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**IN THE BACKYARD OF THE FACTORY:
GENDER, CLASS, POWER AND COMMUNITY IN BAHIA,
BRAZIL**

By

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To my children, Marina and João,
with all my love;
for the precious moments lost over the years
so that this work could be completed.

To the memory of my mother, Maria Candida,
and my teachers and friends, Tony Leeds and Eva Hunt:
with *saudades*...

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In the spring of 1974, while working full time as a bank teller in Illinois, I signed up for my first anthropology course. Although feeling usually run down after a long day of tending to endless lines of customers at the bank, I would suddenly find myself full of energy in class, fascinated by the study of cultures. As a feminist active in the women's movement, I was particularly drawn to the comparative approach to gender divisions offered by anthropology and its relevance to the pursuit of feminist ideals of building a new society. By the end of that semester I had my mind set: I would find a way to go back to school full time, become an anthropologist, and work towards the building of that idealized society.

It has taken me over two decades to conclude my formal training in anthropology; but I have remained faithful to the pursuit of those goals. However, I am aware that I would not have persevered this far without the encouragement and support I have encountered on the part of family members, friends, teachers, and from different institutions throughout this long journey. I wish to acknowledge here their enormous help.

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In the Department of Anthropology at the Universidade Federal da Bahia where I have been teaching anthropology since 1982, my colleagues have always stood behind me; indeed, even those who might have doubted that I could bring this work to a conclusion supported my different requests for leave to get the work done. I wish to thank them all and, in particular, Sylvia dos Reis Maia for being there when I needed here and never losing faith in me.

Most of my theoretical and practical-political concerns with the study of gender relations and women’s condition in society have grown

through my work at NEIM, the Nucleus of Interdisciplinary Studies on Women ('Núcleo de Estudos Interdisciplinares sobre a Mulher) of the Universidade Federal da Bahia. The congenial group of fellow teachers, researchers, students, and staff who make of NEIM a reality, has not only showered me with the necessary stimulus and trust to keep aiming higher, but also with the warmth and affection that made the road to reach these goals much easier to travel. For this and much more I must thank Alda Britto da Motta, Elizete Silva Passos, Neuza de Oliveira, Silvia Lucia Ferreira, Enilda Rosendo and, in a very special way, my 'Bahian sisters' Ana Alice Costa and Rita Lessa Costa.

The research upon which this work is based would not have come through were it not for NEIM's involvement with women's groups from neighborhood associations in the periphery of Salvador particularly those active in the area known as Subúrbio Ferroviário. It was our association with the women from AMPLA, Plataforma's Residents Association that paved the way for this work. In Plataforma, I am indebted to a number of people; among them, I wish to thank here Antonia Garcia, D. Lina, D. Julieta, D. Zulmira, D. Lili, D. Flor and all the other women from the 'senior women's group'. It should be clear to those reading this work that their cooperation was fundamental—the essential support in its conception. I am equally indebted to União Fabril--especially to Dr. Luiz Catharino Gordilho--for putting at my disposal the archives of Fábrica São Braz. I am also thankful to him and to Dr. José Martins Catharino for sharing with me their grandfather's story and that of União Fabril.

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As it often happens, the last lap of this long journey—the elaboration of the dissertation-- was without doubt the most difficult and painful part in many ways. Fortunately, even if the writing process was a task that I had to accomplish on my own, I had many friends on who to count at all times, including for the eventual material support. At

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Those who know me well can measure how difficult was the task of keeping my feet on the ground and the discussion centered on the questions at hand in the elaboration of this work. Indeed, it is very clear to me that I would never have brought it to a conclusion without the sound advisement of Professor Sutti Ortiz throughout the entire writing process. I am deeply indebted to her, not only for accepting me as her student and for guiding me in re-conceptualizing the project, but also for her patience and consideration with all the 'existential' problems I faced in getting the work done.

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What else but my undying love and gratitude can I give my family in return for all their sacrifices?

**IN THE BACKYARD OF THE FACTORY: GENDER, CLASS,
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(Order No.)

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Boston University, Graduate School, 1997

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation reconstructs and analyzes work relations and everyday life of men and women textile workers in a working-class neighborhood, owned by the mill, in the outskirts of the city of Salvador in Bahia. It also traces the transformation of the neighborhood and of the textile mill from 1875 to 1960. It relies on the combined results of six-years of intermittent field research in the community and in-depth interviews and life histories of twenty men and women who had worked in the factory. It is also based on the analysis of data from payroll books and other company records for a sample of 385 employees

The study takes a gender perspective and shows that women's experience of factory work was unlike that of men. Men and women had distinct domains of influence and faced different struggles. Although the factory relied largely on the employment of the women from the community, patriarchal gender relations dominated in the workplace. Not only was the chain of command in male hands, but it was also men who led and took an active role in the local unions and in collective actions

centered in the workplace. Industrial and union paternalism was reinforced by a gender ideology that emphasized women's domesticity. It served to restrict the participation of women in labor organizations and limit their role in union-led strike movements. Women have only vague and inaccurate recollection of the strikes that were effectively organized when they themselves were part of the work force. They also idealize the paternalistic organization of the factory and the owner who put it in place.

At the same time, the textile mill's reliance on a female labor force enhanced the position of women in their household. A right to a house or house lot and a paycheck made other members of the domestic group dependent on her. It resulted on more egalitarian gender relations within the "backyard of the factory" than within the factory itself. It indicates that gender relations, as well as class relations, do not interlock in fixed ways but that they are flexible and fluid, varying according to the sphere where men and women interact. Indeed, whereas in the past women did not take an active role in workplace-based social movements, they are now in the forefront of neighborhood-based movements, leading the present struggles of their community against their former patrons.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Readers' Approval	ii
Acknowledgements	iv
Abstract	Xii
List of Tables	Xvii
Part I - Introduction	03
Chapter One: Reporting the News	04
The Facts	04
Setting the Record Straight	07
Chapter Two: Points of Departure, Point of Approach	14
Introduction: Key Issues	14
Mapping Contours	23
Practical Knowledge and Theoretical Investigation	34
Part II – A Patriarchal Factory	
Introduction	44
Chapter Three: Retracing and Weaving Histories: Patron and Factory (1875-1944)	47
Beginnings	47
The Emergence of Vilas Operárias	51
Converging Histories (1891-1932)	61
Chapter Four: The Era and Legacy of Bernardo M. Catharino (1930-1944)	77
Introduction	77
Paternalistic Dominance	82
Chapter Five: A Profile of the Workforce (1935-1959)	92
The Archives of Fábrica São Braz	92
The Workforce	96
Contrasting Forces: The Distinctiveness of Sex	103

Chapter Six: The Work Process and the Gender, Age, and Color Divisions	111
Introduction	111
The Work Process and the Division of Labor	113
The Chain of Command	116
Gender Divisions	122
The Working Day	135
Rules and Regulations and the Gender of ‘Docile Bodies’	138
A Real ‘Sweatshop’: Hazards and Accidents	141
Chapter Seven: Gender, Class, and Protest	148
Introduction	148
Labor Protest in Bahia	153
Lost Memories and Gendered Memories	162
Women, Resistance and Solidarity	177
Women’s Protest: ‘O Bloco do Bacalhau’	184
Part III - Life in the Backyard of the Factory	189
Introduction	190
Chapter Eight: From the Gates of the Old Factory	192
Introduction	192
Talking About the Past	200
Family Origins	205
At the Command of the Whistles	218
Chapter Nine: Gender, Work and the Family	223
Introduction	223
To Be a Boy, To Be a Girl	225
Mating Patterns	234
Family-Household Organization	243
Gendered Divisions and Household Organization	255
‘Ideal’ and Alternative Models	259
Chapter Ten: House, Street, and Community	265
Introduction	265

