'if performance establishes the criteria by which subsequent practice is engaged and evaluated, so

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[85] This significantly differs from religious 'conversion' in my own country Israel. When 'secular' (i.e. none-practicing) persons 'repent', they adopt a rigorous Jewish Orthodox lifestyle (*Teshuva*, in Hebrew). Consequently they often transform every aspect of their lives; from dressing codes through observation of Jewish Law to acceptance of new moral convictions and the proclamation of new political ideas. I think that in Maranhão change associated with 'conversion' or initiation is less radical because sociality itself is vested in religious moralities that regularly permeate mundane activities.

too practical judgment generates new performances, that is, relatively formal acts and utterances that recalibrate the criteria and shift the ethical context'. As they embed cosmogonic events in ordinary forms of sociality, practitioners thus acknowledge this shifting ethical register (Das 2010:396-7). Engagement with *oração* leads to more and more *orações*, which may be carried out in virtually every location or time of day. Even after 'conversion' the ritual continues to furnish the cultivation of intimate relations with God. Wilson's life-history demonstrates that *oração* also stands at the centre of social aggregation, at home or in the neighbourhood, as the main ritual by which persons share Evangelical lifestyles predicated on a Christian Conscience.

Similarly, after a series of unwitting possessions, Tambor de Mina practitioners often go through formal initiation. They embark on a spiritual path that includes further possessions, by which they further constitute relations with both worldly and otherworldly beings. For example, in Dora's recurrent possessions she kept revealing more and more details about the entities grouped in her 'chain', including their interests in and explicit demands from Dora. Or, sequences of *orações* make an implicit separation between the difficulties and anguish associated with mundane life on earth and the consolation, peace and eternal bliss associated with the Heavens.

Once RITORS such as possession and oração become 'ordinary ethics' they also emphasize elements of play (Levi-Strauss 1966:30-33). As I claimed in chapter four, Roger Caillois (2010) offers a typology of four main types of play: competition (*agôn*), chance (*alea*), simulation (*mimicry*) and vertigo (*ilinx*). These manifest in both *oração* and possession. For example, the heteroglot quality of *oração* – which simultaneously addresses God and the crowd of listeners – encourages a subliminal competition between contrasting narratives as intrinsic to the constitution of a Christian conscience. Magic and healing in Tambor de Mina, as well as petitions or promises made towards God in an Evangelical context, are both invested with an element of chance. Simulation and mimicry is central to both *oração* and possession because in both cases practitioners learn how to perform from more experienced figures. Finally, while possession seems to include a great deal of

ilinx, thrill, anesthesia and vertigo; the phenomenality of *oração* consists in perfecting one's control over bodily catharsis. Combinations of these elements of play thus become intrinsic to the visible performance of moral personhood in both these cosmogonic doctrines.

O*ração* and possession also share with play-zones the elementary features that structure them as distinctive from everyday sociality (viz. Huizinga 2000). These features concern clear demarcation of time and space, voluntary engagement, manipulation on symbols, and rules that determine permissible or taboo actions (Handelman 1998)[86]. This also includes a measure of uncertainty: in oração there is an assumption that God will listen entwined with the recognition that He might choose not to respond or 'take responsibility'. In possession the visual dualism of the medium – who is at once him/herself and the possessing entity – suggest that he/she might be both or maybe neither (Handelman 1998). Incessant rumours about 'charlatan' (sic.) *pais/mães* de *santo* attribute a measure of uncertainty to the constitution of relationshiops with figures of authority in Mina and their entities. Importantly, both these RITORs convey a meta-message that transcends the activity itself (Stromberg 2009:101-5). In both cases this relates to the continuous ethical work that those RITORs bring forth, namely, the acquisition of a religious personhood that visibly represents certain moral discourses (Halloy and Naumescu 2012:168).

Crucially, elements of play produce *spaces of invisibility* as intrinsic to this process of visible moral becoming. Possession, for example, literally renders invisible the range of communicative and sensual faculties normally associated with the medium. For a determinate period of time the medium is simply not there. Every verbal communication or bodily gesture is thus associated with the entity. In that sense sorcery or witchcraft that is done during the temporality of possession also includes the effects of invisibility. In the case of sorcery and love-magic, for example, sorcerers themselves are seldom seen to be responsible for the trouble or misfortune that affected victims. Responsibility is attributed to the rival parties who issued witchcraft and paid for it.

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[86] It is true that at times possession is involuntary and unexpected. Yet, after initiation, this happens seldom.

This has ethical consequences precisely because possession renders invisible the regular criteria by which value judgment is applied (cf. Lambek 2010b:54-58). For example, a *travesti* called Iris from Santo-Amaro was once possessed by one of her entities when the latter was very angry at her. In an attack of rage the entity began cutting Iris' long beautiful hair and then set it on fire. Assistants at the *terreiro* quickly smothered the flames and saved Iris' life. I heard of other such risky or edgy episodes, wherein full responsibility for actions was attributed to the *encantados* rather than to their mediums. Such events range from homosexual intercourse undertaken by 'officially' heterosexual men when possessed, to murder.

Play in *oração* entails semiotic invisibility. The narrative always begins with approach to God, the mentioning of Jesus his son somewhere in the middle, and a 'closure' appealing again to the source of divine authority. It thus elevates and highlights a divine power that transposes mundane causality, and hence renders such causality temporarily invisible. Since *oração* attributes every emotional and physical state of being to the works of the Holy Spirit, it 'hides' psychological and social sources of affliction. The hetroglot quality of the narrative elevates collective interest on the expense of individual intentionality or political authority. When *oração* is voiced publically, common rhetorical techniques are swallowed by and directed to the service of this collective setting. As a narrative, *oração* thus projects a bright light on one collectively framed goal – for example the wellbeing of Genilson and his family – and casts shadows on other relevant issues[87].

Rather than conceive of possession and *oração* RITORs as antagonistic, it is thus possible to think about them as different patterns of ethical labour that are derived from similar notions of sociality. Both *oração* and possession produce invisibility as an intrinsic, inseparable aspect of the visible production of religious moral personhood. In other words, it would have been impossible to perform the visible demands of certain reproductive scripts, norms, conventions, commitments

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[87] These can be associated with the fact that Genilson really was depressed and bored, that he had no medical or rehabilitation facilities, that the financial situation of the family was not good, and that according to Evangelical convictions salvation from all these problems will only arrive after death anyways.

and ethical reworking of selves in everyday life if it was not for those moments of silence, aberration and invisibility that these RITORs entail. Ultimately, *oração* and possession are predicated on a similar moral injunction for the production of invisibility although they contribute to the cosmogensis of networks of relatedness in different forms.

Conclusion: RITORs and the Transformation of Relatedness

During the temporalities of both possession and *oração* it is possible to identify themes of hierarchy, obedience and deference side by side with the exchange of egalitarian affective transfer. In possession, this comes about through the dialectic between submitting to the exigencies of *caboclos* while exchanging affects with them on equal terms. In *oração* this comes down to the dialectic ways by which the manifest power of God within the practitioner's body interacts with practitioners' overt 'friendly' relation with Him, which entails the exchange of favours, gifts and the expression of mutual 'love'. I claim that the aesthetics of possession do not exclusively 'push' towards an ethical model of relatedness based on notions of egalitarian affective transfer (viz. 'detotalization'); just as much as the aesthetics of *oração* do not exclusively push towards an ethical models of relatedness based on hierarchic indebtedness (viz. 'totalization').

The difference between these RITORs lies in the scope of 'shifting' between egalitarian and hierarchic modalities of affective transfer. This manifests in ritual design, which demands different forms of self-transformation. Mina practitioners depend more and more on 'closed' curvatures as they strive to constitute viable intimate relations that stretch through to the world of enchantment (*encantaria*). Evangelicals depend more and more on the 'flat' curvature of *oração* as they strive to disconnect from the sins of 'this world' and live Under the Word of God (*sob a palavra de Deus*). Although I used Josias' wedding mainly for methodological purposes, I think its design also reflects a similar process. There, fusion between 'Evangelical' and 'Jewish' symbols created a spatiotemporal universe that facilitated access to both these doctrines simultaneously.

Roberto DaMatta (1997) correctly points out that codes of both hierarchy and egalitarianism in Brazilian society are intrinsically reproduced within generalized cultural forms (like rituals), rather than merely given to personal interests, tastes and preferences (Robbins 2007). Yet, this does not automatically imply that reproducing cultural values is mechanical or unreflective or even isolated from the regular rhythm of everyday sociality (Latour 2005). For example, you can decide if and how you wish to 'assume responsibility' over your actions or not, without that significantly interfering with generalized (or structured) social values (Graeber 2007:30-36). In the context of religious initiation this can be done in various ways that include aversion, as Dora's case suggest. The dialectic between general cosmology and everyday actions thus remains.

In the next chapter I will think of how cosmological imagery locally manifests in the realm of relatedness. I will analyse a foundation myth and argue that as it is told, commemorated and refined through grand scale public festivities, the historicity of intimacy, desire and relatedness at large in contemporary Maranhão is intrinsically interwoven with contemporary kinship dynamics. I will demonstrate this ethnographically and attempt to challenge the assumption that the story Maranhenses tell themselves about the formation of their social cosmos only emphasizes popular resistance to invincible hierarchic structures (Linger 2005).

Chapter Six: Historicization and the Cosmology of Kinship Relations

Historiography and Historicity in Contemporary Maranhão

The sociocultural manifestation of '*Brasilidade'* in Maranhão cannot simply be taken for granted[88]. How did the once-segregated multitude of slaves from different African origins (cf. Pereira 2009, Eduardo 1966); various Amerindian groups (Lacroix 2008); and 'white' agents of European Colonialism become a self-identified 'people'?

The canon for a History of Maranhão (Meireles 1960) partakes from the establishment of the Fortress of São Luís in 1612 by Frenchman Daniel de la Toche. This brought forth armed struggle between Portugal and France, supported by rival Tupinambá groups, and the consequent constitution of the province of *Maranhão e Grão-Pará* as a Portuguese territory for colonial exploitation (Linger 1992). In 1682 the Portuguese established a trading company to monopolize commerce between the colony and the metropolis (de Lima 2006). The increasing reliance on African slave labor in the sugar-cane, tobacco and cotton plantations of Maranhão resulted in almost three centuries of brutal human trafficking, during which São Luís has become one of the largest slave ports in Latin America (Eduardo 1966; Ramos 1951, Bastide 1978).

Gradual economic downfall in Maranhão – associated with the decline of coffee production since the 1850s and slavery abolition in May 1888 – nonetheless failed to precipitate the collapse of local colonial class hierarchies (cf. Costa 2006). A series of reigning oligarchs are still portrayed by contemporary scholars (and commonplace *maranhenses*) to have deliberately preserved this condition of socioeconomic decadence, political corruption and subaltern modernity in the *Tristes Tropiques* of Maranhão ever since (Gonçalves 2000; cf. Mignolo 2000).

Daniel Linger (1992 and 2005), for example, locates this meta-historical narrative at the backdrop of his analyses of violence and street-fights (*briga*) in São Luís. He argues that by intermittently juxtaposing different constellations of 'The People' to governing apparatuses, the 'hegemony of discontent' (Linger 2005:79-110) has locally come to produce a 'common sense of

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[88] Brasilidade is the commonsense that unite Portuguese America as one Nation State (cf. Ribeiro 2000).

power [which] permeates social relations and reaches deeply into people' (Linger 2005, 110). By this view 'discontent in São Luís is, strangely, part and parcel of a durable political structure: a handful of elite patrons use popular revolt as a tactic in their own private power game' (ibid:108).

Although at times utilized strategically by political pressure groups in Maranhão (Gonçalves 2000), during my fieldwork the historicized marginality of the masses was rarely mobilized in terms of local collective identities. None of my research interlocutors, for example, ever recounted to me the story of Manuel Beckman (Bequimão), who in 1684 led in Maranhão one of the first nativist revolts in the New World against Colonial economic domination. The 'Balaiada' (1838-1841) – one of the largest Brazilian libertarian uprisings – took place in Maranhão almost 60 years before the atrocities of the Canudos affair (1897) but is virtually unknown to most of my research interlocutors (see da Cunha 1940 on Canudos; Serra 2008[1946] on the Balaiada)[89].

Alternatively, Maranhenses celebrate on a grand popular scale a colossal repertoire of legends, tales and myths. These amount to a corpus of shared knowledge, which illustrates the forces that sustain, shape and transform local sociality at large. For example, it is said that under the island of São Luís lays a huge serpent that is constantly growing. When its head touches its tail the serpent will shred the city to pieces (Reis 2008:56). Or, Dona Ana Jansen (1793-1869), a fearsome slave patron, still haunts the souls of fugitive slaves in São Luís on full-moon Friday nights. It is said that 'Donana's' carriage leaves the cemetery of Gavião to roam the city center harnessed to headless horses and guided by a decapitated slave; a sign of Donana's cruelty (Reis 2008:37).

Throughout Maranhão there are hundreds more such mythical articulations of 'local knowledge' (Geertz 1983). Like the legend of Boto I analyzed in chapter one, these popular myths add up to a sense of a shared 'cosmos' in Maranhão, an intrinsic cultural logic on which the

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[89] In 1684 Bequimão was hanged after declaring 'I die happy for the People of Maranhão!' (Linger 1992:20). There is a city bearing his name in the *interior* of Maranhão. Canudos is one of the founding myths of modern Brazilian constitutional jurisprudence. In 1897 the Brazilian Army massacred up to 20 thousand members of a millenarian community lead by self-proclaimed prophet Antônio Conselheiro in the *interior* of Bahia. The great majority of the people massacred were recently liberated slaves and impoverished peasants. The scale of the violence provoked a long list of literary critiques and scholastic commentary. The most famous of all is Euclides da Cunha 'Os Sertões'. The Balaiada was a civil uprising against Brazilian Monarchy that took place in the south of Maranhão and in the state of Piauí. It was suppressed brutally (see Serra 1946).

connectivity of historically situated subjects – both worldly and otherworldly – is seen to rely (Sahlins 2000, Schrempp 1992)[90]. Contemporary myths re-authenticate hegemonic narratives because they demarcate new fields of power through ritual and other commemorative action (Trouillot 1995). Particular images of the cosmos thus gain precedence (Moore 2011).

