This chapter focuses on two aesthetic practices on the urban periphery of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. First, I discuss applications of bright, deliberately eye-catching makeup in the context of professional makeup salons, among amateur enthusiasts, and in relation to women's empowerment classes at a community center in a small favela located in Rio's downtown. Second, I describe a tanning practice known as *marquinha* (little mark), in which strips of tape are applied to the body and used to create precise tan lines. Taking as a starting point the assertion that aesthetics and political dynamics are inextricably entwined, I draw comparisons between these aesthetic practices and their relation to questions of sexuality and desire, power and self-empowerment, and to questions of race. In Rio de Janeiro, as elsewhere, aesthetics are particularly important to the politics of inequality that define the urban landscape. And while aesthetics may often express ideas and indeed "say something" about their practitioners, they are hardly just passive reflections of society. This chapter focuses instead on the pragmatic power of makeup and *marquinha* to "*causar*" (to cause) and make real material impacts on viewers. In describing these practices as pragmatic, I call attention to aesthetics as a relational practice that mediates between the self and other, and invites new social possibilities. As such, makeup and *marquinha* are understood as co-constitutive of the contexts within which they are found, shaping not only relations between individuals and things, but also, one's understanding of the self.

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MAKEUP AND MARQUINHA: AESTHETICS OF THE BODILY SURFACE IN RIO DE JANEIRO

Samuel Novacich

> Red is a color that draws attention to the lips…
> — Mari

Mari takes a moment for herself and a deep breath before beginning her weekly lesson on makeup and women's empowerment at a small NGO in Morro da Providência, the oldest favela in Brazil. She has invited me and my partner, Candy, to participate in two back-to-back workshops that meet weekly, and we sit in the third-floor classroom of a community center that rests at the very top of the historic favela in the middle of Rio de Janeiro's downtown. Mari is white, in her early 30s, and lives in a middle-class neighborhood in Rio's northern zone, where she also grew up. She has designed this course herself and taught it only once before, but tells me she looks forward to expanding the class to other favelas. Two young women from the community join us. Mayara, the younger of the two, is of lighter complexion relative to her classmate, and has tight curls, while Rebecca has slightly darker skin and straight hair.[1]

"Women have always been silenced," Mari begins, "and it was only in recent history that we have even been allowed to vote." She pauses and scans the room, waiting, perhaps, for a reaction to the statement she has just made. But the room is still, and so she continues: "Red is a color that draws attention to the lips…. I've challenged women to wear red lipstick for a week, to see if they can sense a difference. It is powerful, and people pay attention."

"Lipstick like Marta?" asks Rebecca, in reference to the soccer star who recently played in the Women's World Cup for Brazil while wearing a bold shade of purple lipstick.

"Exactly!" responds Mari, with what feels to me like an amalgam of excitement and relief at the engagement. She then passes out cotton swabs and shows the women a tip for applying lipstick. The women quietly follow her instructions; Mayara is silent and methodical while Rebecca moves swiftly and applies her lipstick perfectly, turning to Mari for next steps.

[1] Most of the names in this chapter have been changed to protect the privacy of participants.

The next class begins with some confusion as students enter at different intervals, obligating Mari to repeat herself for new arrivals. This class is much larger than the first, and Mari begins her lesson about gender discrimination and silencing as the women, ironically, talk loudly. Soon, one of the most vocal members of the class—a woman in her mid-40s named Aliny—interjects to declare, "*Professora*, I don't like red lipstick. It doesn't work with me. It doesn't combine well with Black people." She points to Candy, whom Mari is now using as a model, and says "See, it looks good on her … her fine lips, but she's much whiter."[2]

A classmate, darker in complexion and comparable in age, joins in: "Yeah, bright red lipstick on big lips just further exaggerates them."

Mari encourages the women to experiment with the red lipstick, but is measured, and provides an alternative. "Nobody is obligated to do anything—I have a purple lipstick as well," she offers, and Aliny quickly accepts.

As the women apply their lipsticks, Aliny turns again to Candy, noting the foundation and concealer on her cheeks, and asks, "Did you put on makeup in the earlier class too?" Learning that the first class had not only applied lipstick, but worked with other makeup products as well, Aliny rekindles her protest. "Look *professora*, I like you a lot and I will say this in a way that I don't want to offend, because I like you, but I feel like you treat the first class differently, and we don't get the same attention." Other students echo her concerns, and Mari becomes visibly fazed, promising the students a makeup lesson, which she soon delivers. By the end of this second class, the women have worked with lipstick, foundation, and concealer, and Aliny and her classmates disband, apparently satisfied.

As we leave the NGO and begin our descent by van to the Central do Brasil train station, Mari asks for my thoughts on the workshop, and I cautiously suggest the irony that I had observed. I point out that Mari had set out to teach a class about makeup, empowerment, and women's voices, but was immediately confronted by women standing up for themselves, expressing their aesthetic preferences and vocalizing their displeasure.[3] Mari

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[2] This chapter is based on dissertation fieldwork conducted in Rio de Janeiro in 2019 and 2020, and the vignette described above occurred in July 2019. Candy, my long-term partner, occasionally accompanied me to events such as these and was routinely solicited as a model by makeup artists and instructors, owing in part, I believe, to her fair complexion. Ironically, Candy's parents are both Guatemalan-Americans and, at home in New York, she proudly identifies as a woman of color. In Brazil, however, she was consistently interpellated as white.