Privacy, Community, and Gendered Domains	267
Part IV – From Vila Operária to Periferia	287
Introduction	288
Chapter Eleven: Changing Times, Changing Markets, Gendered Histories	290
Introduction	290
Retracing Work Histories	301
Gender and Generation	317
The Transformation of Plataforma	323
Chapter Twelve: In the Name of the Family: Women’s Neighborly Militancy	331
Introduction	331
On Neighborhood Movements	334
Women’s Neighborly Militancy	339
Coalitions and Alliances	353
The Fight Against União Fabril	357
Chapter Thirteen: Conclusion	359
Introduction	359
Factory and Family	361
Gender, Class and Protest Revisited	364
Change and Continuity	378
Gendering Labor History in Brazil	382
Bibliography	386

LIST OF TABLES

- 3.1 Geographic Distribution of Textile Mill in Brazilian Provinces
- 3.2 Textile Companies in Bahia (1891)
- 3.3 Cia. Progresso & Uniao Fabril da Bahia - Mills (1932)
- 5.1 Workforce at Fábrica Sao Braz (1935, 1945, 1954)
- 5.2 Distribution of Factory Workers in Sample by Year of Admission
- 5.3 Distribution of Factory Workers in Sample by Year of Dismissal
- 5.4 Distribution of Workforce at FSB by Sex (1945)
- 5.5 Distribution of Factory Workers in Sample by Sex
- 5.6 Distribution of Factory Workers in Sample by Sex and Age
- 5.7 Distribution of Factory Workers in Sample by Sex and Marital Status
- 5.8 Distribution of Factory Workers in Sample Naming Children as Beneficiaries by Marital Status
- 5.9 Distribution of Factory Workers in Sample by Sex and Length of Service
- 5.10 Distribution of Factory Workers in Sample by Sex and Place of Residence
- 5.11 Distribution of Factory Workers in Sample by Sex and Place of Birth
- 5.12 Distribution of Factory Workers in Sample by Sex and Color
- 6.1 Distribution of Factory Workers in Sample by Sex, Sector and Occupation
- 6.2 Distribution of Weavers by Sex (1945)
- 6.3 Mean Weekly Productivity and Wages by Sex (1945)
- 6.4 Mean Weekly Productivity and Wages of Minors and Apprentices by Sex (1945)

- 6.5 Distribution of Male Workforce in Sample by Occupation and Age Group
- 6.6 Distribution of Male Workforce in Sample by Occupation and Color
- 6.7 Number of Extra Hours Worked by Weavers by Sex and Category
- 6.8 Accidents Requiring Medical Attention
- 8.1 Gender Divide in Selected Households
- 11.1 Evolution of Employment in Textile Industry in Brazil by Sex (1940-1970)
- 11.2 Composition of Occupied Population by Sex and Sector of Activity - Bahia (1960-1980)
- 11.3 Occupation Status of Sons and Daughters of Former Factory Workers
- 11.4 Sector of Occupation of Sons and Daughters of Former Factory Workers
- 11.5 Population Growth in the Metropolitan Area of Salvador (1940-1980)

PART I

INTRODUCTION

*Tem certos dias em que eu penso em minha gente
E sinto assim todo o meu peito se apertar
Porque parece que acontece de repente
Como um desejo de viver sem se notar
Igual a como quando eu passo no Subúrbio
Eu muito bem, vindo de trem de algum lugar
E aí me dá como uma inveja dessa gente
Que vai em frente sem nem ter com quem contar*

*São casas simples com cadeiras na calçada
E na fachada escrito em cima que é um lar
Pela varanda flores tristes e baldias
Como a alegria que não tem onde encostar
E aí me dá uma tristeza no meu peito
Feito um despeito de eu não ter como lutar
Eu que não creio, peço a Deus por minha gente
É gente humilde, que vontade de chorar.*

From the song **Gente Humilde**
(‘Humble People’) by
Chico Buarque, Vinicius de
Moraes & Garoto

There are certain days that I think of my people
And then I feel my whole chest tightening
Because it seems to happen all of sudden
As a desire to live without taking notice
So too when I pass through the Subúrbio
Riding the train, coming from anywhere
Then I feel envy for this people
Who move ahead even with no one on whom to rely

They're simple houses with chairs on the sidewalk
But on their façade is written: 'this is a home'
On the verandas there are sad and lost flowers
Like a gladness that has nowhere to couch
And then I feel a deep sadness in my heart
Feeling bad that I am unable to fight
Though not a believer, I beseech God for my people
They're humble people, it makes me want to cry

(Translated by Claire Cesareo
and Cecilia Sardenberg)

CHAPTER ONE

Reporting the News

The 'Facts'

On June 12, 1993, one of Salvador's leading newspapers reported that the Residents' Association of Plataforma (AMPLA) had joined the associations of Curuzu and Vodum Zoo in waging a battle against Companhia Progresso & União Fabril da Bahia. In contention were União Fabril's claims of legal ownership to over "80% of the land in the neighborhoods of Pirajá, Curuzu, Plataforma, Alto do Peru, Largo do Tanque, Fazenda Grande and Capelinha" (**A Tarde**, 6/12/93, my translation). These were traditional working-class neighborhoods in Salvador and the families residing in them owned their homes but not the lots on which they were built. Tied to leasehold contracts, they were obliged to pay rent to União Fabril for use of the land--a burden which, in most instances, had plagued residents and their families for generations. Lately, however, União Fabril had not only raised their rent and changed collection of those rents from a yearly to a monthly basis, but was threatening to evict those who had fallen behind in their payments. "This is a suspicious action on the part of União Fabril," charged a board member of Curuzu's Association. "We are being exploited by this company who claims ownership of this land but we have no proof of this claim," denounced one of AMPLA's directors (**A Tarde** 6/12/93, my translation).

Interviewed by the reporting paper, União Fabril's president vehemently contested these charges. Presenting documents which claimed

to attest to the legitimacy of the company's hold over those areas, he asserted that the neighborhoods in question were all former *vilas operárias* ('workers' villas' or 'company towns') developed around textile mills legally incorporated by União Fabril in the late 1800s. He then added that the whole issue was nothing but a misunderstanding springing from a lack of dialogue with the company, especially on the part of the community leaders. According to União Fabril's president, these leaders "were creating a controversy out of a very simple matter." He concluded by challenging the leaders:

We are open to dialogue and ready to negotiate. We are waiting for the presidents of these associations to come to us, and I even propose a meeting open to all residents to discuss this problem. I will hand over my company to whomever proves that we are not the legitimate owners of all this land (**A Tarde**, 6/12/93, my translation).

Almost a year passed without such a meeting occurring. Despite this, neither of the contending parties backed up their claims nor were they willing to let the issue rest. However, instead of dealing directly with AMPLA União Fabril did send letters to the tenants inviting them to come to the home office to settle matters on an individual basis. Responses did not meet their expectations. União Fabril then opened an office in Plataforma and hired local people to pay visits to the tenants and invite them to "forget about AMPLA" and deal directly with the company. The company offered homeowners (and some of the renters) the opportunity to purchase the lots and/or homes in question, an offer which most were financially unable to accept.

Meanwhile, at AMPLA efforts were geared towards finding collective solutions. Legal counsel was sought and following their advice, word was circulated within the neighborhood alerting the contending tenants to the dangers of being swindled if they chose to deal directly with the company. AMPLA recommended they stop paying their rents until a collective agreement with the company could be reached. At the same time, through FABS--Salvador's Federation of Neighborhood Associations--AMPLA began to articulate with other neighborhoods and associations that were also fighting União Fabril. Together, they ran petition drives among residents in the affected areas, while continuing to seek support for their cause from prominent figures and organs of the Salvador community at large.