I will work with Don Handelman's (2008) analytic distinction between two 'designs' of cosmos: one 'integrated' from without and another 'intra-grated' from within. 'Integrated' cosmos – to which Handelman calls 'monotheistic cosmos' – is founded on separation between God and humans. Whereas God can enter or exit the cosmos as He pleases, humans are bounded from without by their finitude and their total separation from Him; thus, they are dependent on the borderline of 'belief' to define their relations with divinity. In an intra-grated cosmos, however, the 'logics of connectedness' (Handelman 2008:182) eschew external encompassment. Handelman calls this 'organic cosmos', whereby all things and entities are contiguous so that boundaries between them are 'fuzzy' to begin with (Handelman 2008:187). This propagates an open-end cosmos in which any field of practice (divine or mundane) is accessible to all types of entities.

I argue that as analytic topologies, in Maranhão these imaginaries overlap. If an infinitely expanding affective sociality is locally infused with a bounded, totalizing force of moral integration; persons actively employ both these kinds of cosmological imageries in their everyday interactions. As I claimed in chapter four, this is especially salient in playful actions by which ethical boundaries are problematized and reworked. I offer my reading for a cosmology of relatedness in Maranhão that revolves around such play-forms and paradox (cf. Schrempp 1992:26).

The Power of Desire: The Mythical Birth of the People of Maranhão

The most widespread cosmogonic celebration in contemporary Maranhão takes place every June during the *festa* (or *brincadeira*) of Bumba Meu Boi (Reis 2003, Cunha 2011, Bueno 2001; cf. Bastide 1978, Cascudo 1972[1949]). It coincides with the traditional June Festivals (*Festas Juninas*) in the northeast and with the Catholic commemorative days of Santo Antonio (13th of

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[90] Since my data on the middle-class in Maranhão is limited, I should note that this is true at least for the low-income residents of urban and rural parts of Maranhão I know first-hand.

June), São João (24th), São Pedro (29th) and São Marçal (30th). The Bumba Boi is essentially a satirical dance spectacle (*auto*) performed on public stages (*arraiais*) by generic dance groups called *Grupo(s) de Boi* ('Groups of the Bull')[91]. The spectacle relishes a foundation myth, which is familiar to every *maranhense* I know since infancy. It can be summarized as follows:

There was a rich planter (*fazendeiro*) who owned many cattle heads. His most precious property was an exquisitely beautiful bull adored by all. The slaves (*escravos*) living in the plantation (*fazenda)* included a couple called Mãe Catirina (Mother Catirina) and Pai Francisco (Father Francisco, also referred to as 'Negro Chico'). Catirina became pregnant and one day she desired to eat the tongue of the finest bull in the *fazenda*. Chico tried to convince her that this is an act of madness, by which both of them risked death. Yet, in Maranhão it is known that a pregnant woman whose desire would not be fulfilled could lose her child in a sudden miscarriage. Chico therefore snuck into the cowshed, killed the bull and dismembered its tongue. He then brought it to Catirina and gave the rest of the meat to his fellow slaves. He then went into hiding. When the *fazendeiro* discovered what had happened, he sent 'civilized Indians' (*cabolcos de fita*) and *vaqueiros* (mixed-race cowboys) to find and arrest Chico. They discovered Chico and brought him to the *fazendeiro* together with the corpse of the dead bull. Fearing for Chico's life, the slaves in the *fazenda* called upon indigenous healers (*pajés*) to intervene. The *pajés* invoked their spirits (*encantados* or *invisíveis*), who with the help of the Catholic saint São João (Saint John) resurrected the dissected bull. The *fazendeiro* then condoned Pai Chico and furnished a great feast to commemorate the miracle[92].

It is possible to break this myth down to its basic units (cf. Lévi-Strauss 2008:231-248), which reveal relations between two main sets of relations. These are (a) relations between hierarchy and egalitarianism; and (b) relations between natural phenomena to supernatural phenomena. The opposition and fusion between these sets of relations seem to stand at the heart of systematized relatedness in the myth, as I will attempt to show.

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[91] Boi translates as 'bull'. In his monograph on violence in São Luís from 1992, Daniel Linger reports that Bumba meu Boi was more rigorously commemorated in the interior of Maranhão, while Brazilian carnival was the biggest festival celebrated in São Luís. During my fieldwork in 2009-10 this situation has dramatically changed. In my experience, contemporary commemorations of Bumba Meu Boi locally exceed the celebrations of carnival in scope, volume and vigour.

[92] The same basic elements of the myth of Bumba Meu Boi have been recounted since at least the mid nineteenth century (Bueno 2001). Note that some versions of the myth convey that the bull knew how to dance. In yet other versions, the bull belonged to São João (Saint John) rather than to the *fazendeiro*.

In the first instance, all human relations in the *fazenda* are subsumed under the order of colonial segmentation. Here roles are allocated to certain social classes, each circumscribed from without by the class that is located above it. The *fazendeiro* encompasses the political domination of his *vaquieros* over the slaves. The only exception is the final intervention to save Chico's life, which locates the *pajés* as politically subaltern yet 'spiritually' elevated. This is so because they modify the situation through their exclusive communication with the divine, which in itself encompasses the mundane. Hierarchy::Egalitarianism entails dissimilarity between classes both politically and spiritually, which restricts class relations to a closed-end moral economy of obedience and retribution. I will use the term *relations of integration* to describe this.

In the second instance, all natural/biological operations obey *positive* cause-effect logistics. Catirina becomes pregnant as a function of her consensual union with Chico, she desires the tongue as a function of her pregnancy and Chico kills the bull as a function of her desire. Contrarily, all supernatural operations obey a *negative* cause-effect logistics. If Catirina's desire is *not* fulfilled she will lose the baby, if the *pajés* do not evoke their spirits the *fazendeiro* will lose his finest possession, If São João does not resurrect the bull Chico will lose his life. These inverse relations between positive and negative actions are symmetrical. Consequently, in the *fazenda* natural and supernatural operations become contingent on each other. Deities, saints, spirits and (implicitly) God himself are instrumental actors whose relational contiguity with the mundane is constituted on a gift-economy, open-end, basis. I shall call this *relations of intra-gration*.

The result is that in the *fazenda* Hierarchy::Egalitarianism is located in a reverse meta-relation to Nature::Super-Nature. Whereas in the first instance external hierarchies encompass internal egalitarianism (integration), in the second the fluidity of entities in the world dissolves all hierarchies from within (intra-gration). The myth suggests that the category that intermediates these oppositions is the power of desire. This is so because the myth recounts a process of both transformation and fixation, which is only made possible by the trajectories of human desires and the actions that were taken to respectively satisfy or contain them. Elaboration follows.

In the first instance, implicit sexual desire resulted in gestation that would have normally brought about the birth of another generation of slaves in the *fazenda*. This is contained in the closed-end moral order because it sustains 'ideal' social relations based on taxonomic differentiation. Sexual desire is submitted here to the terrestrial law, installed by humans. In the second instance, however, Catirina's desire for the tongue reverses that law due to its mythical origin, associated with the mysterious alchemic reaction by which Catirina would lose the baby should she *not* eat the tongue. This suggests the divine origin of carnal desires, and the almost unlimited function it has in an intra-grated relational cosmos. The resurrection of the bull is a final action that combines intra- and integrated desires. The resurrection paradoxically proves that (1) desire 'speaks through' Catirina to reveal an absolute morality that manages to incarcerate human law; and that (2) divine intervention to save Chico's life is only possible through the collaboration of all of the social segments making up *fazenda* relational hierarchies.

This miracle facilitates the birth of Catirina's baby, who symbolizes the tension between such egalitarianism and encompassing political hierarchies. Pragmatically this invents an egalitarian People of Maranhão, which is still entangled in political inequality. Evidently, the *fazendeiro* remains the most powerful figure, who proves his generosity (and domination) by distributing meat in a collective feast. Attributed to the figure of the 'good patron', the *fazendeiro* thus lends himself to a common sense of conviviality in Maranhão that turns on social inclusion within and throughout prevailing hierarchic structures of kin, color and rank (Shapiro 2011b).

In the mythical context of plantation sociality, such aspects of intimate relations as respect (here inscribed as obedience), play and indeed 'belief' are experienced by all actors as something that demarcates unequal spaces of privilege and submission. Morality is only imperative in institutional contexts and it is measured against the visible sanction of coercive power. Desire is a subsumed (and dangerous) force that may potentially transgress all social boundaries but also fixate them on moral grounds. The power of desire is therefore ultimately measured against the intrinsic fragmentation of the sources of symbolic and political domination.

Bumba-Boi as Proto-Event in Contemporary Maranhão

Although Bumba Meu Boi is celebrated in other parts of Brazil, its magnificent dimensions in Maranhão are unique (Cunha 2011)[93]. In what follows I wish to assert that Bumba Boi appeals to huge crowds both in São Luís and the *interior* because it solicits and reflects deep emotional and religious sentiments (Reis 2003). In that sense it is the most important cosmological annual festive in Maranhão, which is equivalent to what Handelman (1998) calls a 'proto-event': a focused public gathering that 'makes sense' locally, both as a historicized reinvigoration of the 'past' and as a synchronic description of the forces that shape everyday sociality in-its-becoming.

State governments in Maranhão have been actively (although selectively) sponsoring various Boi groups from São-Luís and the *interior* in the last two decades. From a marginalized cultural phenomenon associated in Maranhão with the rural poor, the event has increasingly been expanding to include the middle classes (S. Ferretti 1998)[94]. In the context of low-income Maranhão, the event is still marked by huge popular participation. During the night of the 28th of June (the eve of São Pedro Day), for example, many of the *Grupos de Boi* of São Luís pass by the figurine of São Pedro in the Chapel bearing his name. The Chapel is built on top of a hill and in the large square underneath assembled a multitude of celebrants. I wrote in my fieldnotes:

Thousands of people stayed up the whole night long, drinking, blocking the roads around. People brought *matracas* from their houses and accompanied the dancers with tremendous beats. Each of the Boi groups went up the long stairway to the Chapel while beating the drums and whistling the whistles. The *Miolos de Boi*, already quite drunk with *cachaça*, waved the figurines of the bulls around and rolled. Within the chapel the echo magnified the beating sounds. The groups went by, one by one, the whole night long.

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[93] Since 1913 the city of Parintins in the state of Amazonia produces a big annual *festa* bearing the same name (Cascudo 1972). It relates however to a different origin myth. Unlike the street *festa* in Maranhão, Boi Bumbá of Parintins is a highly aestheticized theatrical production exhibited in a stadium.

[94] Until the 1960s Boi dance groups from the *interior* were banned from entering the capital São Luís. In an official documentary made on Bumba Meu Boi of Maranhão by the Brazilian National Institute for Cultural and Artistic Heritage (IPHAN), anthropologist Raul Lody defines Bumba Meu Boi as the most 'expressive manifestation of popular culture in Maranhão' (see http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VIxUesGk_7w last accessed on 29.08.2013). I also interviewed a person who worked in the Ministry of Culture of Maranhão for several years. He claimed that the government of Maranhão in 2010 had spent 25 million reais on Bumba Boi celebration as opposed to about 10 million on the commemorations of carnival.

This jargon requires elucidation. In Maranhão there are five different types of *Boi* performances (Cunha 2011, Bueno 2001) corresponding to five main rhythms that are locally referred to as 'accents' or 'dialects' (*sotaques*). These are *Matraca, Zabumba, Sotaque da Baixada, Sotaque Costa de Mão* and *Orquesta* (Lima 1998). Putting aside the *Orquestra*, which uses a whole range of musical instruments to fit an orchestra, the basic musical instruments used in Boi presentations are the *matraca* (wooden tables with a slit producing a 'clicking' sound), a whistle, *maracá* (maraca), and an array of local drums (*panderão, pandeiro, zabumba, tambor* and *caixa)*.

The highly sophisticated rhythms in each of the *sotaques* accompany a structured poetic literary formation called *toada*, which is constituted from short rhymes that tell a particular story. *Toadas* are usually created by the main singers of the groups in the weeks preceding the public presentations. Often it involves the intervention of divine forces or magical occurrences. For example, I heard of a singer who used to wake up in the morning with long *toadas* 'stuck' in his head, composed and transferred to him in a dream by São João himself*. Toadas* relate to any subject, from appraisal of local politicians to religious vocation, from satiric poems and subversive political messages to love-songs for Maranhão and its people. Some *toadas* are directly associated with local Afro-Brazilian mythology and religious practice. During the reciting of certain *toadas* it is therefore common to see participants or spectators suddenly possessed by spirits (Gomes 1997).

Each Boi group consists of the *amo* – the leader of the group who is often one of the main singers; percussionists; several singers; several helpers or 'supporters' (*torcedorers*); and a group of dancers. In the past, and still today in some location in the hinterland of Maranhão, these groups were formed generically in small villages and often corresponded to clearly defined kinship linkages. Yet, whereas in the past the *brincadeira* – 'the play'- was performed in private houses and yards, nowadays presentations increasingly take place on stages in public squares in the big city. The main features of the spectacle itself, with slight modifications between *sotaques*, are:

(1) the *Indias* – female dancers embellished in colorful feathers; (2) *caboclos de fita* – male dancers dressed as 'civilized' Amerindians marked by hats with long colorful ribbons that cover the

dancer almost completely; (3) *caboclos de pena* – dancers dressed as 'wild' Amerindians, wearing feather-hats and often holding spears; (4) *vaqueiros* and *vaqueiras* – male and female dancers dressed as cowboys/girls, sometimes holding a whip; (5) Cazumbá – a hybrid creature wearing a grotesque mask and a large square wooden frame stitched onto his trousers around the hips[95]; (6) the big wooden carcass of a *Boi* (bull), which is operated by *miolos de Boi*; (7) Pai Francisco and Mãe Catirina, both impersonated by men in a humorous fashion; (8) the singers (*amos)*.