[3] What I refrain from telling Mari at this moment is that her lesson was premised on two false assumptions. The first assumption was based on a simple ethnographic error: that women in Rio's favelas are without a voice. As the class itself demonstrated, this is simply not the case. Although Afro-Brazilian women in Brazil are often subjected to direct and intense discrimination on top of profound systemic racism, to paint them as "voiceless" erases the agency and rich political activism that has come to define these groups (Caldwell, 2007). The second assumption, perhaps more easily forgiven, was premised on a theoretical error: that silence equates to a lack of power. Susan Gal's essay "Between Speech and Silence" upends this popular association, and in so doing points to power that is expressed by remaining silent as others are compelled to speak—i.e., priest, investigator, psychotherapist, husband (Gal 1991; Foucault, 1978).

seems to miss the irony, and responds by calling the students *carente*, or needy, a term used often in conservative media and Evangelical circles to describe favela residents, and one tinged with condescension. She explains that this is just the way things are, and that the students are often jealous of her attention.

This opening vignette hints at what is perhaps already obvious: that bodily aesthetics and productions of race, class, gender, and sexuality are interwoven in complicated and nuanced ways (Cox, 2015). Indeed, this chapter takes as its starting point the assertion that aesthetics and politics are inextricably entwined (Azoulay, 2010).[4] And in Brazil, aesthetics are particularly important to the politics of inequality that define the urban landscape (Edmonds, 2010; Jarrín, 2017), in the ways that beauty standards, for example, are leveraged against women in general (Wolf, 1990), and in the ways that white beauty standards are leveraged against Black populations in particular (Pinho, 2007). More than simply excluding Afro-Brazilians from constructions of beauty, Eurocentric beauty standards have been weaponized as tools of subjugation that actively represent Afro-Brazilians as ugly, unhygienic, and lazy. Indeed, such representations may have swayed Aliny from emphasizing her lips in the narrative above. Yet in response to such representational violence (hooks, 1995), Afro-Brazilians have also cultivated a set of styles that Patricia Pinho (2007) has referred to as "Afro-aesthetics" that valorize Jamaican inspired dreadlocks, "African" prints, and even bright colors. Given the clear link between aesthetics and the politics of race, it is easy to see how stylized makeup applications may betray one's social position (Mendoza-Denton, 2007), or even serve as a political statement of Black solidarity. And yet, although aesthetic practices often "say something" about their practitioners, they are hardly just passive reflections of social status or societal relations. And in Rio, aesthetics do much more than simply reveal, on the surface of one's body, the reality of a divided city marked by intense stratification (Velho & Alvito, 2000; Zaluar, 1998). In fact, to read the bodily surface as only symbolic of Rio de Janeiro's social geography misses the broader, pragmatic nature of signs and their influence in shaping political life (Mizrahi, 2012; Rancière, 2004).

Scholars have long documented the ways that aesthetic practices shape individual identity, especially with respect to race, sexuality, and gender (Kulick, 1998; Peiss, 1996). Frequently, however, less attention is paid to the specific modes through which aesthetic practices mediate these broader social categorizations and relationships. Analytically, focusing on the aesthetic modalities at work in shaping social life necessitates viewing aesthetics not as a distant, contemplative orientation toward art objects, but rather, following Christopher Pinney, as a

[4] Ariella Azoulay asserts that the trend in academic literature to separate aesthetics from politics derives from a misreading of Walter Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1936).

form of social praxis (2004). That is to say, this chapter studies aesthetics as an intensely relational activity. In describing aesthetic practices as pragmatic, I call attention to them as productive technologies (Gell, 1998) that intercede between self and other, thereby inviting new social possibilities. Significantly, this view is distinct from approaches that understand the aesthetic world as only *expressive* of ideas (Geertz, 1976) or as *representative* of taste, judgment, or social status (Bourdieu, 1984). Indeed, this is a critical distinction that this chapter aims to maintain. The aesthetic practices described herein do not reflect an a priori reality or set of fixed social relations; rather, this chapter analyzes practices like makeup application and tanning as co-constitutive of the contexts within which they are found.

Fig. 1
IMPACTO DAS CORES (IMPACT OF COLORS). A mural just outside of the community center where Mari teaches, Morro da Providência (photo: Samuel Novacich, August 2019).

Mari, for example, begins her lesson by describing red lipstick as a source of power, not for what it represents, but for what it *does*. "*Red is a color that draws attention to the lips …*" And although some of the students in Mari's class rejected the shade of red that she implored them to use, a shift in tone and energy throughout the class was undoubtedly perceptible in the wake of her pronouncement, one for which even Mari was perhaps unprepared. While Mari later read this shift through the neoliberal lens of empowerment and self-esteem, I felt something different emanating from the women—something more akin to delight and momentary gratification. "You felt the change, right? You could feel it?" Mari asked, energized, as we later said our goodbyes at the Central do Brasil train station.