Thus it was that on May 11, 1994, AMPLA made headline news once again (**Bahia Hoje** 5/11/94). The organization led a caravan of Plataforma's residents and members of other neighborhood associations to the Municipal Council where they filed a petition "containing more than 2,800 signatures," requesting governmental intervention on behalf of the petitioners. The article went on:

The document asks for the installation of a CPI [Parliamentary Investigation Committee] to analyze the irregularities practiced by União Fabril.... After visiting the Council, Plataforma's residents went to Tomé de Souza Palace ask for Mayor Lídice da Mata's intervention. Plataforma's residents want the creation of a Special Committee (...) to study the problem... (**Bahia Hoje**, 5/11/94, my translation).

The events taking place at City Hall that afternoon also appeared in **A Tarde**, the state's major newspaper, where one of the directors of FABS

accused União Fabril of creating a "gigantic real estate business" that had been taking advantage of the residents of the poor neighborhoods of Salvador:

The residents are the ones who built these neighborhoods; they're the ones who fought for and got what they now have. União Fabril did nothing for them, it did not build one curb. Nevertheless, (União Fabril) is now charging them for the value of this upgrading (**A Tarde**, 5/12/94, my translation).

Though the article reported on the visit of this caravan to City Hall to see the Mayor, a photo accompanying the article depicts a group of women, most of them in their 60s and 70s, displaying one of AMPLA's banners to the camera as they sat in the antechamber of the Mayor's office waiting their turn for an audience to take in their request of support. And wait they did for several hours later, at 7:00pm when the reporters left the scene at City Hall, the women had yet to be received by the Mayor.

Setting the Record Straight

While the dispute between AMPLA and União Fabril was making the news in Salvador, I was in-and-out of Plataforma conducting the field research upon which this work is based. Indeed, looking at this news photograph from **A Tarde**, I recognize some of the women I had then interviewed and whose lives will be portrayed here. Standing right in the middle of the group, for instance, is Dona Elenita, her hair tied and hidden under a scarf as always, and next to her, sitting on what seems to be a reception room couch, is Dona Luciana, her perky eyes staring

inquisitively at the camera, as she had stared at me some years back when we first met.¹ Upon my asking if she would like to tell me about her life, she had immediately retorted, "What is there to tell about my life?," measuring me from top to bottom with the same quizzical eyes.

My first encounter with D.Luciana came in March of 1991. This happened more than three years after, as part of my work at NEIM--the Women's Studies Center at the Federal University of Bahia, I had written a funding proposal for a women's center that the women from AMPLA were planning to create in the neighborhood. It was then that I learned about Fábrica São Braz, the textile mill owned by União Fabril that had operated in Plataforma for nearly a century, and decided that someday I would study its impact on the community. Although I had anticipated locating some of the former mill workers among the group of senior women ("third age ladies") that met at the AMPLA headquarters every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon, I was elated when I actually located the first few. At that time I was coordinating an applied-research project that NEIM was developing in the Subúrbio Ferroviário area of Salvador where Plataforma is located, while also beginning to develop my dissertation proposal on women, work, and the family. Meeting these women opened the possibility of merging the two projects. Why not write about these former *operárias* (women industrial workers) and their life in the factory? Why not write about what life was

¹ 'Dona' is a formal term of address and reference applied to women, preceding their first names and abbreviated as "D". The equivalent term for men is 'Seu', short for 'Senhor', and abbreviated as 'Sr.'. In order to preserve the privacy of all the persons interviewed in the course of this research, their names and other characteristics that can be used to identify them have been changed.

like for these women and their families, living and working in Plataforma--living in the 'backyard of the factory'--when the community was still a *vila operária*, a workers' villa? This was a missing page in the history of industrialization in Bahia--indeed, in Brazilian labor history. Established in Plataforma in 1875, Fábrica São Braz was one of the oldest textile mills in the country, one of the few that had remained in operation throughout the decline of the cotton manufacturing industry in Bahia. The mill was finally closed in 1959 but for nearly a century it employed generations of women from the community. And there, coming to AMPLA every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon, was a group of women who had been a part of this history.

Some time was to elapse, however, between the moment the project first suggested itself to me and the day on which, after making the arrangements to go to one of these reunions to explore the possibility of carrying my ideas further, I came upon Dona Luciana. I singled her out after the initial introductions when I began telling the women in her group about my interest in talking individually to those who had worked at Fábrica São Braz. She had stared at me with suspicion throughout my initial remarks. "She is reluctant, will she ever talk to me?," I remember thinking to myself, and decided to find out right way by singling her out for the first interview.

She was sitting in the corner of the big terrace over AMPLA's Daycare Center where they usually met (and still do), weaving strips of

discarded cloth materials into a rag rug as part of a group project. And her fingers kept moving busily tying the strips while she stared at me when I asked if we could set up an interview.

"Would you be the first one to talk to me? When can we get together for a chat?," I asked, going straight to the point. She immediately snapped back, answering me with the question : "What is there to tell you about my life?" Her eyes mocked me as she turned and looked to the other women around her, as if to gain their support, and then added: "It is just the life of a woman, a life of struggle."

It was not until months later, when she finally agreed to the long requested interview, that I came to understand that by 'a life of struggle' (*uma vida de luta*) she had not meant the life of a combative *operária* (as I had romantically supposed), but 'simply' the everyday struggles of a poor woman, a single mother of four trying, on a meager income, to keep food in her children's stomachs, clothes on their backs, and a roof over their heads. To do so, she began working at the age of twelve and spent most of her adult life toiling at the looms of Fábrica São Braz. This was nothing out of the ordinary for her: her mother before her had done the same; most of the women she knew did the same. Her everyday struggles had in time led her to bigger struggles--including the present one against União Fabril to guarantee the roof over the heads of her children's children whom she now raises. All of this was taken 'matter of factly' by Dona Luciana, since that was the only thing for a woman, a mother to do.

Such an attitude is shared by Dona Elenita, whom I also met in these senior women's meetings. But unlike Dona Luciana, Dona Elenita is certainly neither spunky nor inquisitive. She has never seemed to wonder why I wanted to learn about her life. She has always been agreeable and patient with my many questions, taking them as she takes everything, with patience, care and resignation--probably developed by more than twenty years spent tending spindles at the factory. Slow-moving, even sluggish in her movements, it is difficult to understand how she kept up with the pace of production at the factory. Crossing São Braz Square from the bus stop to AMPLA, she walks leadenly, carrying upon her shoulders not only the 73 years of her own '*vida de luta*' but of all the women in the world. She carries this weight even in her eyes, eyes with the tired and resigned look of those who have grown accustomed to endless waiting; waiting in line for the bus, for their turn to see the doctor, to see the Mayor, or for life to take a turn for the better. **A Tarde's** camera captured this look in her eyes. But of course, it did not reveal that behind the seeming resignation--even passivity--lies hidden a relentless determination to keep striving towards a better life. Like the other women in the photo, Dona Elenita did not leave City Hall until much later that night. She was determined not to leave before they were seen and heard by the Mayor.