The Boi is the central artefact of the presentation (Lima 1998, Jesus 1999). It is heavily decorated and is consecrated in baptism by a *padre* on the 23rd of June, the eve of São João Day. Many of the *Bois* are marked with a star on their forehead. This symbolic element refers to the myth of King Sebastião of Portugal (*El-Rei*), who in 1578 'disappeared' in North Africa during the battle of Alcáçer-Quibir. Legend has it that Rei Sebastião and his court sailed across the Atlantic and arrived at Maranhão, where they became 'enchanted'. They established their new kingdom under the sand dunes of the local island of Lençóis, northwest of São Luís. There are various popular tales that follow from this myth. The most canonical is that on midnight São João Day (24th of June) Rei Sebastião annually turns himself into a black bull with a white star on its forehead. In the night that a courageous man will manage to scratch that star, *El-Rei* will be de-enchanted and his kingdom will surface, causing the island of São-Luís to sink into the ocean (M. Ferretti 1994).

Every Boi has a life cycle. It begins on *Sábado de Aleluia* (Holy Saturday) in April with the 'birth' of the *Boi* and the beginning of rehearsals for the São João period (cf. Bueno 2001). The presentations during June and July take place almost every night, especially from mid-June, as the São João Holy-Day approaches. Between August and October the Boi group celebrates a symbolic 'slaughter' (*matança*) of the *Boi*. In this performance the Boi is ritually sacrificed and hidden for the commemorations of next year's Bumba Boi (cf. Gomez 1997). The *amo* then provides a *festa* and meat is distributed between the participants, just 'like' in the myth (Almeida [Zé-Olinho] 1999). This cycle repeats annually.

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[95] Cazumbá represents an enchanted spirit. It directly relates to Mina and Pajelança rituals. It features predominantly in the *sotaque* of Zabumba.

Participants join distinctive Boi groups, which perform one or more of the possible *sotaques*. Still today none of the participants is paid for their services and some solely participate as a fulfilment of promises made to São João or São Pedro. A person I know called Careca, for example, told me he was about to die so he vowed to São João that he will praise him for the rest of his life if the saint saved him. He was saved alright and ever since he follows Boi da Maioba – one of the most famous *grupos de Boi* of Maranhão – as a faithful fan (*torcedor*). Fans like Careca commonly speak about themselves in *Bumba Boi* vocabulary (e.g. 'I am *matraqueiro*', 'I am a fan of Boi da Maioba' etc.) and buy CDs of their favourite groups. Immigrants from Maranhão even established a corresponding annual *festa* in São Paulo (Buano 2001).

Despite this spiritual appeal, current-day governmental investments in Boi groups are mostly commercial so that many generic groups from remote locations in Maranhão do not gain financial benefits from the popularization of the *festa*. One aspect of this socioeconomic shift is that the *sotaque* of *orquestra* – which was associated with the elites of Maranhão until the 1960s – has become the main attraction in contemporary presentations, performing a distilled and harmonized version of the 'original' myth. It is supplemented by spectacular dance moves and carefully selected beautiful *Indias* (Zé olinho 1999). Likewise, whereas in the past performances of the satirical play could last a whole night, contemporary Boi groups perform on five to seven *arraiais* (stages) per night and their presentations only usually last about one hour.

Bumba Boi is still the most popular public event in contemporary Maranhão. It commemorates the ways by which desires penetrate existing structured hierarchies and regenerate the social system as a whole. Bumba Boi thus becomes an act of active historicization of post slavery sociality in Maranhão, as a popular *toada* suggests: 'this inheritance has been left for us by our ancestors/today it is cultivated by us/in order to compose your history, Maranhão'[96]. Next I turn to elucidate how the play-logic of this public event actively produces historicization.

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[96] This famous *toada* is called '*Maranhão meu tesouro, meu torrão*' (Maranhão my treasure, my beloved). It was composed by Humberto, the *amo* of the group Boi de Maracanã. The Portuguese lyrics I quoted read: '*Esta herança foi deixada por nossos avós/ Hoje cultivada por nós/Pra compor tua história, Maranhão*'.

Historicization and the Play Logic of Bumba Meu Boi

The Bumba Boi spectacle exhibits a processual play-logic that is focused on dismantling and reassembling the elements of sociality. This emulates the logic in the myth, which explicitly mentions dismembering and reincarnation as oppositions that implicate each other through the power of desire. In the mythical timeframe plantation social ethics are integrated from without by external hierarchies and intra-grated from within through transgression. Since it represents this dynamic annually, the Bumba Boi spectacle playfully invokes the mythical timeframe as pertinent to contemporary sociality. This is articulated in the *festa* in two forms.

Firstly, the birth-life-death sequence of Boi Groups annual life-cycle generates a 'closed-end' process that is nevertheless divided into 'open-end' feasting episodes. Beginning with the virtue transferred to the Boi (and through it to the group as a whole) by way of baptism, the group is imbued with divine grace that crystallizes it as a distinctive unit. This is enhanced and perfected during rehearsals leading to the São João period (June), and culminates in the frenetic public presentations on June Saint Days. The last week of June is characterized by a carnivalesque atmosphere, heavy drinking and playful behavior by both spectators and participants. Yet, these are regulated by the leaders of the group, so that imperatives for successful presentations vanquish 'having fun'. The final 'slaughter' of the Boi is a private event organized for participants, fans and relatives, whereby all segments of the Boi group mix and merge in an egalitarian fashion.

Secondly, in recent decades most of the Boi groups no longer reenact the actual play (*auto*) of Pai Chico and Mãe Catirina. Consequently the focus shifted to the skill of the drummers, the vigor of the *Miolos de Boi*, the dance choreography, and the quality of the *toadas* conveyed by the *amos*. The *brincadeira* becomes a sensory spectacle, which includes the merging of circle- and row-dance movements, evocative *toadas* and enthralling beats. These at times resemble a *festa* in *terreiros*, which invokes the intervention of spiritual entities. For example, an *amo* from São Luís told me that in one of his presentations he once saw a person who had turned into half-man-half-skeleton; and that the skeleton-side of that person's face was glowing in flames.

The thread that conjoins the particular activities among themselves, as well as the 'parts' to the 'whole' *festa*, is marked by the amorphous boundary between desires that 'dismantle' and desires that 'reassemble' social institutions. By that I mean that mythical 'dismantling' corresponds with the expanding intra-grated logic of affective transfer while mythical 'reassembling' corresponds with integrated hierarchies held together by moral indebtedness to the Boi group. During Boi public presentations this boundary therefore reproduces the mythical dynamics. The whole structure (i.e. the life-cycle of the Boi), as much as the content of its distinctive parts (mainly the frenzied activities taking place during the Saint Days), are spatiotemporally infused with both integrated and intra-grated activities.

My point is that although the realpolitik of Bumba Boi goes beyond grassroots organizations, participants and followers of Boi groups ultimately experience hierarchic encompassment and its dissolution from within in a circular fashion. By this I mean that Catirina will continue to become pregnant and Pai Chico will face the cruel dilemma again, as much as the Boi will be slaughtered and resurrected. This characterizes the micro level of the presentations and the macro level of the repeating cycle through the years. Consequently, in Maranhão the power of desire will continue to link the divine and the mundane, as well as masters and slaves, in a tripartite drama of rebellion, incrimination and deliverance.

As opposed to *carnaval* 'everything goes!' spirit (Linger 1992, DaMatta 1991) – which builds on multivocality, discontinuity, and grotesque inversions (Bakhtin 1994) – Bumba Meu Boi in Maranhão historicizes a circular process of generation. It does so by presenting an organized scheme of death and rebirth that controls within itself such frenzied occurrences as possession, mutiny and divine intervention. Modeling the tension between intra- and integration delineates a paradoxical boundary, which at times separates between these conceptual worlds and at times conjoins them. The *festa* thus reproduces the tension exisiting in Maranhão between hierarchic and egalitarian modalities of relatedness. Yet, as sopposed to myth, in reality desire at times directly attenuates that cosmological tension. It is to this issue that I now turn.

The Arrest of José-Agotinho Bispo Pereira

54 year old José-Agostinho Bispo Pereira was arrested on 8th of June 2010 in the *interior* village Experimento, county of Pinheiro, Maranhão[97]. He was charged with sexual abuse and false-imprisonment (*cárcere privado*) of his daughter Sandra-Maria Monteiro, at the time 29 years old, since she was 12. The police raided their isolated hut following an 'anonymous' denouncement acusing José-Agostinho of being the father of his own daughter's seven children. Following the raid Sandra-Maria and four of her children – who were found 'undernourished and half naked' – were relocated to a 'safe house' in the city of Pinheiro, where they were held under the custody of the Brazilian Child Protection Council (*Conselho Tutelar*). José-Agostinho was imprisoned.

Brazilian press reported the arrest with dramatically condemning tones. Reporters immediately compared José-Agostinho with Austrian Joseph Fritzl, who in 2008 was sent to life in prison for holding captive his daughter for 24 years in a cellar and having had seven children with her[98]. The nickname 'Monster from Pinheiro' (*o monstro de Pinheiro*) had become synonymous with Agostinho across a wide range of media platforms, from local and national newspaper articles to TV reports and internet blogs. Press reports accused Agostinho of raping Sandra-Maria and his older daughter Maria-Sandra (who was 31 years old at the time of the arrest) from the time they were both minors. Brazilian police also suspected that José-Agostinho fathered Maria-Sandra's first born child and that he sexually molested two of Sandra-Maria's daughters, who were 6 and 8 years old. DNA test results released in August 2010 confirmed that all of Sandra-Maria's seven children, as well as her sister Maria-Sandra's first child, are José-Agostinho's.

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[97] All conversations here presented took place on July 14th, 5 weeks after the initial arrest. I recorded the life history narratives of José-Agostinho and his daughter Sandra-Maria. I conversed with Agostinho's 31 year old first-born daughter Maria-Sandra. I also interviewed the investigating officer Delegada Laura Amélia Barbosa from the Civil Police (*Polícia Civil*) in Pinheiro as well as the prosecutor Promotora Doutora Alineide Martins. Due to the visibility of this affair in Brazilian press, all names here presented are real.

[98] See Folha de São Paulo, 10.06.2010. http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/cotidiano/748704-exame-mostra-que-lavrador-preso-no-ma-tambem-abusou-sexualmente-da-filha-neta.shtml.

Extreme poverty in which the family lived was portrayed by both media reports and public officials as the underlying trigger for these crimes. For example, newspapers described the hut in Experimento as 'pigsty' (*chiqueiro*) and the fact that both Agostinho and his daughter Sandra-Maria were illiterate was emphasized. Reporters also presented the fact that the children had had very limited access to medical or educational facilities (and were themselves illiterate) as a cynical manipulation self-consciously enacted by Agostinho to prevent him from being incriminated. Since some of the children did (rarely) attend a regional rural school, certain journalists reported that Agostinho had sent them there only to benefit from the 60 Reais financial assistance given by the Federal Government to low income families under the *Bolsa Família* (Family Benefit) scheme[99].

Although just as severely disparaging, official figures rhetorically mitigated Agostinho's responsibility by associating it with his 'simplicity'. When I arrived at Pinheiro Police Station, for example, one of the wardens told me that José-Agostinho was 'a man reduced to the level of animalistic behavior, so primitive that he didn't even understand he was doing something wrong'. State Prosecutor Doutora Alineide Martins condemned Agostinho but also said that sexual crimes within the family in Maranhão were somewhat predicated on the feebleness of public authorities:

…I attribute these cases to the lack of knowledge, the isolation, and the misery proper (*a própria miséria*) – the absence of the public authority (*poder publico*) in these places, which predicated (*que profecía*) this kind of crimes… The Brazilian constitution guarantees dignified life – health, alimentation, leisure, school – and this has always been absent [in the interior of Maranhão]…

Discontent with the overall inefficiency of 'the State' in enforcing law and order (or even for consciously generating misery as sinister political strategy) is prevalent in Maranhão at least since the 1980s (Linger 2005:79-110). As I demonstrated above, this links into the discourse by

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[99]   I surveyed various newspaper and online articles in Maranhão (Jornal Pequeno and O imparcial) and beyond (e.g. Folha de São Paulo, Globo, Terra). See for example http://noticias.terra.com.br/brasil/noticias/ from 11.06.2010. *Bolsa Familia* is a controversial welfare financial scheme first introduced in 1998 by President Fernando Henrique Cardoso. Since 2002 left-wing PT government expanded that scheme to its current configuration. The scheme purports to pay around seven pounds per month for each child attending school in families of the lowest income rates. The scheme remains a focus of political dispute.

which 'the state produces (poverty and crime) through its neglect and abuse of the poor' (Linger 2005:124, brackets mine). Under this framework state/political institutions in Maranhão become the source of 'humiliation and degradation (that) are the ubiquitous emotional residues of the social hierarchy in which those who 'are somebody' – those privileged and protected by the state – subject ordinary nobodies to symbolic nullifications which, when accumulated internally, can cause murderous eruptions among the nullified themselves' (ibid:124, original quotes, brackets mine).