Alfred Gell has shown how different art forms, like Trobriand prow boards, function as "technologies of enchantment," which, through their sheer beauty and technical complexity, inspire awe and momentary shifts in power between artist and viewer (1994). Gell compels us to consider art objects themselves, not for what they *stand for* in terms of status—this is his critique of Bourdieu—but for how they mediate between two or more people. Gell's work is full of contemporary examples and rich ethnographic material that support his anthropological theory of art. He argues that aesthetic objects produce a sociological function, describing for example the way the decoration on a child's bedsheet may *entice* that child to bed. But perhaps most convincingly, Gell delves into the anthropological record to illustrate his point about art and agency, noting that even Mauss described aesthetic objects as pragmatic extensions of human intention in his work on reciprocity and exchange (Gell, 1998; Mauss, 1954). Gell describes decoration and complex patterns as exhibiting "cognitive stickiness," a phenomenon in which aesthetic surfaces draw in viewers through pleasure and intellectual indecipherability—we never fully "get" them, whether we are attracted or distracted; we are simply stuck. Gell

was also fascinated by a phenomenon that he termed "captivation," an example of cognitive stickiness in which viewers of an image, familiar perhaps with the artistic process and skills required to render such an image, are captured by frustration and wonder (1998).

Although makeup isn't always heavily patterned, I argue that it nevertheless produces a similar form of "cognitive stickiness," "captivation," and indecipherability that shapes social encounters. And indeed, during my fieldwork I often witnessed and even fell prey to the intangible grasp of makeup, especially the elaborate styles practiced in Rio's northern suburbs. In fact, makeup artists often tout makeup's powers of mediation. Mari, for example, discusses lipstick in exactly the same terms that Gell uses to describe Trobriand prow boards; the technical perfection of the craft and the boldness of color inspire awe, direct attention, and—if all goes right—create a momentary advantage. Red draws attention to the lips, Mari reminds us, telling us exactly what color *does* in social encounters. The red lipstick compels us, focuses our attention, and even unsettles.

But makeup is only one of several aesthetic technologies that shape Rio's urban periphery.[5] *Marquinha*, translated literally as "little mark," is another bodily aesthetic technique that commands attention, one that involves the use of electrical tape to create precise tan lines. A practice of aesthetic amplification—one of boldness, contrast, and exaggeration—the origins of marquinha are difficult to pin down. Most agree, however, that marquinha emerged as a practice of mimicry in which favela residents began using tape and homemade bronzing solutions to recreate the tan lines that were left on middle- and upper-class beachgoers. And while the original marquinha practitioners may never have gone to the beach at all, their tan lines nonetheless reveal a process that points indexically to leisure time, pleasure, and status (Ochs, 1992). Like makeup, however, marquinha is more than a symbol of status. As this chapter further addresses, marquinha is celebrated for having real, intimate, and material effects on both practitioners and viewers (and, in particular, for the effects it is believed to have on men).

There are many ways in which layers of makeup, contrasted lines of light and bronzed skin, and wooden prow boards couldn't be more different. And although Gell's work on aesthetics is vital in terms of rethinking makeup and marquinha as pragmatic, his focus on foreign objects limits the utility of his ideas for studies of the body. Indeed, the manipulation of the bodily surface is both conceptually and ethically divergent from the production of a piece of art, and when it comes to makeup and marquinha, the imperfect distinction between subject and art object begins to blur. In fact, as layers added to and reconfigured on the surface of the body, makeup and marquinha are arguably closer to clothing than they are to prow boards or children's sheets. Webb Keane (2005) uses clothing—owing, perhaps, to its conceptual ambiguity between subject and object—as an example and metaphor in discussions of ontology and semiotics, and as an analytic tool for dissecting the Western distinction between spirit and matter. We assume, he says, that clothing is an expression of our ideas and a projection of our identities. This assumption reflects Clifford Geertz's theory of art and materiality (Geertz, 1976), which Keane pushes back against by arguing that such an understanding of clothing—and, by extension,

[5] My use here of the word "periphery" is a direct translation of the Portuguese word *periferia*, which, together with its variant, *periférico* (peripheral), is often used to connote the social and economic, rather than geographic, margins of the city. Although there is often overlap between these meanings—socially marginalized, working-class populations are indeed pushed into distant suburbs that radiate out from the urban center, in a sense then "peripheral" according to all three of the word's referents—there are, just as often, ruptures in these designations. Moreover, I have found that working-class residents of Rio de Janeiro are particularly sensitive to suggestions of marginality (Perlman, 1976), both because of local, problematic allusions to illegality that the Portuguese word "marginal" connotes, and because of recent, localized efforts to assert Rio's favelas as important engines of cultural production that are central to political and economic power. For these reasons, I deliberately and unproblematically use the word "periphery" in referring to a favela that is, in actuality, located at the geographic center of Rio de Janeiro.

materiality—is an indiscriminate vestige of Saussure (1966). He asserts that layers of clothing, rather than only expressing who we are, in fact make different ways of interacting with the world feasible. Clothing can be comfortable or uncomfortable, it can allow the wearer to do things or, conversely, restrict their movements. This chapter investigates makeup and marquinha in much the same way—as signs whose very substance acts on the world, invites new possibilities, and shapes our engagements.