To set the record straight, this was not the first time--and certainly it would not be the last--that Dona Elenita, Dona Luciana and other women from AMPLA had taken the long bus ride from Plataforma in the outskirts of Salvador, all the way to the center of town to take their

grievances to City Hall. Nor is it surprising that in doing so they have made it to the local news. I have known many of these women for more than seven years now, and over these years I have often seen their pictures stamped on the papers depicting them on similar missions. As I will delineate in this dissertation, since the late 1970s when a group of concerned mothers from the community was formed to seek solutions for the deterioration of the schools in the neighborhood, the women from Plataforma have made numerous trips to City Hall to voice their grievances and demands. They have fought for and built a daycare center for their children; demanded and seen a health care center go up in their neighborhood; struggled over and over-- not always successfully--to guarantee their community the minimum infrastructure crucial to decent and humane living conditions.

Until recently however, these actions were waged against the impersonal 'State' which was personified in whoever happened to be in control of the County or State government at the time. But now the fight is against União Fabril and by rising against União Fabril, the residents of Plataforma have begun a new chapter in their history--perhaps the last one in the unmaking of Plataforma as a former *vila operária*, a factory workers' villa long patronized and controlled by the very company against which they now stand.

This is the first time that women in Plataforma organize to confront on their own União Fabril. It contrasts with their attitude and willingness to confront this same institution in order to redress unfair treatment and

dangerous working conditions in the past, when they worked in the factory. With hindsight about these recent events, I have tried to understand both their present activism in the community as well as their apparent past apathy about those conditions in the factory. In this work, I seek to explain why women workers shied away from the struggles led by local labor organizations. I maintain that the explanation is not immediately apparent. It is buried deeper in the previous chapters of the history of the community, enmeshed in the intricate web of social relations--of class, gender, race, and vicinity--that were interwoven with the textiles produced at Fábrica São Braz. One of my tasks, then, is to untangle this web. In this work, I retrace the 'making' of Plataforma as a *vila operária*, delineate the social and economic changes that have transformed it, and highlight the ways that workers – woman and men – have experienced this process. In the course of this work it will be seen that this is a long story that spans nearly a century – a story whose beginnings were laid in the mid-1870s when, in the midst of the first strides towards industrialization, a textile mill, Fábrica São Braz, was established in Plataforma.

CHAPTER TWO

Points of Departure, Points of Approach

Key Issues

This work, then, is the story of a particular working-class community and its transfiguration from *vila operária* into a poor neighborhood on the outskirts of Salvador, Bahia, noted for its present standing against its former patron. It is as such a study of social change, a study of local history. However, as I retrace this history it should become apparent that, borrowing Joy Parr's words,

the problems, processes, and interpretive possibilities that arise here concerning gender, class, power, and community are part of a vibrant and vigorous international conversation in which many different and contending voices lately have been heard (1990:3).

For an anthropologist, however, a study of social change carries both the advantage as well as the burden of a long tradition. If on the one hand, understanding social change has always been at the heart of anthropological theory and research, on the other, it has been approached from significantly different perspectives and with varying degrees of emphasis at different moments in the history of the discipline.

Nineteenth century anthropologists, following the intellectual trends of the time, focused on long-term, evolutionary changes, attempting to pinpoint the general trends of social evolution from ancient times to the rise of civilization. With the shift of focus from Culture to the study of specific cultures and societies which characterized anthropological research

during most of the first half of the twentieth century, anthropologists turned to the reconstruction of the histories of native peoples, looking at changes from the perspective of cultural contact and acculturation. By the late 1940s and during the next two decades, renewed interest on social evolution placed issues concerning major structural transformations back into the limelight of anthropological thought and inquiry. In addition to promoting a new reading of nineteenth century evolutionist works, neo-evolutionary thought also opened the way for the establishment of a Marxist tradition within anthropology.²

Since the 1970's and as part of the crisis of the social sciences and the ensuing 'critique of anthropology' that followed, new perspectives have emerged on the analysis of social change.³ Within Marxist thought in particular, considerable interest has developed in the analysis of colonialism and the process of capitalist expansion throughout the world. This in turn has revealed the effects of the penetration of capital among the peoples and societies traditionally studied by anthropologists. At the same time, analyses of the rise of the world capitalist system and the ongoing process of globalization and internationalization of labor have fostered the emergence of new trends in urban anthropology as well as in

² See Harris (1968) for a discussion of the varying emphasis on the study of sociocultural change and evolution within mainstream anthropological thought. For discussions on the relationship between Marxism and anthropology see, Bloch (1983), Vincent (1985), and Wessman (1981) among others.

³ On the 'crisis of the social sciences' and the 'critique of anthropology' see, among others, Asad (1973), Blackburn et al (1978), Copans & Seddon (1978), Hymes (1972), and Marcus & Fisher (1986). For reviews of the 'feminist critique of anthropology', see Di Leonardo (1991) and Moore (1988).

the study of third world development particularly where Latin American countries are concerned (Di Leonardo 1991:21).⁴

In pursuing studies in this area anthropologists have made relevant contributions. Firstly, the efforts in articulating historical and ethnographic analyses have been paramount to the unraveling and depicting of the ways and extent to which the transformations taking place at the macro-structural level of society as a result of the internationalization of capital, instill changes in the patterning of social relations at the local level. Secondly, in examining these processes from an actor-oriented perspective and focusing on the analysis of the perspectives/perceptions and contending actions of the specific communities, groups or segments of the populations studied, they have contributed to the understanding of history as a two-way process. That is to say, as a product of the actions of given subjects upon the specific circumstances and conditions that history she has presented them.⁵

This procedure has represented a welcomed departure from the traditional studies of capitalist penetration and industrialization which focused primarily on the "...structural factors of class formation without considering the nature of class experience" (Cesareo 1991:4). "Traditional"

⁴ Many of these studies (and trends) emerged in the course of the debates on development/underdevelopment (see Frank 1972) and 'dependency theory' (Cardoso & Faletto 1975, Cardoso 1977a, 1977b). See Sankar & Sardenberg (1978) for an annotated bibliography on the 'critique' of dependency theory and its applications in anthropology. For discussions of the new trends in urban anthropology in Latin America, see Castells (1985), Kowarick (1988), Leeds & Leeds (1977).

⁵ In addition to the works cited in the text, see also Mintz (1986), Wolf (1982), Taussig (1980), and Nash (1979).

approaches often resulted in a false separation between "structure" and "agency," that is, between economic class relations and the individual or group expressions of the different and various relations that make up the texture of social life (Rebel 1989). They failed to take into account the fact that 'community,' or the sense of commonality of experiences and interests and corresponding alliances of workers, do not always coincide with 'class' (Sider 1986). As a consequence, they could not account for the contending actions of individual and/or collective actors which extrapolated the direct confrontations between capital and labor and thus which did not have a clear-cut class overtone (Kowarick 1988).⁶

I contend here that such a fallacy is only avoided when workers are placed in history and their specific experiences of capitalism are unraveled. This entails an approach which considers 'class' both in terms of the structural determinants of the mode of production as well as in terms of the "economic, structural and cultural relationships that promote a feeling of community or homogeneity" (Roseberry 1983:11). It entails, as such, the incorporation of a 'historical-geographic' perspective (Harvey 1989) that approaches the analysis of class in terms of its time/space variants, so as to account for the variety of experiences that mark the histories of capitalist expansion and industrialization throughout the world.

⁶ To a large extent, the focus on 'agency' and 'class experience' has derived from the works of the Marxist historian E. P. Thompson, particularly the comprehensive *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963), and his critique of structuralist Marxism (1978). In Brazil, the new perspectives on the analysis of class is more recent, dating from the late 1970's on up, being closely linked to the emergence of urban social movements. The discussions have benefited largely from the postulations of Alain Touraine (1984). See for example Sader (1988), Paoli & Sader (1986), and Paoli (1987, 1991).