The protagonists of this drama, however, invoked their own agency vis-à-vis one another in ways that defy determinism. Sandra-Maria, for example, initially told journalists and police investigators that she wished her father released from jail. Even one of the police officers responsible for the arrest - Delegada Adriana Meireles from the Delegacia da Mulher in Pinheiro – said a week after the arrest in a press conference that Sandra-Maria 'is confused. She calls him (José-Agostinho) 'father', but they were living like a couple (*casal*). She cares about him (*ela tem carinho por ele*) and says he was her only man'[100]. Sandra-Maria's older sister Maria-Sandra even told me that she was angry at Sandra-Maria for telling the local health-agent, who visited the house some weeks beforehand, that Agostinho was the father of his own grandchildren. She claimed that just as much as she 'liberated herself', Sandra too could have left whenever she wanted.

In what follows I will analyze José-Agostinho's and Sandra-Maria's versions of these events. As I argued in chapter three, in the context of co-residence, hierarchies are thought to inhibit impermissible forms of affective transfer because persons are supposed to 'respect' authority and formal distance (DaMatta 1991, Finkelstein 2008). In line with that argument I will suggest that the complex emotional and sexual entanglement among the protagonists of this drama was predicated on a scenario in which all sense of 'respect' has been abdicated. The result was an incestuous union that eroded the productive tension between intra- and integrated activities in the house, giving precedence to the destructive power of desire.

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[100] See 'Dima Santos Blog' in http://dimassantos.com.br/?p=4922 for Adriana Mierles' quote (last accessed 29.08.2013). See Hautzinger (2007) for ethnography of Delegacia da Mulher in Bahia.

Incest: The Disintegration of Intimate Aggregations

José-Agostinho engaged in a common law union with Laurete Monteiro, who he had met in a brothel, when he was 16 and she was 13. They lived in a low-income neighborhood of Pinheiro. In the following years Laurete gave birth to four children – Maria-Sandra, Sandra-Maria, Fabio-Junior, and Zé-Inácio. Laurete continued to work occasionally in the brothel while José-Agostinho worked as a fisherman (*pescador*) and unskilled worker. When she turned 21, however, Laurete moved to São Luís to live with another man. José-Agostinho told me he then tried to 'give away' the children to some of Laurete's relatives but 'nobody wanted them', as he put it. He resolved to move back to his natal village Experimento, located 200 kilometers away into the jungle, where some of his siblings were still living. He asked his sister Maria-Tibusa, whose husband had left her some time before with three children, to help him. They all moved-into José-Agostinho's isolated hut.

Agostinho worked in subsistence agriculture (*lavrador*) and as a fisherman (*pescador*) while Maria-Tibusa took care of house tasks. Soon Agostinho engaged in a common law union with his ex-wife's 'blood' *prima* Rosa, whom he says he 'took out' (*tirou*) of a brothel as well. She lived with them for a year. Then, José-Agostinho engaged with another woman, who stayed for almost two years. When she left, Maria-Tibusa also moved out with her children to live with relatives in a nearby village[101]. From then on, Maria-Sandra and Sandra-Maria were responsible on house work. According to Agostinho, Sandra-Maria began 'testing' him when she was about 13 years old:

She was about 13 year old and she always threw these small jokes at me… she told me that after all these women left me I am not a man anymore… and I always told her – '*careful, you should respect me*'. One day my brother came to the house and he was angry with her. I asked him what happened and he said – 'it is Sandra who doesn't want to respect me, what she thinks I am, a punk (*moleque*)? I could have been imprisoned because of this' (implying she was 'hitting' on him). So I went to Sandra and I told her 'look Sandra, you are wrong, he is a mother and a father to you, he stayed with you children since you were little'.

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[101] Sandra-Maria said that Maria-Tibusa's children still call José-Agostinho 'father' as a sign of their 'respect' for him.

During our conversation Agostinho tried to reinforce his self-indulgent image of a responsible hard-working man-of-the-house who provided for his family and did his best to raise 'respectful' children. Correspondingly, Agostinho described his sexual involvement with Sandra through local codes of sexual conduct, by which women who 'tease' imply erotic seduction:

I always liked sleeping in the kitchen, so I used to lie in my hammock and she used to arrive… and I used to tell her 'look, get up'. Once I got up and moved my hammock to a different corner, enraged (*enraivado*), thinking 'Sandra is testing me (*atentando*)'. So I went and I said to my brother 'look, Sandra is becoming crazy, I don't know, she doesn't know I am her father?!' It was about five times like that… once I went to take a shower by the well and she (Sandra) arrived. I told her – 'go away' and she said 'I don't want to'. I told her again – 'look, Sandra, you go away from me and look for men elsewhere… Why you don't look for him (her boyfriend)?' but she said 'nobody will know about this'. I don't even know how I did this crazy thing; it is only Deus that knows... It was always she who looked for me (*me procurou*), I never chased her.

This narrative self-consciously invokes gender 'frameworks of intelligibility' (Butler 1993) informing models of action by which you locally become 'like' a man (Lancaster 1992, Herzfeld 1985). For, it is common in Maranhão to mock men as gay, effeminate or weak if they repudiate women – including girls at puberty age – who allegedly designate sexual availability[102]. In this narrative Agostinho thus construes his own 'weakness' on what he presented as his unwitting submission to carnal desires; which were ostensibly stronger than his moral commitments as a father. Agostinho thus insisted he remained a man of principles despite the fact he broke a moral taboo. He emphasized, for example, that when the police raided their house his son/grandson ran and told him to flee. Agostinho refused, thinking of this as 'cowardice'.

Sandra-Maria confirmed that the first time they had sex indeed took place by the water well, but disclosed no details as of how this came about. She negated that she ever incited sexual

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[102] For example, a friend of mine once sat in the *praça* with some teenage girls. One of them was waiting for her boyfriend but when the latter was delayed she said 'that *corno* (cuckold) is not coming'. 'I don't know what this means for you', said my friend, 'but for me, this is an invitation to 'apply'' (*aplicar,* meaning 'go for it'). Yet, these features of masculinity are considered incestuous when practiced in the context of conviviality. Agostinho's narrative thus overlaps the two models of relatedness to which I am drawing attention.

relations with her father. She also revealed that José-Agostinho did not always comply with his duties as the 'man of the house' and that he had violent outbursts:

…He (José-Agostinho) lived with a bottle of *cachaça* (rum) under his hammock and was drunk all the time. He used to leave the house in the morning and come back only the day after… He used to beat us with everything he could find in his hand. If for example he came to the house and we were not washed and didn't put the water in the place he would beat us. Sometimes he even took a big knife (*facão*) to kill us… it was really bad for us… we ran away from him when he grabbed the knife…

Sandra said she did not leave since she did not want to abandon her children to physical abuse. Simultaneously, however, she refuted allegations concerning incarceration and false imprisonment. Alone or with her children, Sandra often visited relatives, church and *festas*. She spent days in the city of Pinheiro with relatives or *comadres*. The house in Experimento was also visited by relatives and friends, including the older sister Maria-Sandra, who has been living in the nearby village of Refúgio for the past 13 years. Sandra-Maria maintained sexual liaisons with other men in the village. She told me of some of these engagements:

…Sometimes I used to go out a lot, to church, to *culto* (Evangelical sermons), to *festa*. I arranged men there… One of them is the father of this one, the blond child[103]… he used to come to sleep with me inside (the house)… He used to go and look for Augostinho when he was drunk, and help him to the house. Augustino never fought (*brigou*) with him… but he hated the others (boyfriends), only because the others were fathers of families ('*pai de família*')… so he (Agostinho) had rage (*raiva*) only against them… (but why), only because one is married? If he is interested in me and I am interested in him… (smiling).

It seems to me that gradually José-Agostinho and Sandra-Maria developed a relationship more characteristic of married couples in Maranhão than that of parents-children. Sandra said that sometimes, for example, Agostinho wanted sex and she would say she was menstruating, so he would give up and go to sleep. José-Agostinho expressed *ciúmes* (jealousy) and anger (*raiva*) in face of Sandra's sexual affairs while Sandra used to argue (*brigar*) with him had he drank too much or

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[103] Referring to one of her children, who has white-blond hair like the hair of that boyfriend.

disappeared from the house for too long. Sandra said she sometimes even confronted Agostinho's aggression and beat him back. Agostinho described the subtleties of their relationship:

Sometimes I used to sleep in Refúgio for two or three days and when I came back (to Experimento) she (Sandra) was already fighting (*brigando*) with me, she didn't care anymore about breakfast, if she made for the little ones (*os pequenos*) she didn't leave anything for me, so I began doing it myself, I already washed my own clothes, and then Maria-Sandra came and told Sandra-Maria – 'are you crazy, Sandra, why you don't do the things for your father?' and Sandra answered – 'no, it is because he doesn't sleep in the house'.

Sandra said that people in Experimento were 'suspicious' and that there were 'rumors' and 'gossip'. Consequently, neighbors and relatives probably knew what was going on in the house although both José-Agostinho and Sandra-Maria kept their sexual involvement a secret. Delegada Laura-Amélia told me she was certain that people knew, but did not report to the police because incestuous sexual relations were 'so normative in the *interior'* that people could not 'see' that a crime was committed. Prosecutor Alineide Martins strengthened this view:

I believe that there are many more cases because people do not denounce. Generally this happens within the family, sometimes the mother wants to protect the father, sometimes he is the only one that sustains the family, and there is this idea that the father is the one that must sustain, that women cannot work and raise the children alone. Many times even when it is denounced, they do not tell the truth or refute their own narrative because there is a sentiment of pity (*pena*) for the accused…[104]

As opposed to the citizens of Experimento, The state of Maranhão did see these as crimes. Despite the daunting allegations, José-Agostinho was not appointed a defense attorney up until his trial, which took place in December 2010, about five months after the arrest. In his verdict, the judge ignored the initial accusation concerning false imprisonment but found José-Agostinho guilty of raping his two daughters as well as of sexually abusing two of his granddaughters. Consequently,

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[104] Alineide Martins' juxtaposition of democratic citizenship with what she describes as backwater 'family norms' is beyond the scope of this analysis. I hope to deal with this issue in future publications.

the judge sentenced José-Agostinho to 63 years in jail – two sentences of 14 years for the rape of Sandra-Maria and Maria-Sandra, and two sentences of 17 years and 6 months for the sexual abuse of his two minor daughters/granddaughters. I now turn to analyse this case.

Incest and the Limits of Cosmogony in Maranhão

I chose to use this ethnographic event despite the vexing questions it gives rise to. I do not intend to 'deconstruct' the official narratives here, nor do I wish to make the crimes committed more comprehensible or 'culturally permissible'. I am convinced that José-Agostinho lied when he claimed that it was Sandra-Maria who 'always' seduced him and I am sure that their relationship was charged with contestation and violence. Yet, this case is important analytically: it elucidates the pivotal space of deference in locally restricting the scope of affective transfers, and thus in maintaining a reproductive tension between intra- and integrated cosmological imaginaries.

Marilyn Strathern (1996a) asks what a 'boundary' would be in a world that is increasingly understood through the metaphor of hybrids and other forms of composite sociality (such as 'networks'; cf. Latour 2005). Strathern uses the terms 'cutting' and 'truncating' in order to describe moments of apprehension, in which certain cultural forms are interpreted contextually and objectified for long enough to be considered a unified phenomenon. Patenting and ownership rights, for example, 'truncate' the proliferation of forms of knowledge that are technically shared by whole scientific communities. Strathern consequently argues that moments of 'cutting' can be imagined as the shadow side of 'emergence', making both these processes mutually inclusive.

It appears that in this ethnographic case there are two such moments of 'cutting'. Primarily, José-Agostinho and Sandra-Maria must have experienced 'cutting' when they first had sex by the well, or later on. 'Truncating', 'cutting' or 'abating' here correspond with the breach of sexual taboo, which objectified moral imperatives shared unreflectively with neighbors and kindred (Zigon 2007). On the phenomenological level sexual intercourse instantiated an intragrated relational

universe, which became the dominant cosmological imagery underscoring domestic reciprocity. This was so because it allowed for the power of desire to transgress abiding hierarchic structures to the extent it diluted their authority.

The breach of sexual impermissibility between 'blood' kin was therefore accompanied by an increasing disdain for 'respect'. For example, Sandra was not supposed to present *ciúmes* (jealousy) or to tease her father as much as he was not supposed to demand from her to fulfill the domestic duties of a housewife or chase her with a knife (Mayblin 2010:125). Since intimacy is locally coupled with respect, the protagonists of this drama lost the capacity to reproduce intimacy when they resorted to live in a domestic world in which 'everything goes' (Schrempp 1992:53-4)[105].

The desires that sustained this domestic world eroded the foundations of reproductive morality at large. That was so because reproductive morality in Maranhão includes both respect-as-proximity and respect-as-distance, which cross through all social domains (see chapter three). José-Agostinho and Sandra-Maria slowly got used to living as a couple precisely because 'cosmologically' they discounted the reproductive tension existing within this continuous process of totalization and detotalization of relatedness. Without divine intervention to reincarnate (or at least fixate) other fleeting objects of desire – embodied by the figures of Laurete Monteiro, Maria Tibusa or Sandra-Maria's causal boyfriends –José-Agostinho and Sandra-Maria' children symbolized the complete dissolution of this cosmological tension. The proliferation of erotic intimacy in the family-house was therefore outrageously unethical (Schneider 1984).

Consequently, the second moment of 'cutting' re-established cosmogenesis of relatedness in the public sphere. In February 2011, during a mutiny in Pedrinhas Penitentiary Facility in the outskirts of São Luís, inmates attacked the cell in which José-Agostinho and other sex offenders

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[105] The Judge characterized the dynamics between José-Agotinho and his daughters as extremely hierarchic and coercive. Based on Sandra-Maria's narrative I reckon that reality was more complicated. I therefore present an alternative analysis, which is focused on the cosmology of relatedness in Maranhão rather than on the legal and moral implications of criminal actions.

were held. They executed José-Agostinho by decapitation and presented his severed head to photographers. A while later, in June 2011, the Legislative Assembly of Maranhão voted *against* the approval of state-funded monthly pension for Sandra-Maria. Consequently she was left with no means of income for herself and her children.