Maquiagem

Throughout my fieldwork, I felt constant anxiety about the position I had begun to inhabit within the worlds of makeup and Afro-aesthetics. From a personal and ethical perspective, I worried about the negative effects that a white, heterosexual, cis-gender foreign man might have on the people and spaces I was invited into—spaces that were (and still are) largely produced and maintained by Afro-Brazilian women. But when it became clear that my awkward check-ins and wants for reassurance were of greater annoyance to salon participants than my presence itself, these anxieties began to dissolve. From a professional and academic perspective, however, if such a vantage can be distilled from the personal, I was still concerned that my reactions to the made-up faces around me would be unfounded or overly romantic. I had been cautioned against exotifying language in earlier grant writing seminars of the previous year—“eye-catching” makeup, perhaps, but “eye-catching” to whom? Were these makeup styles, in fact, “striking”? Or was I simply an outsider captivated by an otherwise unremarkable, quotidian aesthetic practice?

Initially, these concerns compelled me to watch others for *their* reactions to makeup, and during the first few weeks of fieldwork I refrained from saying much of anything at all about the newly made-up clients in the salons I visited. Women had makeup applied as I sat and watched, cleaning brushes or wiping down vacant makeup stations but keeping my comments to myself as the women were showered in compliments by men and women alike. This approach quickly backfired, and the fantasy of remaining an objective observer proved unsustainable as I began to suspect that the makeup styles on display around me were meant to compel a response. “You can say if you like it,” whispered Priscila to me one evening, urging me to share my opinions.[6] Ashamed, I realized that my deliberately subdued reactions and lack of engagement were, in these situations, simply rude.

[6] I have known Priscila for 10 years, meeting her for the first time when she still worked in the kitchen of her cousin’s restaurant. At the time, Priscila was new to makeup, but devoted hours each evening to honing her craft, watching endless YouTube video tutorials, and attending clients in her small, one-bedroom apartment above the restaurant. Later, when she opened her own studio and began teaching courses herself, she also helped to explain the presence of her gringo friend as I slowly became a fixture in the salon.

Figs. 2 (left) and 3 (right) Bruna and Joana, students in one of Priscila's courses, pose for photos after a lesson on auto-maquiagem, or auto-makeup, Priscila's salon (photo: Samuel Novacich, July 2019).

During the next 18 months of fieldwork in Rio, I often heard aesthetic practices described as making an impact, and consistently witnessed requests for makeup that would *causar*, literally, "to cause." One artist that often touted the power of makeup to *causar* was Pérola, a young woman who Priscila took on as a kind of protégé. Pérola was ever present in the salon, where she had taken classes and now worked, and often sat in a chair at the far end of the room between client sessions. She routinely spent hours applying makeup before washing it off, practicing and experimenting on her own face until it was time to return home. Pérola is much younger than Priscila (she was in high school when we sat for this conversation in October 2019), and was often mistaken by visitors as Priscila's daughter, since the two have similar complexions, builds, and outgoing personalities. Both women identify as *negra*, or *negras lindas* (beautiful Black women), as they often say. A self-professed cosmetics *viciada* (addict), Pérola was always willing to talk makeup, and waxed expansive when I asked her to elaborate on her work with clients:

> **Pérola:** No, it's like this … I say: "Give a little look in the mirror … you like it, want something more?" And she always says, "Ahhh no … do a little more highlighter because I like to *causar*." My clients are like that.
> **SN:** To *causar*?

Pérola: Yeah, to *causar*.
SN: How do you mean?
Pérola: Like, to cause an impact. To arrive somewhere and have everyone take notice and say "hey cutie" and whatnot, you know? And so I put a bit more highlighter, more blush …

Pérola patiently explains her approach to working with clients, and describes a scenario in which clients examine themselves in the mirror before asking for additional makeup. This was common in Priscila's salon, and a protocol that even I was instructed to follow when taking a makeup professionalization course with other women from the community.

Priscila usually begins by asking clients about their aesthetic preferences, and then applies makeup as the women face away from the mirrors that span the length of her salon. As she finishes, Priscila spins her client around to face the mirrors, at which point they inevitably ask for more makeup. They ask for highlighter, or more glitter, because they want to *causar*, or as Pérola expands, "to cause an impact."