In this work, therefore, I have attempted to incorporate this perspective. Nevertheless, in retracing the histories of the women and men of Plataforma, it has become evident that one must also consider the web of ('economic, structural, and cultural') relationships--such as gender and race/ethnicity--that may promote intra-class heterogeneity and as such engender the construction of intra-class "collective diversities/ identities" (Kowarick 1988:322). As feminist scholars have repeatedly stressed, in most (if not all) instances, the gender divide has ensured that women and men experience the process of capitalist development differently, and thus they respond to it in different ways.⁷ The sexual division of labor in the family household and the ideologies of gender implicit in family morality, have played a determining role in the way and form in which women and men are incorporated and/or recruited into social production at large. At the same time, gender divisions in the labor market feed back into the dynamics of household organization and gender relations in the domestic sphere (Connelly & MacDonald 1986, Luxton 1986). As Mary MacIntosh observes:

...in capitalism the household has become a kind of mediating institution, mediating that is two sets of social relations: those of marriage and filiation, which act to constitute the household and determine the context of much of child care, and the wider economic relations of the society. Women's performance of domestic work, especially the care of children within the home, both expresses their dependence and subordination within marriage (since men actively benefit from this work) and also

⁷ There is today a vast literature dealing with these issues, much of it coming under the heading of 'women and development.' An overall discussion of the gender perspective and development within anthropology is found in Moore (1988); see also essays in Di Leonardo (1991), Young et al (1984), Etienne & Leacock (1980), Leacock (1981). For a feminist critique of E.P. Thompson's work see Scott (1988).

weakens their position within the wage labor market, contributing to their low wages and poor conditions as wage workers" (1984:13).⁸

Precisely because women's work becomes 'devalued' and allows for the payment of lower wages and thus greater profits to capital, the recruitment of women's (as well as children's) labor has figured as an important part of the history of industrialization and the rise of the world capitalist system. By the same token, the fight against the exploitation of children and women by capital has figured as one of the first and major struggles of workers throughout the capitalist world. Yet, in these struggles, organized labor has often assumed a paternalist role in relation to women workers, sustaining the notion of their 'domesticity.'⁹ This demands that labor history - and of the unraveling of the specific experiences of capitalism - incorporate a gender perspective.

This work aims at contributing to this endeavor by analyzing the dynamics of gender, class, power and community in the context of industrial capitalist development in Brazil. In particular, this is a study of how work, family, and community relations in the Subúrbio of Plataforma have changed in this past century as different moments and movements of the process of capitalist industrialization in Bahia have unfolded. It looks at the different spheres and ways in which the gendered subjects and

⁸ The relationship between women's domestic work and the economy was the focus of heated debates in the late 1970s. For discussions of the major issues, see Armstrong & Armstrong (1986), Barrett (1980), Eisenstein et al (1979), Hamilton (1986), Hartmann (1987, 1979), Miles (1986), Molyneux (1979), and Secombe (1986).

groups involved have 'experienced' this process. It also analyzes the different ways they have responded and/or reacted to the impact on their lives of the transformations related to that process, which redefined social roles and relations and promoted collective actions, and how these actions are remembered by the men and women who were involved in them.

In undertaking this task I seek to demonstrate that gender, class, and community relations in Plataforma did not articulate in a fixed pattern. This articulation was flexible and fluid, varying according to the different spheres in which men and women here portrayed interacted. Whereas the factory relied primarily on the employment of women of the community, patriarchal gender relations dominated in the workplace. Not only was the chain of command in male hands, but men also led and took a more active part in the local unions and collective actions centered on matters dealing with the workplace. Consequently, men and women do not share the same social memories of these actions; indeed, as we shall see further ahead, women's memories about them tend to be vague and fragmented, reflecting the marginal role that they played in labor organizations. In contrast, the greater reliance on the employment of women in the mill, enhanced their position in the family and in the community-at-large. This contributed to the patterning of more egalitarian gender relations in the 'backyard of the factory' than in the factory and within labor movements.

⁹ For discussions on issues regarding women and organized labor in Brazil, see for example, Hahner 1986, Pena 1981, Pena & Lima 1983, Rago 1985.

The interplay of gender, class, and community also varied over time as the closing of the factory and the other transformations occurring in Plataforma have had different impacts on men and women. In particular, the burden of traveling outside of the community to search for jobs has been heavier on women. Consequently, they have been more likely to find local means of income generation; unlike men, women have not experienced as much the fragmentation of identity between workplace and place of residence. On the contrary, women have maintained an important role in community affairs, thus leading the struggles for improvement of services and life conditions in the neighborhood.

Central to this undertaking, then, is the task of demonstrating that the rise of industry in Bahia is not thoroughly comprehensible without considering the intricate patterns of relations that have underscored the texture of social life and thus the specific experiences of capitalism of the workers here depicted. Indeed, capitalists have made use of the highly hierarchical gender divide and the patterns of family morality characteristic of Bahian society to further their project of ever-growing profits. As a consequence, the contending actions of the exploited have also been marked by gender overtones. Women have faced different struggles than men, a fact which has escaped the bulk of current discussions on the history of Brazilian working classes.

This does not mean that the observable patterning of gender relations predominant in contemporary capitalist social formations, Brazil including, can be explained solely in terms of the mechanics of the

capitalist mode of production. Although it is here argued that capitalists have historically taken advantage of pre-existing gender divisions and the subordination of women in the family at large, it cannot be said that these social arrangements are inherent to or a *sine qua non* condition for capitalist development. In other words, gender divisions and hierarchies have been 'functional' to capital; however, I here maintain that at the highest level of abstraction the mechanics of the capitalist mode of production is in fact sex-blind (Barrett 1980, Connelly 1986).¹⁰ Accordingly, the analysis of the interplay of gender and class relations must be undertaken not at this level but instead at that of capitalism as a mode of production which unfolds and develops in historically determined social totalities--social formations--articulating and transforming the texture of social relations. This notion then entails a shift of analytical focus from the "...sexless and epochal abstraction of the capitalist mode of production..." to the "...sexist and historically periodized concrete of the developed capitalist societies" (Secombe 1980:59).

Crucial to this change of focus is the understanding that the relations among women and men are socially constructed phenomena embedded in symbolic metaphors (Ortner and Whitehead 1981). Thus, they are not only mutable and fluid but also culturally and historically specific. Ultimately, they are power relations (Saffiotti 1992, Scott 1988) and, as

¹⁰ The discussions surrounding this issue were part of the 'debate on sex and class,' which engendered an extensive literature attempting to articulate Marxist and feminist views. See, among others, Armstrong & Armstrong (1983), Barret (1980), Brenner & Ramas (1984), Burnham & Louie (1985), Combes & Haucault (1987), Connelly (1983), Lewis (1985), and Nicholson (1991, 1986).

such, the form that they "...take in any historical situation ... has to be constructed inductively; it cannot be read off from other social relations nor from the gender relations of other societies" (Pearson, Whitehead and Young 1983:x).

It should be emphasized that this view does not discard the premise that the macrostructural factors of the mode of production have the ultimate determining role in (re)shaping these relations. Indeed, it assumes that they create the material conditions in which they are realized. As such, this view does not contrapose "historical" versus "theoretical" approaches, forfeiting a search for universal tendencies and what underlies them. On the contrary, it is premised on the notion that the task of social analysis is to recognize what is 'general' in the specific historical instances under study. Then, what grants specificity to those instances and accounts for historical variations and cultural diversity can be delineated.

Mapping Contours

Cast within the wider contours of the rise of industry in Bahia - and, as such, of the more encompassing process of the internationalization of capital - this study of Fábrica São Braz and its surrounding community of workers should thus provide grounds for reflections of wider significance to the analysis of the articulation of gender and class relations in the process of capitalist development.