Agostinho's decapitated head quite literally reinstated discontinuity into the public sphere. And, by voting against paying a monthly allowance to Sandra-Maria, the legislative assembly of Maranhão discontinued the crucial life-source of a family born of incest. I here follow Roy Wagner (1972 and 2001:81-96), who argues that incestuous relations produce individualized identities that are juxtaposed to the common 'humanness' of persons. Breaking the regular association of affective content with certain conceptual categories disturbs the regular production of differentiated familial groups (Schneider 1984). When incest became a public matter it thus represented an uninterrupted movement, which defied the cultural tension between intra- and integrated social forms (cf. Gillison 1987). Decapitating Agostinho's head and preventing money from Sandra-Maria 'cut' such 'inhumane' continuity and publically reinstated moral order.

The following example further elucidates this claim. In the interior town Santa-Lucía my friend Ninete told me of a case that 'shocked the town'. A woman called Amanda, who was living in São Luís since she was 13, returned to her mother's house at the age of 24. Amanda's mother, who during the years had separated from Amanda's biological father, was living with another man and raising their two children. Her oldest son was about two years younger than Amanda. Although at the beginning their relations seemed 'sibling-like' (as maternal 'blood' siblings), Amanda had soon become pregnant and the forbidden romance was discovered. Amanda and her brother/lover were thrown out of the house and to the best of my knowledge they are still cut off from it. Here too, distancing or discontinuing the image of intragration from the house serves to reinstate reproductive tension between intra- and integrated activities.

These notions of incest both reveal and delineate the conceptual tension that locally exists between inter- and intragrated imaginaries of sociality. This tension empirically boils down to the ethical labour required for maintaining boundaries between affinal and 'blood' relations, including the hierarchies that bind them together into particular aggregations. In other words, aggregated sets of intimate relations in Maranhão cannot be too 'tight' but they cannot be too 'pliant'. Maintaining reproductive tension between intra- and integrated imaginaries of social relations is crucial for a sense of 'correct' affective flow (Taylor 1992). I now turn to analyze how this cultural logic informs the *cosmogenesis* of relatedness through a detailed ethnographic account of the *festa* of Divino Espirito Santo, as it was celebrated in Guanabara in July 2010.

Dona Bernardinha's Promise and the Festa of Divino Espirito Santo in Guanabara

In 2003 Dona Bernardinha discovered the early signs of cervical cancer. She then made a promise to the Divine Holy Spirit (*Divino Espirito Santo*, hereafter DES). 'He has always been my Santo', she told me. 'When I was young I suffered from migraines and one day I had a dream. I saw the figure (*retrato*) of Jesus engraved into the wall of my house, glowing with light. He left the wall and leant over me and slid his hand from my forehead to the back side of the skull. There he grabbed a cluster of hair and pushed my head violently. I woke up frightened'. Dona Bernardinha said she never suffered another migraine. This time DES helped her again. In 2006, after a successful treatment in a specialized cancer clinic in Teresina (State of Piauí), Dona Bernardinha overcame the illness. She has been commemorating the festive for DES annually ever since[106].

The *festa* for DES dates back to the 14th Century in Portugal. It has become widespread in the Portuguese New World from the 16th Century (Cascudo 1972:294). The *festa* depicts a medieval royal court (or Empire) impersonated by children who play the roles of Emperor and Empresses,

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[106] Although Dona Bernardinha and her husband Nelson have been living in São Luís since the early 1970s, Dona Bernardinha decided to hold the festive in her natal village of Guanabara. That was so since several of her sisters still lived there, and because her *afilhado* (godson) Zeca (who is also her ZS) owned an open-air function hall (*barracão*) there.

their servants and flag holders. Although varying in minute details, everywhere in Brazil the *festa* includes the dove and crown symbolizing the Saint, His red and white colors, and the Sunday procession. In Maranhão all DES festivities also include a group of women drummers called *caixeiras* (Pacheco, Gouveia and Abreu 2005). They lead the prayers (*rezas*), litanies (*ladainhas*), and improvised *toadas* (Eduardo 1966). Their services are paid for by money, groceries, or both.

As the 2010 *festa* approached, DES Himself began instructing Dona Bernardinha in her dreams how to prepare to the feast. He advised on such issues as the design of the uniform, the cloth to be used, what ornamentations to include, the arrangement of the altar, and the division of labor during the festive. The preparations for the *festa* lasted several months. They included the prerequisite recruitment of money from friends, relatives and other sources (e.g. local politicians) as well as the purchase of large quantity of expensive cloths and decorating material. Dona Bernardinha herself, together with her sister Dona Jara and other *senhoras* (elderly women) who volunteered to help, meticulously stitched the uniforms and the flags. The bronze crowns representing DES had already been ordered several years beforehand from a metallurgist in Rio de Janeiro. At the time they were sent to São Luís with a messenger and blessed by a local Padre.

At the beginning of July 2010 Dona Bernardinha moved to Guanabara together with two of her daughters, one daughter in law, one grandchild, Dona Jara and her husband Seu Sansão, and the *comadre* of one of Dona Bernardinha's daughters. They settled in the small two-room hut belonging to Dona Bernardinha and Dona Jara's 83 years old sister, Dona Olímpia. There, Dona Bernardinha appointed Dudú (son of her compadre Seu Joaquim) and Laurimar (her BS) to be responsible for any 'heavy duty' workload (*serviço pesado*) the *festa* would require. Other affiliates – associated by either 'blood' relation, ritual kinship or amity ties – contributed differentially to the ongoing organizational demands. Overall this included dozens of people.

On the morning of July 8th a firecracker was launched to commence the *festa*. It would last for ten days. On that first day Dudú led a group of ten men, who rummaged deep into the forest in

search of a strong bough. They chopped down a 15 meter high bough and carried it back to Guanabara for the women to decorate with bananas, cheap liquor bottles and bags of sweets. The bough was then erected in front of Zeca's *barracão* to serve as the *mastro* (mast) for the *festa* (cf. Eduardo 1966). In the following days Zeca's *barracão* was decorated minimally with an altar, where the crowns and figurines of doves were located for the duration of the nightly prayers (*rezas*) undertaken by seven praying-women (*rezaderas*). Every night it was someone else's responsibility to prepare corn porridge (*mingau*), soft drinks, cakes or coffee, as well as distributing these among participants and spectators. These sessions were followed by dance training sessions for the children that would participate in the enactment of the main event on the last night.

During the two nights prior to the main event, the close-cycle assistants (14 people altogether) stayed in the *barracão* to change the decoration of the altar and rearrange the chairs around. I joined them and we worked until dawn. This transformed the *barracão*, which was now beautifully decorated with red-and-white ornaments. Very early on Saturday morning Dudú, Seu Sansão and Laurimar slaughtered the bull that Dona Bernardinha had commissioned from Laurimar some months earlier. The women, most of them Dona Bernardinha's *comadres* and old friends, worked the whole morning to cut it up and cook it in the yard outside the *barracão*.

The transfer of favors, bestowals, money and goods corresponded with principles of affective interconnectedness I delineated in chapter two. Relational positioning within aggregated sets of intimate relations thus corresponded with a totalizing logic of an integrated ethical system. This can be imagined as concentric circles surrounding Dona Bernardinha, by which the closest group was formed mainly from 'blood' and ritual kinship connectivity with her; while external circles included persons with weaker moral indebtedness towards Dona Bernardinha[107]. The DES *festa* was supposed first to detotalize and then re-totalize this structure. I will now turn to describe extensively how this task failed.

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[107] As mentioned above, one of the closest assistants was Dona Barnardinha's daughter's comadre. I include her in the category of 'ritual kin' because of her close relationship with Dona Bernardinha's daughter.

Play and Its Fallacy

On Saturday afternoon an old Chevrolet D20 pick-up truck rattled down the dirt road loaded with a band of six *caixeiras* from São Luís. They arrived in good spirit and slightly drunk. This sparked excitement in and around the *barracão*. The *caixeiras* continued to drink and tell jokes. They also made up short *toadas* with twofold erotic meanings. This delighted several of the older men, who engaged in a lively discussion with some of the *caixeiras*. Seu Sansão laughed joyfully and hinted to his *compardes* Seu Reginaldo and Seu Joaquim that the fun was just beginning.

That evening the *rezas* were to begin later than usual. About a quarter of the population of the village, some 200 people, gathered in and around the *barracão*. Everybody was dressed elegantly. The *barracão* was filled with benches and chairs, arranged in a square typical of a church setting on the three sides of the altar. The elderly women, including Dona Bernardinha and her kinsfolk, were seated in the first row. Behind them people sat wherever they wished. Many people stood outside, blocking the entrances. The place was cramped. The children personifying the main ceremonial roles, chosen by Dona Bernardinha the year before, were seated on opulent chairs resembling an imperial court. They included the emperor - located at the highest spot - two empresses sitting on chairs right beneath him, four girls serving as dancing flag holders, and two older teenagers (a boy and a girl) serving as guards from both sides, holding big red flags.

The ceremony began with *ladainhas* sung by the *caixeiras*. After about half an hour they gave way to the official *rezas*, which lasted for about 40 minutes. The *rezaderas* wore the red-white uniform supplied by Dona Barnardinha. They sang beautifully. They were followed by two dances on which the children had practiced throughout the week – *Dança do Caroço* and *Dança dos Cruzeiros*. This was followed by a snack break that included tapioca cake and juice. Most of the people then left the *barracão*. Only those who intended to participate in the '*brincadeira*' (the Play) remained. This meant staying awake until dawn (*amanhecer*). The remaining people were thus referred to as *noitantes* (night-dwellers).

The *caixeiras* were supposed to capture the spectators for the rest of the night with their hypnotic, repetitive beats, while the play went on. That meant that between drumming sessions people would playfully 'rob' fruits from the *mastro.* The flag-carriers (*bandeirantes*) – the 'guardians' of the property of the Imperial court – 'arrested' the offenders and seated them in front of the *mastro*. The *caixeiras* then descanted the 'thief', who was only to be released after paying a ransom. Dona Jara was the first to 'rob'. Later on several others, including me, joined her.

The most important aspect of the *festa*, however, was the playful 'robbery' of the quintessence of divine authority itself: the emperor, the two empresses and the crowns of the Holy Spirit. One by one, and with impeccable cunningness, the human epitomes of Empire were 'snatched' from the back side of the altar and led to the yard, where Dudú or Laurimar lifted them above the short concrete wall and handed them over to collaborators. Despite their best efforts to stop the 'theft', the *bandeirantes* were defeated.

The robbery of the first crown was swift. Laurimar ran, swiped it off the hands of an elderly woman who tried to guard it, and transferred it to somebody in the back yard. The robbery of the second crown, however, caused turmoil. A person called Rivaldo quietly removed it from the altar and put it inside a fisherman's hay-bag (*cofo*). He then calmly, though with a fair bit of humorous friskiness, walked through the crowd with the *cofo* hung on his shoulder, whistling. He hid the *cofo* somewhere inside Zeca's house, which is located next to the *barracão*. Several minutes later Dudú and Laurimar, who were sitting on the pavement across from the *barracão*, called one of the *caixeiras*. She walked out and returned with a severe expression on her face, the DES crown in her hands. She stood in the middle of the *barracão* and declared through the roaring silence:

Espirito Santo is God. He is not the pure God, but he is a part of the Holy Trinity. And I admire this Santo from a long time ago, since I was 11 years old. And I am moved now to see such an image thrown out in the street like that! I beg your pardon (Dona Bernanrdinha), but I have never seen anything like that during all my years of adoration for this Santo.

People started talking excitedly. Dona Jara reacted first. She went straight to the *caixeira*, grabbed the crown and declared for all to hear: 'I have also been admiring this Santo forever and now He is mine. *Tchau*!' She then left the *barracão,* pacing steadily towards her sister's house at the other end of the village. My friend Cristina, one of the *rezadeiras*, explained what had happened. Apparently Dudú and Laurimar saw Zeca's wife Dona Rosiléi opening her door and putting the *cofo* with the crown in the street, for whoever to take charge of it. This signified the withdrawal of responsibility and avoidance from taking active part in the *brincadeira*.

There were no other excitements until the morning procession began. The *caixeiras* first led the crowd on the traditional *alvorada*, circling the *mastro* seven times with sunrise. Then they embarked to recover the lost objects of the *festa,* which were hidden away in people's houses. The *bandeirantes* walked in front to the sound of relentless beats and the rest of the crowd swirled after and around them, forming a flushing cascade of a tired red-and-white singing mass in motion. This egalitarian moment epitomized collective moral indebtedness.

The procession first recollected one of the 'empresses' and charged a symbolic 'ransom' from the owners of the house in which she was found. The crowd proceeded to the local church to perform one *ladinha* in front of the altar, down the hill to redeem the other 'empress' and up to the far side of Guanabara to recover the 'emperor'. The procession then turned towards the other edge of the village to obtain the crown that provoked the big drama. We ultimately marched back past the church to recover the last crown and circle the *mastro* again before entering the *barracão*. This formed an exact geographical cross through the topography of the village.

Several of Dona Bernardinha's *comadres* were already in the *barracão* when we returned, distributing *feijoada* (bean stew) to the participants. The *caixeiras* orchestrated the last *reza* and the *festa* came to a break until four o'clock (that Sunday afternoon), when the final procession was held. This closing procession physically circumscribed the entire territory of Guanabara. The *caixeiras* followed Dona Bernardinha, who walked in front and led the crowd gracefully. We left the

barracão down to the far side of the village and snaked around while registering a closed circle. The caxeiras drummed, singing *ladainhas,* and people stood on their verandas to watch us go by. One elderly woman, who is blind, even cried. That night, the altar was folded away and the *barracão* accommodated a reggae party that was organized by Zeca.