Pérola suggests that the purpose of her aesthetic, the style of makeup that her clients overwhelmingly request, is to *impact* one's surroundings and elicit reactions, usually in the form of comments and compliments. And indeed during my fieldwork in these salons, with makeup amateurs and professionals, and at makeup workshops, the expectations that makeup and bodily aesthetics mediate our exchanges became increasingly clear. As I learned through transgression, it was considered rude to not comment on someone's makeup, even if only to acknowledge a shade of eye shadow or lipstick. The gloss of a certain lipstick, impeccably contoured cheeks, or perfectly shaped eyebrows *demanded* a response. Such exchanges extended to the aesthetics of marquinha as well, and indeed, women frequently entered the salon to refrains of "oooh look at that marquinha … someone went to the beach this weekend!"

About midway through my conversation with Pérola, and hoping to learn more about causing an impact, I asked her if she had a favorite color for makeup, to which she responded:

Pérola: [laughing] Yes.
SN: Which?
Pérola: Black skin [*Pele negra*]
SN: Oh …
Pérola: I love Black skin, I don't know how to explain …
SN: Why? [laughing] You have to at least try to explain …
Pérola: I don't know, I just don't think there is an explanation, I don't know. Because

> I just love it. I tell Priscila, if I could, I would only make up Black skin. Nothing against other colors, but I love Black skin so much, like, I really love it.

In asking about color, I had in mind the courses on "colormetrics" in which I knew makeup artists like Pérola had participated. I thought the question might lead to a more in-depth discussion of aesthetic causation. But a serendipitous misinterpretation made the question and response far more interesting than was initially intended. I was met, unexpectedly, with "*pele negra*," "Black skin."[7] Pérola often spoke about her love for *pele negra*, and placed her own skin tone within the same aesthetic category. I say "aesthetic category" deliberately, with the logic behind this decision acting as a device to help explain the conversational (mis)interpretation above. My fieldwork has revealed that skin color is not always interpreted first and foremost as a sign of race (Novacich, 2021), and in this exchange, race did not seem to be Pérola's ultimate referent. Rather, *pele negra* seemed to be used as a term analogous in sentiment to *pele oleosa* or *pele madura*—oily and mature skin, respectively—and therefore as a material, "superficial" description of the skin itself. Later in the conversation, I pressed the issue further, asking Pérola to expand on her love for *pele negra* and the politics of saying "I specialize in *pele negra*":

> **Pérola:** Because if we stop to think, there isn't this thing called "specializing in Black skin." People, they've in a way imagined this, and think there is a difference between Black skin and white skin, but no, there isn't. It's sub-tones and different tones. So, you can't specialize in something that is natural, understand? What you can specialize in, is like, I can specialize in learning more about makeup, so I can be fierce. Ok, you train, whether it be with a white model or Black, understand?
> **SN:** So is this to say that a difference [deliberately vague] doesn't exist?
> **Pérola:** The only difference between a white person and a Black person is the subtone of their skin, and different skin tone. They have tones and sub-tones that are different, you know? Black skin is warmer and more reddish, you can … I mean there is a risk of making it ashy more quickly, especially for people with really dark skin [*negra retinta*]. White skin, no. White skin, the base is more … it's always more yellowish, always pinkish, you know? It's rarely got a warm sub-tone.

[7] I am deliberately using the upper case "Black" here to highlight the racial implication of *pele negra*, especially as it appears in this context. However, as I am trying to show, there is a slippage between aesthetic and racial referents that is exceedingly complex. The Portuguese *negro/negra* are often used in reference to racial categories, while *preto/preta* typically refer to abstract color. Having said that, both terms are often applied to people, though not without negative implications in the case of the latter, depending on the speaker. The overlap between *negro/negra* as aesthetic and racial category—and the exploration of what, if anything, might make such categories different—is explored in the pages that follow.

> **SN:** I think I understand the worry, the political incorrectness of saying that you specialize in Black skin, because you're calling out a difference that …
> **Pérola:** That doesn't exist.
> **SN:** That doesn't exist. But only an aesthetic difference, between colors.
> **Pérola:** Colors, that's it. And if there's a Black person around and someone says: "ah, so-and-so just robbed me," do you think they're going to round up all the white people, or just the Black guy? It's obvious, just the Black guy.

When Pérola talks about *pele negra* she seems to refer to an aesthetic condition of the bodily surface having to do with color and sub-tones. She is careful to point out that difference "doesn't exist." But to what kind of difference was she referring? Perhaps she means to suggest that there is no moral or essential difference—no internal distinction, below the surface of the body—between those with *pele branca* and *pele negra*. Yet at the same time that Pérola repudiated at least one form of difference, she pointed to the difference in techniques required to make up two materially disparate faces (highlighting, for example, the importance of different sub-tones and the dangers of making *pele negra* appear ashy). Later, Pérola directly addressed the politics of race in Brazil, citing examples of rampant racism and mentioning the exclusion of Afro-Brazilians from systems of education, as well as the violent racism of policing. Indeed, she is hyperaware of the systemic, anti-Black racism that is so prevalent in Brazil, and uses this experience to inform her work with clients, promoting styles and techniques that she believes valorize Black skin and *beleza negra* (Black beauty) (Pinho, 2007). Nonetheless, there remains a tension and delicate balancing act as she negotiates racial politics, and she hints at a distinction between "natural" or "essential" difference and "aesthetic" differences in the material surface of the body, reflective, perhaps, of the range and complexity of racial thought in Brazil today. Rife with ambiguity, our exchange emphasizes the complexity of racialized constructions of the body in Brazil (McCallum, 2005; Roth-Gordon, 2017), revealing race as pervasive, yet impossible to pin down.