In this sense, it is important to note that early entrepreneurs in Bahia as true in other parts of the world especially in the area of textile

production, paradoxically broke from--albeit simultaneously exploiting--the gender divide encoded in Western family morality by engaging the labor of women (and children) in great numbers. To attract these workers and guarantee continuous labor recruitment, many of the early textile establishments operated on a factory-workers' villa system (Leite Lopes 1979, 1984, 1988) providing company housing to those families whose members were employed in the mills. This was particularly common in the case of those mills which, in order to be close to water resources to power their machinery and/or secure means of transportation for supplies and finished products, were forced "to locate at some distance from existing population centers" (Dublin 1975:75).

But more than a means of tending to labor recruitment and meeting other operation needs, the villa system also provided for the institution of what Leite Lopes (1988:15-22) has termed *servidão burguesa* (bourgeois serfdom). That is, a form of social relation in which the worker, in contrast to the 'classic proletarian' of the industrial revolution, was only partially 'free'. Factory owners exerted direct control not only in the sphere of production but also over the sphere of reproduction of the worker through the concentration of industrial capital and ownership of territorial property. Such an arrangement often meant that the domestic life of the worker not only took place in the 'backyard of the factory', but also that it was directly controlled by the work process and the timing of the activities of the work day. This was symbolically expressed by the sounding of the

whistles of the factory, calling and returning workers to and from their families.

This was precisely the system which was in operation for nearly a century in Plataforma, the community depicted in this study. Indeed, in Plataforma, generations of women like D.Luciana and D.Elenita supported their families and guaranteed them a home in which to live through their employment as textile workers in Fábrica São Braz.

As noted earlier, Fábrica São Braz was founded in 1875 when Brazil still remained an agrarian, slave society, and Salvador figured as a bustling slave trading post. At that time, local power and authority still rested in the hands of merchants in close alliance with the powerful *senhores de engenho* (sugar plantation masters) and other plantation owners of the *Bahian Recôncavo* area. This meant that the conditions and social relations of production in Salvador were still predominantly 'backward.'¹¹ It was a typically patriarchal slave society, deeply stratified, and one in which "...differences between freemen, freed men, and slaves; white, mulattos, and Negroes; Africans and Brazilians; and rich and poor were very clearly demarcated" (Andrade 1988:41, my translation). In addition, all of these social categories were further bisected by a rigid gender division in which the roles, activities and attitudes proper to the sexes insured that women always undertook a subordinate position (Augel 1980, Mattoso 1978). Not

¹¹ According to Marx, "wherever merchant's capital still predominates we find backward conditions. This is true even within one and the same country, in which, for instance, the specifically merchant towns present far more striking analogies with past conditions than industrial towns" (1967, III:327).

surprisingly, factory owners ran their establishments much along the same lines as *senhores de engenho* ran their plantations. Thus, this early period of industrialization in Bahia could be characterized as a period of 'patriarchal capitalism'.¹²

At that time--and throughout the first half of the present century--Brazil still depended essentially on agricultural exports. However, since the mid-nineteenth century, the province of Bahia experienced a spurt of feverish industrial enterprising, emerging as an important cotton manufacturing center. By 1880, one-third of all textile mills in operation in Brazil were located in Salvador and its environs. Together, they responded for close to 35% of all textiles produced in the country at the time, placing Bahia in a leading position in the production of manufactured goods throughout the last decades of the imperial regime (Stein 1957, Azevedo & Lins 1969).

Despite this position in textiles, industrial production in Bahia still played a very minor role in the regional economy. Moreover, this period of flourishing industrial enterprising in Bahia was short-lived. By the late 1880s, when slavery was finally abolished and a republican government was installed in Brazil, the center of cotton manufacturing was already shifting to the southern region, first to Rio de Janeiro and later to São Paulo. In 1907, Bahia already figured among the lesser manufacturing producers in

¹² As it will be delineated in greater detail in Part II of this dissertation, the expression 'patriarchal capitalism' refers here to a phase in the development of industrial capitalism in Brazil. As such, it is

the country. Furthermore, after 1910, the rate in which new factories were established in the area began to slow down considerably, coming to a near halt by the 1920s (Azevedo & Lins 1969, Faria 1980).

For the next three decades, while industry prospered in the southern states, Bahia experienced a period of seeming 'industrial involution' (Tavares 1965), marked by the increasing deterioration of its local textile industry. It was only in the late 1950s, after the discovery of petroleum off the shores of Salvador and the subsequent creation of Petrobrás, Brazil's National Petroleum Company, that this situation began to be reversed. Petroleum paved the way for the creation of government-sponsored incentives for investments in industrial production and the economic development of the area, incorporating Bahia into new patterns of capitalist accumulation (Faria 1980, Oliveira 1987). However, the revitalization of the local economy could not change the fate of its cotton textile industry. On the contrary, it sealed its demise. The growing economic importance of Salvador in the internal division of labor demanded the construction of new highways linking the area to the main industrial centers in the south, such as São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. This greatly facilitated the flow of their products into the local market and intensified competition. Salvador cotton manufacturers operated with old mills, old machinery, and without significant incentives for modernizing the mills. They could not meet the demands of the market (Faria 1980:34).

distinct from the expression 'capitalist patriarchy' used by Eisenstein (1979), which refers to phase or form in the history of patriarchy.

With the development of the petrochemical industry in the area, interests centered on the production of synthetic fibers. This required new technology, new machinery, and a more skilled labor force, making it easier to build anew than to convert the old mills. Thus, by the mid-1960s, most of these mills had silenced their spindles and looms for good (Franco 1983).

The deactivation of the mills sealed the end of an era in the history of industrial production in Bahia. But, more importantly, it also represented the closing of a chapter in Bahia's labor history. Gone with the mills were also the factory workers' villas, the *vilas operárias*, and with them, a distinct form of working-class community and way of life would also disappear.

The story of Fábrica São Braz and its surrounding community of workers was precisely a case in point. Though remaining in operation during the decades of 'involution', the factory had been in a process of increasing deterioration for quite some time. In the 1930's, when falling profits promoted the merging of different companies, this factory had been incorporated into União Fabril, a conglomerate of textile factories in the hands of the Bernardo Catharino family, which owned most of the landed property in the outskirts of the city. Investments in rental property brought greater returns than factory production; no effort was made to modernize the factories in the face of external competition. In 1959, production at Fábrica São Braz was stopped; when it was reactivated a few years later, it employed less than half of its previous workforce. In 1967,

Fábrica São Braz was incorporated into the Fábrica de Tecidos Fátima and its name was changed to Fatbraz, S.A.. However, it operated under this name for only a short time. In 1968 it closed down again, and has not reopened (Bevilaqua 1992:36).

The closing down of this factory occurred at the same time in which major economic changes took place in Bahia. In the two last decades, the metropolitan area of Salvador has been developing at a rapid pace, corresponding to a new moment in the history of capitalist expansion in Bahia. Today, it hosts some of Brazil's major petrochemical industries; the Petrochemical Complex Pole of Camaçari, situated in an area just outside of the city, and figures as the largest industrial center in the Northeast Region. The tourism industry has also had a significant upsurge over the past ten years, with spill-over effects on all sectors of the local economy.

At the same time, the development of the agro-industry in the interior of Bahia has contributed to increasing land speculation and the speeding up of the process of expropriation of the peasantry.¹³ All of this has stimulated increasing migration to the metropolitan area of Salvador and significant population growth: Salvador is today a city of 2,5 million people, the third largest city in the country, surpassed in population only by São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro.