The following day, on Monday morning, the closing ceremony was performed in front of the *mastro*. The names of each of the contributors to the *festa* were read on the speakers while Dudú hit the *mastro* with an axe synchronically, until the *mastro* collapsed. As it fell, we all ran to pick up the ripe bananas, sweets and cheap liquor bottles that were attached to it. The *caixeiras* then left on board the D20 that brought them. That afternoon Dona Bernardinha held a private barbeque for her entourage. The *festa* was officially over.

Gossip and Contestation in Santo Afterlife

Dona Rosiléi's actions interjected 'everyday' calculations of pride and prejudice into the very mechanism that was supposed to guarantee their temporal suspension. Instead of a controlled circular process, uncompromising oppositions were revealed right in the heart of the spatiotemporal zone that was supposed to conceal them. The boundary between ritualized play and the social surrounding beyond it was challenged (Gofmann 1961:43) and this threatened the cosmological integration of the hierarchic power structures organized around Dona Bernardinha.

Consequently, the Santo afterlife echoed for weeks. At first people commented that Dona Rosiléi's actions were shameful and that this reflected hers and Zeca's 'penny-pinching' ('*canhegisse*' in local slang). Dona Rosliléi and Zeca were also said to have been *disrespectful*. Gossip breeze even carried the assumption that Dona Rosiléi and Zeca 'don't like Santos', which denoted irreverence and cynical opportunism. One rumor held that Zeca himself – who as far as I know was soundly asleep when the whole crisis broke out – had thrown the Santo in anger 'into the middle of the street'.

When Dona Bernardinha went to speak with Dona Rosiléi about the affair they both allegedly cried. Rumor has it that Dona Roiléi denied she ever 'threw' the Santo away. She purportedly called Zeca's cousin Caché to take the Santo back to Rivaldo, and then located the *cofo* within the limits of her terrace. But Caché was busy drinking at the *barracão* and never came to pick up the Santo. When Dudú and Laurimal saw Dona Roséi leaving the Santo unattended, the crisis therefore emanated. People also say that Dona Roiléi further reminded Dona Bernardinha that she has been sharing costs with the *festa* since it began in 2006. She pointed out that throughout the years she used to wash the big cooking pans alone and emphasized the fact that Dona Bernardinha, her family and other assistants from São Luís were always hosted for the duration of the *festa* in her house. Dona Roséi admitted that this year she felt rejected by Dona Bernardinha's decision to stay at Dona Olímpia's house. She also felt excluded because most of the preparation work had been done at Dona Olímpia's house, rather than at her own house.

Antagonism and bitterness were intensified several days later, when Dona Bernardinha's daughters and her daughter in law transferred the remaining equipment from Dona Roséi's to Dona Olímpia's house. Since the house was very small, they wanted to install a wooden platform in one of the rooms and store the boxes there. Dudú and Bebeto – Dona Bernardinha's son who is a professional builder – also insisted that next years' *festa* should not be celebrated at Zeca's house and went out to measure a plot on which to build a new *barracão* outside Dudú's house.

When Dona Bernardinha saw that, her migraines returned. She ordered the boxes sent back to Dona Roséi's house at once and refused to even discuss a new *barracão*. She said she has always done the *festa* at Zeca's house – who is 'like a son' to her – and that she will continue to hold the *festa* there until she dies. After all, Zeca has already implied that if the *festa* is to be held anywhere else his 'shame would be so great' that he would be capable of leaving the village altogether. Even if this was just a threat, it pointed to a rupture that could become an unbridgeable conflict across a wide set of aggregated intimate linakges.

Dona Bernardinha thus went to speak with Dona Roséi once again. She said she was confident of the inappropriateness of this whole quandary. Instead of a new *barracão* she decided to build a small structure next to Dudu's house, which would accommodate the *caixeiras* in future years[108]. Dona Bernardinha then said that soon she would 'sit' with DES and ask him what to do. If he approved, she would cancel her promise and there would be no more *festa*. Dona Jara, as well as other elderly women, tried to convince Dona Bernardinha that it is impossible to cancel a promise to a saint, but Dona Bernardinha insisted she would speak to the Santo after all.

Dona Bernardinha remained in Guanabara for several more weeks to rework the crisis. Slowly gossip dissipated and relations between the relevant persons were routinized ethically (cf. Besnier 2009:12-19). When she eventually returned to São Luís, Dona Bernardinha indeed consulted DES, who dissuaded her from cancelling the *festa*. The following years it was held as usual at Zeca's *barracão* and even grew in volume. I now turn to discuss how the cosmogonic failure that marked the *festa* from within was related to the local cosmology of relatedness.

Cosmogonic Failure and the Cosmology of Relatedness in Maranhão

Economic arrangements in the *festa* generically reaffirmed the different levels of 'respect' existing between Dona Bernardinha and her assistants. Payments and bestowals were allocated differentially according to (1) the amount of work invested; (2) the structured (affective, 'blood' or ritual) proximity to Dona Bernardinha or her close family, including the expectations this embedded; and (3) objective measurements for contractual relations. For example, one of Dona Bernardinha's sisters in law (BSW) had spent a full day cooking meat in the *barracão* for free, but was paid for the tapioca cakes she baked in her house and distributed amongst the *noitantes*. While Zeca and Dona Roséi offered their facilities for free, they charged for every beer they sold throughout the period, whether the buyers were 'of the family' or not. Cristina, who voluntarily served as *rezadeira*, was also paid extra cash for her work as care-taker of elderly Dona Olímpia.

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[108] This was completed in 2012.

Ceremonial activity itself, however, revolved around the general agreement that 'This is Play' (Bateson 2000), namely, that the robbery of the Santo was not *really* a robbery and that the ransom was not *really* a source of sanction or even a wealth object. Play was supposed to generate a particular kind of phenomenon – the destruction of Empire and its reconstitution – in ways that would highlight the interconnectedness of existing social hierarchies as a holistic unit. As with the Bumba Boi myth, this emulated a symbolic process of dismemberment and reincarnation, by which formal hierarchies should have been removed and successfully reinstated. The fact that Dona Rosiléi disputed play-logic undermined proper cosmic flow.

The *festa* was thus marked by two complementing cosmological imaginaries. On the one hand there were closed-end actions that corresponded with the intimacy of moral indebtedness as well as with economic utilitarianism. This manifested in the mobilization of kinship and amity ties encircling Dona Bernardinha, who herself showed symbolic deference towards the Saint. These closed-end relations can be imagined as totalizing ethical practices that grade down vertically from the divine through levels of intermediating authorities to the mundane. For example, DES revealed Himself to Dona Bernardinha in her dreams to instruct how to prepare that year's *festa*, while Dona Bernardinha passed these instructions on to the helpers that accompanied the various stages.

On the other hand, there were open-end actions that corresponded with personal epiphanies and affective transfers. Initially this began with Dona Bernardinha's promise, which transgressed the eschatological boundary of illness. This also came about through Dona Rosiléi's contested actions. It can be imagined as a detotalizing force that spreads horizontally to intra-connect people, deities and objects. For example, during the morning procession one of the *caixeiras* was suddenly possessed by a spirit. People were saying that the possessing entity was that woman's late husband, who had passed away the year beforehand. Likewise, in several occasions during the week before the main event both Dona Beranrdinha's daughter and her *comadre* were unexpectedly possessed.

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Although this was probably inadvertent, the processions undertaken during the festive physically imprinted these abstract frameworks onto the land. The first procession took place during the most somnambulant, unregulated and egalitarian moment of the event, during which all symbols of authority were absent[109]. It was characterized by an intra-grated sense of communitas (Turner 1969) as it tangibly dismembered Guanabara into differentiated units by forming a cross through its streets. The second procession took place during the most hierarchic moment of the event. Dona Bernardinha walked in front, followed by the *caixeiras*, the human and inanimate symbols of DES, the *bandeirantes*, and the rest of the crowd. It tangibly integrated Guanabara within a closed perimeter, which 'reincarnated' the village as homogenous social entity.

Although the rules of the game – as well as their fragility – were ostensibly transparent and well mastered by everyone, Dona Rosléi undermined prescribed play-logic at the most critical moment. Successful cosmogony was thus challenged. The Santo afterlife and the gossip that fomented it directly resulted from this symbolic failure. Instead of introducing a paradoxical play-boundary – which aimed to conceal the flaws of Divinity and the uncertainty of relying on His grace – a revelation of mundane intrigue was brought forth. Dona Bernardinha therefore had to deploy the sources of authority – both her own as the owner of the *festa* and those of DES Himself – in order to encompass all relevant aggregations and finally totalize them.

Conclusion

In this chapter I highlighted an image of an open-ended intra-grated universe in which all forces and entities transgress their prescribed domains; and a closed-end integrated universe in which all forces and entities are organized within clearly defined fields of practice. The Bumba Boi spectacle exemplifies the tension between these intra-grated and integrated worlds, a tension which is culturally prescribed as intrinsic to the cosmogony of relatedness in Maranhão. This

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[109] The human epitomes of Empire and the crowns of DES were still hidden. Likewise, Dona Bernardinha did not lead this procession. She walked in the crowd like a regular participant. The *bandeirantes* and the *caixeiras* walked in front, but they were quickly surpassed by other participants.

argument challenges the assumption that the story Maranhenses tell themselves about the formation of their social cosmos only emphasizes popular resistance to invincible hierarchic structures (Linger 2005:79-126).

I argued that this cosmological 'tension' – which manifests ethnographically in a cyclical destruction of hierarchy and its inevitable reinstatement – historicizes post-slavery social relations. Historicized narratives are constituted through procedures of silencing, enhancement and naturalization, which outline certain events and meanings on the expense of others (Trouillot 1995, Hannertz 1996, Mignolo 2000, Sahlins 1981). In Maranhão play-logic encourages paradox (Handelman 1998), which actively 'forgets' the brutality of plantation sociality (cf. Harrison 2004). I claimed that this is so because play avoids clear-cut segregations that seek moral distinction between masters and slaves. Both in Bumba Boi and DES, and in contrast to the incest case, an ethical boundary that emphasizes agility and performance was laboriously instituted. Local notions of incest and bestiality delineate precisely the space in which this boundary collapses.

This treatment of cosmology in the realm of relatedness ultimately suggests that desire and the erotic in Maranhão are not generally perceived as a source of 'excess' to the same extent that local familial exigencies are not normally seen as the provenance of coercion. Rather, the ethics of relatedness produce boundaries by which persons try to maintain a plurality of intimate sets of relations coexisting in parallel to one another; even when sometimes some of these sets become mutually-exclusive. Persons seek to integrate and intra-grate simultaneously, and when this fails it at times culminates to tragic social dramas. In the conclusion of this thesis I will take this assertion further to discuss how play sociality in Maranhão critically informs theoretical frameworks on intimacy and kinship in contemporary anthropological scholarship.

Conclusion: The Intimate Event

Ethics + Affect = Intimacy?

In low-income Maranhão relational aggregations of persons spring from intersubjective transfer of bodily affects, including the ethical labor that accompanies and structures its 'flow'. Expression and maintenance of kin relations is then predicated on diverse forces: the power of love as it manifests in nurture; emotional entanglements that 'capture' others by means of touch or the transfer of smell; the essential realization of lustful attraction when it strikes; the transitive trajectory of and the sudden submersion with fear, sadness, longing, or anger; and the contagious intensity associated with jealousy, desire, passion, sorcery or violence.

I argued that two paradigmatic models of relatedness organize these forces in practice. These represented closed-end and open-end forms of affective transfer, to which I related through the terms hierarchy::egalitarianism, totalization::detotalization, and integration::intragration. I used heuristic terms – such as play (*brincadeira*), respect (*respeito*), jealousy (*ciúmes*) and control (*controle*) – in order to analyse the profoundly ethical character of 'invisibility' in reconciling these contrasting cosmological imaginaries (Shapiro 2011a). I claimed that by deploying play through everyday action these polarities always implicate each other (McKinnon 1995).

Following Viviana Zelizer (2005), I proposed that the term 'intimacy' glossed degrees of knowledge and feeling that tacitly underscored social conjunctures in Maranhão in all their mundane manifestations. Since intimacy was not an ethnographic term but my own, it remains to justify why I placed this concept at the center of my analysis. This task is twofold. First, I want to establish the claim that the ethnography of relatedness in Maranhão is primarily about intimacy, rather than being about 'kinship', 'gender', 'sexuality' or other segments of 'the social' (cf. Pyyhtinen 2010:35-7). Second, I will suggest that the term 'intimacy' could explicate the 'expansion' and 'contraction' (Beatty 2005b:63) of kinship groups in wider sociocultural contexts. I argue that this entails some methodological advantages for the cross cultural study of klinship relations.

The 'intimate event' and the Sociality of Kinship in Maranhão

The empirical plurality of 'familial aggregations' in Maranhão could be labelled 'cognatic system' in traditional kinship terms (Eduardo 1966; cf. Fonseca 2000)[110]. Lévi-Strauss argues that in order to analyse such systems it is required to 'move successively from relations of kinship and descent to property relations, (and) then, in the absence of a rule of perpetual succession to a hereditary office or domain, to relations of residence, the greater part of them contingent' (Lévi-Strauss 1987:154). In the case of Maranhão I propose that it is crucial also to move further from the contingency of residence to the systematic generation of intimacy in everyday practice. This is so because as an analytical concept, 'intimacy' allows for the theorization of kinship dynamics in dialectical terms, which coincide with local forms of affective knowledge and practice.