Racial thinking in Brazil has always been muddled and fragmentary. From Gilberto Freyre's epic *Casa Grande e Senzala* (1933), which painted a romantic portrait of settler colonialism and slavocracy, to the eugenic underpinnings of "whitening" (Skidmore, 1974) and later, the demystification of "racial democracy" (Fernandes, 1965), descriptions of racial exceptionalism have peppered academic work produced within and beyond Brazil (Sansone, 2003). But each of these contributions to racial thinking and associated concepts tend to cohere and smooth over what are otherwise incongruous strands of thought.

Paulina Alberto has described the twentieth-century shift from "racial democracy" to the "myth of racial democracy" in historiographical terms, first questioning the conceptual solidity of "racial democracy" itself (Alberto 2012). Rather than accepting it as a stable set of ideas—typically attributed to Freyre and glossed as social harmony resulting from centuries of miscegenation—Alberto describes "racial democracy" as a shifting identifier that reflects the specific social and political concerns of its time. Perhaps the most significant intervention in Alberto's work is pointing out that race in Brazil has always been ambiguous and filled with internal contradictions. Conversations about race in Brazil are riddled with contention, and make up an ideologically heterogeneous landscape populated with ideas about color, phenotype, and the body, notably wavering between constructions of race based on skin color and the surface of the body and constructions based on assumed internal qualities like blood, essence, and DNA (Collins, 2011; Wade, 2017).
Pérola seems to navigate these ambiguities by drawing a distinction between that which is visible and that which remains invisible as it relates to race. *Pele branca* and *pele negra* are aesthetically if not internally distinct, she seems to argue, and therefore require specific and disparate cosmetic techniques. Simultaneously, she repudiates other forms of difference—fantasies that support histories of discrimination (Smith, 2016), perhaps—while grappling with the lived reality of being a Black woman in Brazil. Removing experiential and political difference, then, and omitting aesthetic differences in the body as well, the difference that Pérola alleges "doesn't exist," seems to reside (or rather, is believed by others to reside) somewhere below the material surface of the body. And as a makeup artist, Pérola and her colleagues seem to navigate this ambiguity by turning away from imagined and invisible interiors (Stoler, 1997). That is to say, rather than forging their identities by carefully peeling back superficial layers to reveal "inner truths" of subjectivity, artists like Priscila and Pérola shape their own truths by adding layers of pigment to the surface of the body.

Marquinha

If makeup adds layers to the bodily surface, *marquinha* divides that surface even further through the cultivation of precise tan lines. Luiz and his girlfriend, Renata, run a small tanning salon on the *laje* (roof) of Luiz's house, just outside of Mangueira.[8] Luiz is strong and towers over me, and has a gentle persona despite his military background. The

[8] *Laje* literally translates to "slab," and usually refers to the flat layer of concrete, reinforced by iron rod, that covers most favela constructions. Often unfinished, the *laje* may serve as a roof in its first lifetime, later becoming a floor as residents build upward (Angelini, 2013).

division of labor in their business is clear and gendered; he handles the finances while Renata handles clients, applying tape and homemade bronzing solution to their bodies. The thin black tape is applied with a liquid that heightens contrast with the skin underneath, placed exactly where a bikini would be worn. Despite the fact that Luiz does not attend clients, he does most of the talking as we sit in his living room, even explaining the technical process of taping as Renata waits, mostly quiet at his side.

Commenting on the state of the economy, Luiz says that the idea for a tanning salon came to him a few years earlier.[9] "I had seen a few videos online about how it's done, and thought, 'we can do this.' The roof is empty, the sun is free." The couple took a course with Erika Bronze—a popular tanning specialist who has gained great success through her work with celebrities—paying close to R$3.000[10] for a three-day workshop in which they learned the trade secrets for getting perfect tan lines through the right permutation of time, tape, bronzing lotion, and a secret oxidizing solution called *fixador*. "It's still got stigma attached to it, but much less than it used to," he says. Renata recalls how her friends used to tan with tape, and says, "marquinha has always been a favela thing—nobody invented it." Luiz agrees, pointing out that:

> People used to think of it as a kind of *favelada* thing to do, but things really changed with Anitta.[11] Now, we have clients from all over—girls from the favela, you know the girlfriends of *bandidos* [local drug traffickers] and even girls from the *zona sul*.[12] And they all want the marquinha! With white girls it's harder, their skin is more delicate and easier to burn. But even for darker-skinned girls we don't recommend tanning for more than three hours. But they always want to stay longer! They want a really, really defined marquinha!