¹³ I have dealt with the history of this process in the sugar economy of the northeast in greater detail in previous works. See, for example, Sardenberg (1980, 1981), and Sankar & Sardenberg (1979).

It goes perhaps without saying that the economic development of the area and the noted upsurge in population have not been accompanied by the necessary infrastructure so crucial to decent and humane living conditions. On the contrary, Salvador is today a city surrounded by miserable squatter settlements or *invasões* and notorious for its lack of public sanitation, its shortage of schools, day-care centers, hospitals, and transportation--problems which are not unique to this area, but which in fact besiege most major Brazilian cities. Likewise, though the local and regional economies have expanded considerably in the period outlined opening up new job opportunities, this expansion has fallen far behind in absorbing the available (and growing) work force. As a consequence, recent studies have found an unemployment rate of close to 10% for Salvador; in addition, over 55% of those engaged in gainful occupations were found to be involved in activities which could be loosely identified with the so-called 'informal labor market' (Sardenberg 1992). Of special note is the fact that, despite the expansion of industry in the area, only 12,4% of the economically active population are involved in activities included in the industrial sector (Azevedo 1992).

Contrasting these findings with data available for the decades preceding the recent industrial expansion in Bahia, it is possible to detect some clear discontinuities both in terms of the class of local entrepreneurs as well as in the composition of the work force engaged in industrial production. There has been a clear shift along sex/gender lines: while up to the 1950's women represented over 80% of the 'traditional' urban

proletariat in Bahia, today the industrial work force is clearly male dominated in that 83.4% of all industrial workers are men while women represent a mere 16.6% (Azevedo 1992). This shift is also evident when one considers the evolution of the female labor force. As Guimarães and Castro (1987) have shown, though the female labor force has grown considerably since 1960, there has been a marked trend towards the dislocation of women from industrial production to activities related to the service sector. Between 1960 and 1970, in fact, there was a considerable drop in the percentage of women working in industry, a fact which has been associated with the closing down of most of the remaining textile and cigar factories which had traditionally relied on female labor (Guimarães & Castro 1987).

This shift in the composition of the industrial labor force of Salvador must be regarded as an expression of the gender division in the labor market. This is manifested in the sexualization and/or sexual segregation of occupations, sectors of the economy, as well as in specific branches of industry. Whereas the previous period of industrialization was centered on textile production, which has historically engaged women workers, recent industrial development in Bahia has taken place mostly in those areas which are generally identified with a male labor force--such as the petrochemical and construction industries. Yet, even the 'new' textile factories operating with 'high technology', and installed with the support of SUDENE, have not absorbed women in their workforce (Franco 1983).

In this dissertation, I am concerned with demonstrating how this shift has affected employment opportunities for women and men of Plataforma. I take into account not only the effects of the closing of the factory, but also other changes which have taken place in the area. In this respect, it should be noted that until the 1960's Plataforma remained a relatively isolated and stable community, closely identified with Fábrica São Braz. However, even those families whose members worked in the factory did not necessarily depend solely on those earnings to survive. In the 1970's there was still a fairly large fishing community of more than one hundred families who engaged in fishing and shellfish gathering (Santos et alii 1970).

Up to that time, access to the area was either by rail or by water, since there were no paved roads to the city. It was only in the mid-sixties with the construction of Avenida Suburbana which links Salvador to petroleum extraction platforms in the Port of Aratu and passes alongside the suburb of Plataforma, that new means of land access to the area were created. This facilitated the installation of bus routes which remain to this day. Coupled with land speculation and the increasing flow of migrants to the city, this has resulted in the swelling up of the local population. Urban improvements however have not followed at the same pace. Actually, whatever has been accomplished in terms of improvements, has been done so as a result of the organized struggles of the local population. It is in these struggles that the women have been especially active, fighting as housewives and mothers in the interest of their families.

Indeed, as noted earlier, since the late 1970s along with what was happening in other major cities in Brazil, women from Plataforma have been organizing to demand daycare centers and schools for their children, local free medical services, better transportation, as well as other services that usually go or should go with 'urbanization.'¹⁴ In 1978, out of the group of concerned mothers emerged the Women's Association of Plataforma (Associação de Mulheres de Plataforma) which eventually expanded to become the Plataforma's Residents Association (Associação de Moradores de Plataforma - AMPLA).¹⁵ At the same time, they began to promote periodical encounters of similar women's groups from the neighboring suburban communities, an initiative which led to the eventual creation of the Federation of Neighborhood Associations of Salvador (Federação das Associações de Bairros de Salvador -FABS). This organization today figures as one of the most important organized groups in the popular movement of Salvador. And it is under leadership of many women members of AMPLA, that FABS is today engaged in the struggle against the present owners of União Fabril.

It is important to stress that the women from AMPLA (and through them, of the other suburban communities as well) have also constituted a

¹⁴ There is a comprehensive literature on the social movements that emerged in Brazil in this period; for critical reviews, see, among others, Cardoso (1988), Durham (1984), Machado da Silva & Ribeiro (1985), Doimo et al (1986), and Nunes (1986). On issues regarding Latin America as a whole see also Foweraker (1995), Escobar & Alvarez (1992), and Eckstein (1985).

¹⁵ A reconstruction of the history of AMPLA is found in Sardenberg (1996); on women's participation in urban social movements in Salvador, see also Britto da Motta (1993), Espineira Gonzalez (1991), and Pacheco et al (1992).

leading force in the Salvador city-wide women's movement. They have been active in Salvador's Women's Forum, being instrumental in securing signatures throughout the suburbs for the presentation of popular amendments on women's issues, which were presented to the National, State, and Municipal Constitution Congresses.¹⁶ Participation in the popular and women's movement has actually contributed to the empowerment of women and the emergence of a consciousness of gender among them (Motta 1991; Oliveira 1990, Sardenberg and Costa 1994). Thus, in 1987, during the Fifth Suburban Women's Annual Meetings, it was decided that a Suburban Women's Center (CEMS) should be created, to foster the social promotion of women (Sardenberg 1988, 1991, 1996). That was precisely when and how I walked into their history and began to formulate the questions that are addressed in this dissertation.

Practical Knowledge and Theoretical Investigation

As a feminist active in the women's movement and, at that time, also Coordinator of NEIM - the Interdisciplinary Women's Studies Center of the Federal University of Bahia, I was asked along with the other researchers of the center to help the women from AMPLA in formulating a proposal and in being an intermediary with funding agencies to secure grants for the construction of CEMS and for the implementation of job training and income generation projects for women in the suburbs.

¹⁶ See Hahner (1990), Alvarez (1991), Pinto (1992), and Sardenberg & Costa (1994) among other works that discuss the mobilization of women throughout Brazil to ensure their constitutional rights.

Through a grant from the Ford Foundation, NEIM promoted a series of activities in the suburbs such as workshops and training courses for local women's groups. Besides participating in these activities, I also coordinated a survey conducted in seven different communities in the area, Plataforma included, to delineate a profile of the suburban woman.