There are several ethnographic examples that support this assertion. First, in Maranhão the notion of 'aggregation' captures forms of affective reciprocity persons both inherit *and* create while involving their lives with those of tangible and phantasmagorical others. Intimate familiarity is simultaneously 'given' and 'made' in the process of social interaction (but cf. Viveiros de Castro 2009)[111]. Rather than adopt an either/or approach that emphasizes moral discontinuity across social domains (viz. DaMatta 1991), I attribute the ethics of relatedness in Maranhão to shifting degrees of intimate sharing that interconnect diverse fields of practice (cf. Pina-Cabral 2009:168).

Second, as opposed to arguments that focus on gender asymmetry on the Brazilian margins (e.g. McCallum 1999), claims for familial responsibility in Maranhão denote measures of both liberty and duty. This is so because respect-relations form an affective continuum ranging from avoidance/hierarchy to joking/egalitarianism. 'Proximity' and 'distance' – terms I offered to speculate degrees of intimate sharing in everyday practice – are markers of ethical boundaries

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[110] Cognatic kinship is a bilateral descent system traced through both the father and the mother.

[111] Viveiros de Castro argues that sociality is predicated everywhere on creative elaborations derived from what is locally taken to be given ('nature') and what is supposed to be made ('culture'). Here I suggest that for my friends and interlocutors in Maranhão intimate familiarity escapes this matrix altogether.

located somewhere in between (Goffman 1971:41-2). In the polarities of this continuum, 'avoidance' is homologous with too much 'joking' because both signify *loss* of respect. Hence they also signify loss of intimacy[112]. As they manifest in men and women's actions, degrees of intimate familiarity include both the ethics of commitment and freedom (Graeber 2007).

Third, the linkage between desire, sexual intercourse and respect in Maranhão readily includes affective transfers that are at once lustful, passionate and effervescent but also restricting and accommodating. If grafting 'respect' into your children's flesh generates conscience – which is later reworked ethically to cultivate different types of respect-relations – affixing such engagements onto matter and objects then crystalizes a sense of ethical 'correctness' as well as a stage for the realization of its pragmatic scripts. This can be described as 'a dialectical process of objectification and appropriation in which identity and alterity are redefined' (Sansi-Roca 2007:4). The house in Maranhão then becomes the crucial focal point that facilitates both transfer and storage (Graeber 2001): it holds within itself the basic premises for moral indebtedness *and* affective interconnectedness. The house in Maranhão is therefore important not because it always-already resists the 'street' in the realization of personhood and hierarchy (viz. DaMatta 1997) but rather because it offers a space for core social values to circulate.

Fourth, kinship idioms in Maranhão commonly associate the ethical practices of relatedness in family-houses (such as care, sex, nurture, and commensality) with morally correct forms of belonging to larger-scale relational communities. For example, during the 2010 Football World Cup, Dona Jara called the players of the Brazilian National Team (*Seleção*) her 'children' (*filhos*). Dona Jara thus denoted a subtext of ethical personhood, which instantiated a metonymic moral linkage between herself, her family and the Nation. In fact, the alignment of children with football heroes here represented the National Geist itself as meaningfully intimate (cf. Snow et al

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[112] Ethnographically, complete avoidance and complete disclosure destroy intimacy altogether. Jackson and Ludmila's story (chapter three) ethnographically represents the institutionalization of avoidance after complete transparency eroded the foundations of intimate sharing. Inversely, José-Agostinho and Sandra-Maria's institutionalized incestuous relations (chapter six) following the collapse of 'respect' and 'shame'.

1986 on 'frame alignment'). Dona Jara's performance of intimacy challenges the literature that mainly focuses on the continuous diametrical relations between the 'State' and people living in peripheral contexts around Brazil (e.g. Scheper-Hughes 1992, Gregg 2003, Goldstein 2003).

Fifth, membership in corporate groups locally implies knowledge or familiarity on the ontological level (e.g. of a place, a lifestyle, habitus etc.) *as well as* an emotional grit and affective interconnectedness on the ontogenic level (e.g. love, passion, 'respect', *ciúmes* etc.)[113]. Brazilianist ethnographic literature, however, tend to differentiate these theoretical stances as mutually exclusive. For example, constructionist approaches tend to focus on forms of knowledge as they are constituted politically and economically while relativist approaches tend to focus on the emotional propensities associated with key symbols. As opposed to terms such as 'strategy' (Gregg 2003) and 'ideology' (Parker 1991), 'intimacy' simultaneously denotes conceptual 'structure' and experiential 'sentiment'. Importantly, this estimation is in accordance with local cultural style.

Sixth, not only that invisibility in Maranhão 'hides' certain actions, the very imperative to conceal is an important aspect of ethical personhood (viz. Simmel 1906). This is so because through the production of invisibility persons compartmentalize affective knowledge and thus keep face with the commitments that interconnect them across aggregated sets of intimate relations. Secrecy demarcates the murky spaces located between visible moral injunctions in ways that sustain the dialectic 'proliferation' and 'anchoring' of intimacy, which respectively takes place 'through' persons and into houses (or parallel cultural icons such as the National Football Team).

It is thus possible to claim that in Maranhão the term 'intimacy' may be used to represent a cyclical set of actions that 'aggregate' people together: (1) projecting 'essences' that could capture unwittingly; (2) 'anchoring' or reassembling relations (blood, affiliation or ritual) onto spatial hubs;

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[113] Englehardt (1977) argues that the relations between ontology and ontogeny are a variant of the body-mind debate. Ontology stands for that which 'exists' synchronically as a property of mind and ontogeny stands for the accumulative (or diachronic) process of becoming an adult person from the heterogeneous stages that preceded it. In that sense 'ontogeny', like topology in mathematics (cf. Handelman 2004b), refers to the possibility of preserving certain features of personhood that 'existed' even before the actual 'person' has become identified as such; while 'ontology' focuses on the categories of 'being related'.

(3) constituting metonymic proportions across interconnected sets of relations through material exchange; (4) dispersing (or expanding) the scope of affective transfer through play (e.g. *ciúmes*); (5) consolidating ethical boundaries by the production of spaces of invisibility, which allow for hierarchic and egalitarian modes of intimate sharing and exchange to implicate each other.

I argue that this process makes up for a 'structure of the (intimate) conjuncture' (Sahlins 1981:35) in low-income Maranhão. By that I mean that ideological, mythological and moral codes indeed locally supply models to understand relational events of affective character. Yet, the zest of affective transfer also 'ha(s) the power to subvert the framework of meaning that men and women tr(y) to impose on them' (Kuper 1999:177). As Marshal Sahlins claims, 'it is thus half-true that the event is the realization of a general structure; the other half is the realization of the unique event as a new general order' (Sahlins 2000:342)[114]. In that sense the intimate event is 'truncated' by those same factors that shape it as they are being shaped by it (Strathern 1996a).

Through this prism contested gender spaces on the Brazilian margins are not product of an inherent strife, ostensibly taking place between men and women that uphold contrasting ethical life projects (viz. Hautzinger 2007, Goldstein 2003). This is so because this prism does not presume a-priori that Brazilians living in low-income neighborhoods conceive of themselves exclusively as bounded individuals. If intimate sharing is simultaneously 'totalized' and 'detotalized', analytic accounts of relatedness on the Brazilian periphery should include cosmological modalities that positively entail both these aspects of social connectivity. Authors that imagine Brazilians of the early 21st Century in accordance with Euro-American modalities of personhood and subjectivity miss a second sense of intimacy, which consists in intra-gration through provisional others.

In low-income Maranhão intimate events entail both a sense of self-liberation focused on personal desires and the emotional indebtedness predicated on familial responsibilities. They

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[114] Sahlins (2000:342ff) attributes three decisive 'moments' to the dialectic of the event. The first is 'instantiation', 'wherein the larger cultural categories of the history are represented by particular persons'. The second is climax or resolution (Sahlins uses the word 'denouement'), which might not 'fit' into the larger cultural schemata. The third moment is 'the attribution of general meanings to particular incidents'.

emerge both as exclusive sentiments focused on refashioning the self (Zigon 2007) and as inclusive sentiments focused on being-with others (Simmel 1971). They thus account for both consanguineal and affinal forms of affective transfer that are institutionalized by the exchange of objects, money, favors and bestowals (Strathern 1988). *Intimate events in Maranhão pragmatically shape local kinship aggregations, which 'grow' from their intrinsic dialectic* (cf. Das 2012). I will now turn to demonstrate the comparative methodological advantages of this analytical framework.

The Nice Thing about Intimacy is that Everyone Has It: Intimate Events as Heuristic Devices

Elizabeth Povinelli (2002, 2006) argues that in 'settler communities' certain types of intimate dependencies are discursively associated with freedom, hope and ontological security; while others distribute a sense of constraint, moral decay and social uncertainty. This divide refers to heterosexual forms of intimacy, sexuality, eroticism and kinship on the one hand against queer sexuality and Australian-Aboriginal kinship formations on the other. To describe this polarization Povinelli (in Venkatesan 2011:225-6) uses the term 'intimate event', which she sees as:

…A cluster of fantasies... concerned with anti-miscegenation, interracial marriage, bigamy and sodomy… which attain coherence and stability through specific operations, namely, by delimiting what the specific domain of intimacy ought to be, conceiving of intimacy as explicitly normative, and construing forms of social organization other than those regulated by the intimate event as different and immoral. Through the mechanism of exception, the intimate event is therefore implicated in the production of difference…[115]

Povinelli correctly points out the negative sense associated with breaching the normative codes that regulate trust, love and emotional attachment. In chapter one I quoted Hautzinger (2007:70), who takes for granted this exclusivist stance of intimacy to the extent she explicitly claims that her informants 'lost their culture'. William Jankowiak's (1995 and 2008) comparative research on 'intimacies' also reproduces such an either/or discourse. Jankowiak argues that intimacy consists in a 'harmonic unity', which ultimately is a quite rare social phenomenon:

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[115] Povinelli (2006 and 2011) uses the terms 'autology' and 'genealogy' to refer to these discursive domains. Autology describes the imagery of the autonomous, self-sustaining subject and genealogy represents a discourse about structured inheritance that constrains and curtails individual freedom in myriad ways.

My premise is simple: out of the stew that is our genetically-based and chemically-driven biological urge for sex and emotional affiliation comes the psychological experiences that have been variously dubbed, defined, and distinguished as infatuation, limerance, romantic love, or passionate love. When the two experiences come together, *an aesthetic unity is formed*. However, whenever sexual desire and loving intimacy are at odds with one another, a competition occurs. This competition is accompanied by important implications for understanding the difficulty cultures encounter in balancing and regulating sexuality, both as private experience and as a mode of social behaviour (Jankowiak 2008:24, italics mine).

The ethnography of 'aggregations' from Maranhão – which I interpreted as self-proliferating sense of being-with others – goes against both Jankowiak's and Povinelli's models. In Jankowiak's case, not only that 'sexual desire' and 'loving intimacy' locally implicate each other through complementary forms of affective transfer, I also demonstrated that their 'aesthetic unity' may actually bring about serious havoc. In Povinelli's case, the claim that homoerotic intimacy always looms large as a threatening 'other' simply goes against ethnographic reality. My gay interlocutors of both sexes were engaged in familial aggregations and they reported similar notions of affective transfer, 'capture' and morality on which heterosexual interlocutors spoke.

Through the prism I suggest, the intimate event is an underlying principle of everyday sociality (Pyyhtinen 2010:79-81), which is pragmatically institutionalized *as* kinship[116]. This is so because it explicates 'our simultaneous engagement with different persons and different groups, (which) implies a mutualistic plurality of interests' (Pina-Cabral 2013:262, brackets mine). I here allude to Marshal Sahlins (2011), who argues that what makes kinship unique in the mosaic of social relations is the fact it denotes literal extension of 'being' through people that share each other's lives beyond genealogy and personhood. Sahlins (2011a:10, brackets mine) thus claims that 'a kinship system (is) a manifold of intersubjective participation, founded on mutualities (sic) of being'. In this scheme, kinship categorization *defines* the types of 'persons' who employ it. Going beyond this assertion, Pina-Cabral (2013:269, original quotes and italics) argues:

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[116] Pyyhtinen (ibid:79) develops Simmel's approach to the emergence of 'the event' as the main force of social association, which is imagined simultaneously as 'becoming form' and 'formed becoming'. Intimacy is seen as a bursting life-force that makes concrete social forms but always also bursts through them.

I propose… that we should recover Strrathern's (1988) original use of the relation between 'partiability' and 'dividuality' where the former relates to *mediated* relations… and the latter relates to *unmediated* relations, where 'persons are construed as having direct influence in the minds or bodies of those to whom they are thus related' (Strathen 1988:178). What this means is that partiability results from persons being multiple, whilst dividuality qualifies the singularity that characterizes partible persons[117].

Beyond Brazilinist ethnography, I wish to contribute to this debate. Whereas Sahlins (2011) prioritizes an ontological definition of kinship that is not reducible to substance (and hence supplies a sociocentric framework that highlights relationality), Pina-Cabral seems to prefer an ontogenic definition of kinship; by which Strathern's emphasis on 'persons' remains the main unit of analysis. I suggest that when viewed as a generative process predicated on the incessant emergence, sustenance and dissipation of intimate events, the ethnography of 'aggregations' from Maranhão potentially brings these two arguments together. This is so because when imagined from the point of view of ethnographic subjects, the instantiation of intimate events simultaneously entails the 'detotalized' self-generation of personhood *and* the totalization of core moral values.

Take 'respect' in Maranhão as a prominent example for this process. 'Respect' is simultaneously the value that enables intimate familiarity to proliferate and the stationary symbol by which it finds rest in houses. The important point is that 'anchoring' two kinds of respect-relations (proximity and distance) in material form objectifies intimate relations, and thus 'cuts' their potentially limitless scope (Strathern 1996a). Under this prism the 'intimate event' remains a generative force of sociality operating beyond affect, imagination and desire (Long and Moore 2013:17-20) in ways that coalesce with categories employed by ethnographic subjects.