Pausing to let Luiz's emphasis sink in, I respond by asking for clarification on another point: "I get how the tan lines on top work, how someone might show off their marquinha by wearing a revealing shirt or blouse, but what about the bottom, who sees those lines anyway?" Luiz and Renata both erupt into laughter and I immediately blush from naiveté. "The boyfriends! The husbands!" laughs Renata, as Luiz shouts: "They're not just doing it for anyone, they're doing it for them!"

Later that week, I saw a social media post from an account for Renata and Luiz's business that seemed to expand on their point about marquinha and men, and one that pointed directly

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[9] The conversation above was had in May 2019.
[10] About 1,000 USD at the time.
[11] In a separate interview with Erika Bronze on her *laje* (June 2019), she tells me that her career exploded after collaborating with Anitta, one of the biggest pop stars in Brazil, on the music video for her song "Vai Malandra." Much of the video is filmed on a favela *laje*, and Anitta dances in black tape, surrounded by other young women wearing black tape "bikinis." As of this writing, the video has accumulated over 400 million views on YouTube, and is one of Anitta's most successful tracks, garnering her international fame and bringing middle-class attention to marquinha.
[12] *Zona sul* refers to the southern zone of Rio de Janeiro with the greatest concentration of wealth in the city.

to the intangible power of tan lines. The Instagram story featured a young Black woman, visible only from the neck down, wearing a black tape bikini and peeling one strip of tape from her shoulder to reveal a perfectly contrasted strip of relatively light skin. Text over the image read: "No man in Brazil is capable of resisting a perfect marquinha! Book today!!" Clearly intended to attract clients to their small business, the post also hinted at marquinha's intoxicating allure, the implication being that women can turn to their sexuality—and tan lines—to seduce and control their men. The post suggested empowerment while uncomfortably anticipating a lack of responsibility from men for their actions, akin to the "men can't help themselves" discourse that is so central to male violence. And yet, these dynamics don't negate the intended semiotic effect of marquinha, one that I would argue, like Mari's red lipstick, is visceral, and gains currency through cognitive stickiness and captivation. In Gell's analysis, viewers are transfixed by patterns, contrast, and inventive skill—enchanted by artistry as they wonder how such an image or pattern could have possibly been produced (1998). It is not hard to understand how marquinha, a highly contrasted strip of relative lightness produced through a process that is in fact technical and meticulous, generates a similar sense of awe and wonder.

Fig. 4
Priscila's photo of the author –horizontal, despite the position of her phone in the subsequent photo; she took several photos, the one selected here was among the last (June 2019, reproduced with permission).

Conclusion

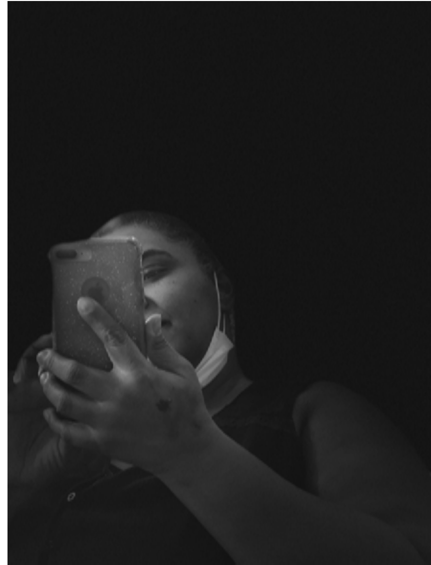
This chapter has focused on the bodily surface, and the ways in which corporeal aesthetics mediate between two or more people, an experience that I have referred to as aesthetic pragmatism. Aesthetics do far more than "express our ideas," as Clifford Geertz once argued, and are instead part and parcel of the material world and our engagements with it. Makeup and tan lines may betray class position, but they are also displayed to *causar*, to create an impact. I have given examples of how red lipstick, worn by soccer stars and women in the oldest favela in Brazil, captures and commands attention. Meanwhile, marquinha, a simple aesthetic design that contrasts bronzed with virgin skin, is praised for its mysterious powers over men. And while I've shown how these aesthetic practices captivate and unsettle others, we might also ask, do these same practices modify one's own sense of self? This chapter thus concludes by investigating what happens when we begin to shift our aesthetic focus inward.

When Priscila and Pérola practice their craft they do so with their clients facing them, and away from the salon's mirrors. The client sits while makeup is applied, and is then spun around in their chair to see themselves in the mirror, made up for the first time. Although routine, one such episode was, for me, particularly memorable. It was an evening in late June of 2019, and when I arrived at the salon Priscila was inside and sweeping,

while Fabiane, her cousin's wife, was doing a young woman's nails. Priscila and I sat as Fabiane worked, sipping sweet coffee and eating ham and cheese sandwiches while playing with the camera of my new phone. We experimented with different filters that replaced picture backgrounds with flat black, imperfectly cropping faces that were then rendered in grayscale. Fabiane finished her work and I took a photo of her. She crossed her eyes and tilted her head. I then turned to Priscila, who softened her gaze and looked directly into the camera, before she leaned in and aimed her own phone at me.

Later, as Priscila worked, I cleaned brushes, using paper towels and makeup remover to rinse out the pigments, now muddied together, that had collected during the day. When she finished, Priscila and I began practicing eye-shadow techniques on sheets of paper that she had printed out for me. We had only started when her next client, Mila, arrived. As Mila waited for Priscila, who quickly finished a second cup of coffee, she borrowed some tweezers from one of the makeup stations at the far end of the salon and began plucking her eyebrows. Priscila began to work as Mila faced away from me, and away from the mirror, and I didn't see her made-up face until the moment it was revealed to her as well. She smiled when she looked into the mirror and exclaimed, "ahhh eu acordei assim!" ("I woke up like this!"), in possible

Figs. 5 (left) and 6 (right) Fabiane and Priscila (photos: Samuel Novacich, June 2019).



reference to Beyoncé's 2013 song "***Flawless." Mila was not the first client to make such an exclamation—indeed it was a fairly commonplace refrain—but for some reason, this reaction was the most memorable, perhaps owing to her delivery, or because it caused the four of us to burst into laughter.

Jacques Lacan's work on the mirror stage (1953) is instructive here, and not only because the narration involves literally looking at oneself in the mirror (indeed, Lacan's initial concern was the interaction of toddlers with their own images, reflected in a mirror). In fact, the anecdote above offers a critical glimpse into the fragmentary nature of subject formation. This was, coincidentally, the main argument that Lacan put forward in subsequent years, moving beyond discussions of mirrors and toward analyses of the fraught state of the ego, split between the inner self as subject (*innenwelt*) and the outer self in the world as both subject and object (*umwelt*). There are two levels of tension in Lacan's analysis. First, there is the stark contrast experienced between the lived, felt self—one that is real but fragmentary, disaggregated, and chaotic—and the image in the mirror that comes together as a fixed, unified totality. The second tension results from the first, and is the bipolarity—an affective pull between love and resentment—with which individuals relate to their reflected image. Lacan describes a sort of admiration and love for the image in the mirror, which he also uses as a metaphor for the unified sensation of selfhood, or self-image. But also present, he cautions, is jealousy, insecurity, and hatred for

an image that in fact reminds us of our own inadequacy (Lacan, 1953). He writes that it is the "illusion of unity, in which a human being is always looking forward to self-mastery, [that] entails a constant danger of sliding back against the chaos from which he started" (1953, p. 16). Staring into the mirror at the allegedly stable, unified self thus involves repressing the sensation of life as a fractured being, a reality premised on endless transformations during which we are constantly pulled in new directions (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980). And while Lacan presents "sliding back" into the acknowledgement of such a fragmented state as dangerous, I suggest here that allowing oneself to feel provisional and fluid can be both socially advantageous and politically expedient.

In applying makeup and tanning their bodies, the women of Rio's northern suburbs are negotiating how they would like to see themselves, and how that introspection relates to the image they want to share with the world. Following Lacan, I contend that examining oneself in the mirror—blanketed in new layers of makeup—heightens the tension between the felt and the seen self. Of course, this tension is further mediated by years of representational violence that Black women in Brazil have been forced to endure (Pinho, 2007). For women feeling the weight of intersectional oppression, the dialectic between desire and resentment may be particularly fierce. As Patricia Pinho has argued, Eurocentric aesthetics have created expectations of Black people in Brazil that are impossible to meet, yet impossible to ignore. These expectations have compelled Afro-Brazilians to contort their bodies into increasingly infeasible and inhumane shapes, wearing extra clothing in hot climates to mask sweat marks, taking extra showers and straightening their hair to stave off white aggression (Pinho, 2007). She writes: "Girls with dark skin and kinky hair make an extraordinary effort to replicate an unachievable ideal of beauty, which commonly leads to frustration and self-rejection" (2007, p. 275). This is not unlike Frantz Fanon's analysis of representational violence, one in which Black subjectivity is constructed from without, through interpellation (1967). Nicole Fleetwood has argued that Fanon's shock in being hailed as a Black man was also a moment of feminization, one in which a man became the object of the male gaze. Yet critically, this gendering is left out of Fanon's own analysis, which in Fleetwood's critique results in an oversight with regard to the subject formation of Black women (Fleetwood, 2010). Considering this oversight, and following bell hooks, I argue that rather than submitting to the violent gaze of white patriarchy, the women in Priscila's salon exercise an "oppositional gaze"—one made easier by layers of makeup, perhaps—that stares back into the mirror and points the camera back at the author, in recognition of the power in looking (hooks, 1992).

Stuart Hall once wrote that identity is constituted "not outside but within representation" before urging us to view media "not as a second-order mirror held up to reflect what already

exists, but as that form of representation which is able to constitute us as new subjects, and thereby enable us to discover who we are" (quoted in hooks, 1992). The made-up surface of the body, reflected in the mirror, shapes that discovery, arbitrating the encounter with one's image. Once again, color makes an impact. I have watched Priscila examine herself after doing her own makeup and shiver, as though her own image gave her chills, perhaps a reminder of life in perpetual motion. Seeing oneself mediated by makeup can be jarring. It may calm and soothe, or it may shake us to the core.

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