This last assertion relies on the idea that a sense of intimate connectivity simultaneously operates on two planes of reference. It is both an objective event of sociality that structures the

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[117] Pina-Cabral (2013a) recently demonstrated this point in an article on naming practices in Bahia. Pina-Cabral argues that names extend parents' and relatives' ontogenic life-worlds into and through their children. They thus create persons that are at once multiple and singular, who in themselves will continue to extend their 'mutuality of being' (Sahlins 2011a) further due to their inherent 'partibility' as social beings.

relatively stable ethical boundaries of 'close proximity' *and* a subjective, fleeting or ephemeral affective connection. 'Ontologically' a sense of intimacy entails at once the inclusion of the infinity of Others within the self (Levinas 1969) *and* a fragmented, contingent quality of continuity, duration and resilience, which may be swept away quite easily[118]. I claim that such dialectic produces a productive tension on both epistemic and emotional registers (cf. Carsten 1995b:227). Intimate events therefore define the ontogeny of persons as much as they are defined by it.

Evidently, this links into Georg Simmel's theory of forms, which is dialectical in the sense it argues for symbiosis between forms and contents. By 'forms' Simmel means the institutionalized aspects of everyday life through which individuals are 'associated' into groups. For example 'the impulse for sociability' in humans (Simmel 1971:135) is an objective social 'form' that pushes people to interact with each other in a playful manner. Objectified 'forms' also transpose into the 'content' of social interactions, which in itself is always determined by acting subjects who define the ethical conditionings of particular associations. Simmel (2009:85, brackets mine) argues:

That the sociological event remains… within the personal apart and-dependent existence, (is) the basis of 'intimacy.' This characteristic of a relationship seems to… return to the initially individual disposition: in that the person gladly differentiates oneself from the other, the qualitatively individual is regarded as the core, value, and *sine qua non* of one's existence—a presumption in no way always justified since for many it is quite typically the contrary, the essence and substantial value of their personality shared with others. Now this repeats itself with aggregations. For them, too, it is manifest that the quite unique contents their participants share with one another but with no one outside this community have become the centre and the real gratification of this community. This is the form of intimacy.

Forms thus emerge through individuals as the particular emotional, cognitive and affective content of their transactions. And then again, these forms are objectified facts that exist outside these individuals. Since Simmel conceives of psychological phenomena to be at the root of every

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[118] Levinas (1969) constitutes a scale between totality and infinity. The former consists in structured, immobile, and concrete utterances. The latter consists in dynamic abstractions that are associated with spiritual elevation. Levinas' point is that only in the physical presence of other persons can one gain access to this latter sense of infinity, as one recognizes his own infinite spiritual potentiality in the other's bare face.

social 'impulse', togetherness is an objectification of interpersonal psychological tendencies. Form and content, psychology and sociology, are thus seen as intrinsically intertwined and inherently 'flowing' into each other (cf. Oaks 1980:45-6). Simmel sees this process as infinite, in fact as life itself, and he claims this stands at the basis of social organization at large (cf. Pyyhtinen 2010:54-60). Simmel (2009:87) demonstrates that elegantly with his analysis of intimacy in marriage:

Passion seeks to tear down the boundaries of the 'I' and merge with the other; however, they do not become an entity, but rather a new entity results: the child. And the characteristically dualistic condition of its becoming: a closeness that must nevertheless remain a remoteness… what has become stands also between its progenitors, and these varying sentiments associated with them allow now one, now the other to take effect… The metaphysical oneness, into which both sought to fuse only with one another, has now slipped through their fingers and stands over against them as a third physical presence that intrudes between them. But even a go-between must appear as a separation, to those who desire unmediated unity, in the same way that a bridge connects two banks, but nevertheless forms a measurable gap between them.

Simmel argues that the figure of a Third (which can be a person, a concept, or even death) marks every dyadic social relation by not belonging to it. The metaphysical presence of otherness thus becomes an *aesthetic* quality that solidifies a social frame; as well as an inherent *ethical* quality of dyadic intimacy itself. 'Hence, it is neither simply the dyad nor the triad that can be regarded as the basic unit of the social: the possibility of the dyad is conditioned by the thirds and the actions of the third presuppose the dyad' (Pyyhtinen 2009:119). I would add that the consistent emergence of ethical life-worlds in the image of personhood is intrinsic to the ways intimate events objectify relations between dyads and triads. As Olli Pyyhtinen (2010:87, original italics) argues:

The event… emphasizes the primacy of process over substance… Life overflows forms: forms have change-potential that is not lapsed in their actuality. Not only society but also other familiar heuristic categories used by sociologists – such as structure, culture, institution, identity, race, and gender – are not stable, clear-cut entities with exact boundaries. Rather, they *are* themselves boundaries that leak and are radically open to change. This is what the notion of the event fascinatingly emphasizes with the element of surprise being always inscribed in it.

I think that ethnographic subjects, potentially everywhere, recognize this potential eventuality of intimacy. The very possibility to sense others and participate in their world – even when these others are phantasmagorical spirits, Saints, or figurines representing divinity – suggests that the intimacy of being-with is inherent in the 'partible' person. To paraphrase Strathern's (1995:169) take on 'culture': if intimacy is about the relative experience of continuity and discontinuity with others, it includes orders of heuristic knowledge that people work one against the other in the incessant unfolding of sociality[119]. Intimacy can be used as a *heuristic device,* by which persons play with their proximity and distant from various Others in mundane practice.

Conclusion: The Methodological Scope of Intimate Events

My analysis of intimate relations in Maranhão entails two main methodological advantages. First, as opposed to complex theoretical terms such as 'partibility' (Pina-Cabral 2013), 'dividuality' (Strathern 1988), 'mutuality of being' (Sahlins 2011a and 2011b), 'relationality' (Viveiros de Castro 2009) or 'analogic kinship' (Wagner 1977); intimacy is a mundane concept that is widely used in various ethnographic contexts[120]. Employing this category for the study of kinship would thus potentially encourage a fertile discursive exchange in the field, which builds on grassroots theorization of local forms of affective knowledge. Second and consequent, if intimacy is enhanced empirically as a heuristic device, cross-cultural ethnographic studies of relatedness could focus directly on the ethical scripts of intimate events in their mundane manifestation. When substituting 'mutuality of being' with 'intimacy', for example, the following passage from Sahlins (2011a:11, original quotes) cogently exemplifies this last claim:

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[119] Strathern (1995:164-5, original quotations, citation dropped) famously argues that: 'the study of social relations pre-empts any illusion of first contact: no one encounters anyone 'for the first time', for no one has ever lived in the absence of relationships. Interaction is made possible on the minimalist premise that persons (like concepts) are inevitably lived and perceived as versions of other persons— they are always in that sense already in a relationship... 'social relations' works as a heuristic for understanding the way different parts of social life implicate one another'.

[120] The fact that 'intimacy' popularly implies erotic or sexual union should not reduce its potential heuristic power to indicate 'mutuality'. I claim this should be the starting point for further anthropological investigation rather than the end-product.

…mutuality of being has the virtue of describing the various means by which kinship may be constituted, whether natally or post-natally, from pure 'biology' to pure performance, and any combinations thereof. In this connection, 'being' encompasses and goes beyond the notions of common substance, however such consubstantiality is locally defined and established. Neither a universal nor an essential condition of kinship, common substance is better understood as a culturally relative hypostasis of common being… If love and nurture, giving food or partaking in it together, working together, living from the same land, mutual aid, sharing the fortunes of migration and residence, as well as adoption and marriage, are so many grounds of kinship, they all know with procreation the meaning of participating in one another's life.

Instead of seeking a clear-cut separation between models of relatedness or social domains – a task which often reflects ideological fallacies on behalf of the authors – we must redefine how intimacy dialectically organizes social forms. As I see it, this is not a relativist question, supposedly assuming that there are various kinds of fixed 'intimacies' that differ in character and poise across societies. Rather, I see the dialectic of intimate events as a renewable resource of social relations, and hence as a core process in the generation of kinship groups. This process combines the ontological status of relationality with ontogenic particularity.

And this leads to freedom. For, as Laidlaw (in Lambeck 2010:27) argues, 'the practice of freedom intrinsically entails the exercise of judgement… through the rituals that involve the optional adoption of compulsory orders and obligations'. If there is one thing I hope I have achieved in this thesis, it follows from this realization as it refers to the ethics of intimacy: when my friends and interlocutors acknowledge their commitments to others and yet they shift across modalities of relatedness by the production of invisbility, they prescribe an ethical judgment that designates their capacity to be free. As they strive to grade intimate sets of relations – sustain and cultivate them for as long as they can – they thus play with the affective vitality of freedom itself.

Maps and Figures

Figure 5: Political Map of Brazil. Taken from www.ibge.co.br

Figure 6: Map of Maranhão. Taken from www.ibge.co.br
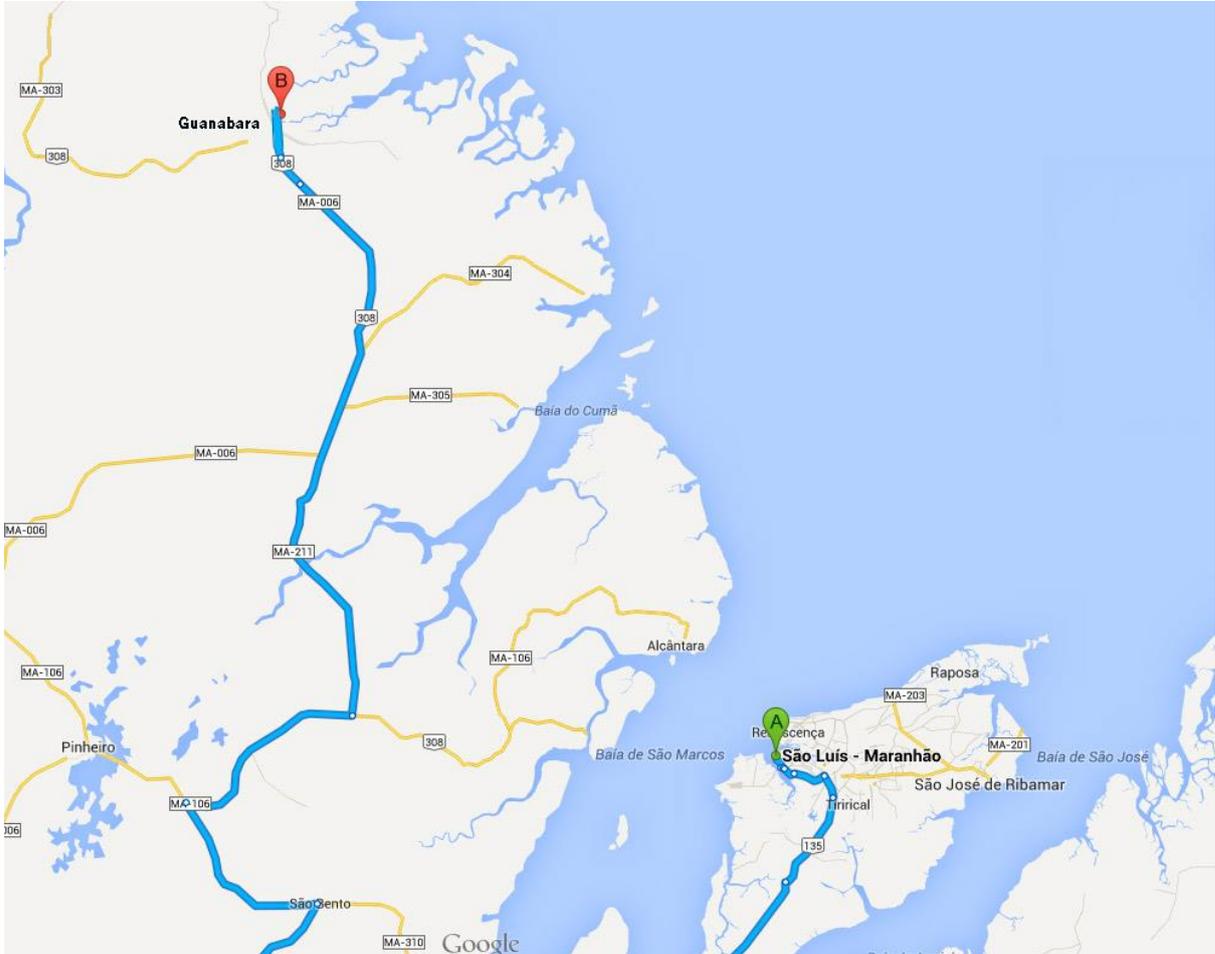
Figure 7: Location of São Luís and Guanabara. Taken from www.googlemaps.co.br

Figure 8: Drummer of a *boi* group during presentation in Santo-Amaro

Figure 9: *Boi* during a Bumba meu Boi Celebration

Figure 10: Santo-Amaro, São Luís de Maranhão.

Figure 11: Girls painting nails in Guanabara.

Figure 12: The crown of Divino Espirito Santo on the altar in Guanabara.

Figure 13: Women chopping meat before the *festa* of Divino Espirito Santo.

Figure 14: Pai de Santo Carlos possessed by a *caboclo* during a session in the terreiro.

Figure 15: Chorus singing during a *culto* in an Evangelical Church in São Luís.

Figure 16: Mâmi in her baptism with her *padrinho* and *madrinha*.

Figure 17: communal building of Beckenbauer's house in Guanabara

Figure 18: Seu Sansão, Seu Joaquim and Chico at work.

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[121] I received permission from the author to change the real name of the neighbourhood to Santo-Amaro.

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