Between 1991 to 1994, two other research projects were conducted in Plataforma under my coordination with the sponsorship of the Brazilian National Research Council (CNPq). The first, entitled *Mulher Suburbana: Gerando Filhos, Renda e Mais Valia*, focused on the different economic activities developed by women as a means of contributing to the family budget. The other, *Gênero e Classe em Processos de Expansão Capitalista: O Caso de Salvador*, aimed at introducing a historical dimension to the analysis of factory work, family-household organization and gender relations in Plataforma. It focused primarily on a study of the former textile factory workers and their families, drawing essentially from their own testimonies of their family histories, their work experiences, and of everyday life in the community.¹⁷

Between the months of October and November, 1994, I also had the opportunity to work with the archives of Fábrica São Braz in the União Fabril headquarters. During the month that it took my student-assistants and I to assess and compile the information available, we sat in an office

¹⁷ I have also greatly benefited from the findings of Samira Bevilaqua (1992) included in her senior thesis. In her work--- which I had the opportunity to monitor quite closely as advisor---Bevilaqua

especially reserved for us next to that of Dr.L. Catharino's, the company's president. This gave me the chance to engage in numerous conversations with him as well as with other members of the board of directors and of the Bernardo Catharino family who happened to come by, and thus clarify eventual doubts arising from the information we were collecting from the archives. On different occasions, we also talked about the occurring conflicts between AMPLA and União Fabril. It was also during this period that I had the opportunity to talk to Dr. L. Catharino's cousin who vividly related to me how their grandfather managed to become a "textile baron" and owner of Fábrica São Braz.

In Plataforma, much of my conversations and observations took place at the group of senior women's meetings at AMPLA. Indeed, this group of women became my "home base" there, not only as my major source of "informants," but also for linking and introducing me to other former factory workers and/or long-time residents in the community and double-checking the information I was gathering elsewhere. Even if not all of the senior women in the group were willing to grant individual interviews to relate their life-stories, as a group they took interest in what we were doing. They eventually adopted my students and myself as part of their group, complaining if for one reason or another we did not show up to the meetings.

analyzed the testimonies of some of these women factory workers as well as the data contained in the 1943 and 1954 payroll books of Fábrica São Braz.

It should be clear, however, that this study departs in many different ways from the more traditional parameters of ethnographic field research. Previous generations of anthropologists have traditionally set out to faraway places to study peoples whose cultures were usually much removed and distinct from their own. To understand these cultures, anthropologists not only had to learn a very different language, but more importantly, following the methods and field techniques spelled out by Bronislaw Malinowski long ago, they immersed themselves in the ways of life of the peoples they studied so as to grasp the 'native's point of view.'

In contrast, I studied people very near to me both geographically as well as culturally. Although originally not from Bahia, I am a Brazilian and had lived in Salvador for over eight years before beginning this study. I did not have to learn a foreign language nor take the time to familiarize myself with drastically new surroundings. Even when facing heavy traffic, the rides from my home or from my office in the University in Salvador's *Cidade Alta* all the way to Plataforma in the Subúrbio rarely exceeded forty-five minutes. Furthermore, I was spared from the difficult task of carving my way into the community by being asked to elaborate the aforementioned project for the Suburban Women's Center.

However, if familiarity and proximity offered shortcuts in the field, working in one's society is certainly not devoid of difficulties in the establishment of the rapport fundamental to anthropological fieldwork. Whereas anthropologists working in a setting very foreign to their own have to overcome the language and cultural barriers, those working in their

own society--particularly with the more underprivileged segments--must transpose social barriers which can, at times, be almost insurmountable. This is especially difficult in a highly segmented and stratified society such as Brazil where class and race differences are sharply marked, and social categories are hierarchically organized and mapped (Velho 1974). To be a white researcher and worse still, a *Professora da Universidade*--a University Professor-- where the vast majority of the population is black and does not have an elementary education and access to higher learning is a privilege enjoyed by a very small minority, is an obvious clue of one's social standing in that hierarchy, and one which cannot be easily negotiated. It sticks out as a "sore thumb," especially as it is often accompanied by other class markers such as manner of speech, dress, and the like.

The crucial point here is that this mapping of hierarchical social categories is always underscored by dimensions of power and domination (Velho 1974:05). University professors in Brazil are not highly paid and very few have risen to positions of power (such as the current president of the country). But there is no question that I am a part of a segment of Brazilian society which clearly has, if not necessarily much more actual power than residents of poor neighborhoods, at the very least greater access to those who do in fact hold it. Indeed, unlike the people from the Subúrbio, I not only had access to União Fabril's president but also to the books kept in the company's archives which contained precious information about their work histories. More importantly, residents and leaders at AMPLA believed that I could approach the company's president

with relative ease, often asking me to intercede with him on their behalf. Some of the people to whom I talked actually thought, at first, that I worked for the company, a misunderstanding which, given the present struggles of the community, I vigorously tried to clarify but possibly not always with total success.

More commonly, however, it was believed that I worked for the *Prefeitura*, the City Government, or was otherwise in a position to intercede in securing jobs for unemployed sons, vacancies in school for the grandchildren, pavement of a muddy street or some other equally needed assistance which, by virtue of my higher social standing--and thus supposed or real greater power in the existing power hierarchy--I could give them.

The problem here is that the kind of *persona* that we are able to fashion--or that is fashioned for us despite our wishes and efforts--always plays a crucial part in the nature of the relationships that we forge in the field, and which, in turn, are an essential part of the data we are able to produce. Indeed, the kind of information that anthropology thrives on is rarely 'out there for grabs' or obtained merely through observation. Instead, it results from an encounter of subjectivities (Cardoso 1986), the nature and depth of these encounters affecting the kind of 'product' that we will be able to fashion.

This work draws from data resulting from a variety of research efforts and as such from 'field encounters' which have differed considerably in nature and depth. They ranged from casual and superficial

exchanges in the streets to deep 'heart to heart' conversations, only possible when the anthropologist is able to peel off the layers of the 'public *persona*' he/she has hidden behind, to emerge as someone to whom our interlocutors can relate in more equal terms. This disclosure involves a process of give and take in which the anthropologist is called to reveal as much of his/her life and self as the interlocutor is asked to reveal. And to this end, gender always plays a fundamental role (Bell et al 1993). Indeed, it was mainly with the women that I was able to relate closer, as we found in the overall commonality of our experiences as women, many of us single mothers striving to raise our children alone, grounds to meet in more equal terms. In this manner, the dimensions of power and domination which separated us in terms of race and class differences were partially offset by the dimensions of power and domination on gender lines which we, as women, despite our distinct racial and class experiences as women, have shared in our everyday lives.

With the women of AMPLA, particularly those active in the Women's Forum of Salvador, this commonality of experiences was translated as well into commonality of interests. The inter-class alliances that the women of Salvador have been able to forge in striving for their common interests, has also been based on a process of give and take. This has included the joining of efforts that has made this work possible. It should be emphasized, then, that this dissertation not only aims at analyzing the texture of gender, class, and community in Plataforma, but it

is also a product of the interweaving of gender, class, and community relations.

Altogether, this work is the end-result of nearly six years of continuous research in the area, as well as of my close involvement with the women from AMPLA and from other women's groups in the *subúrbios* as their 'fellow comrade' in the city-wide women's movement. As such, it is not a work which was pursued without passion, but one which takes the interests of the women here portrayed closely to heart.

Precisely because of my close involvement in their struggles--and thus of the epistemological and ethical problems that arise when attempting to analyze a praxis in which we ourselves are involved (Durham 1986:26)--I had initially decided not to discuss them in this work. Indeed, I was naive enough to believe that it would not be necessary to bring the story of Plataforma all the way to present, and thus avoid an analysis of the current struggles of the community. In time, however, I realized that this would be a misrepresentation of their past and present. To reconstruct their past I depended primarily on the social memory of the community, on the memory of past collective experiences. But social memory is just as embedded in present experiences, as these present experiences are embedded in past ones. As James Fentress & Chris Wickham (1992:4) point out, "memory represents the past and present as connected to each other, and consistent with each other in this way." Thus, when former factory workers and long-time residents of Plataforma spoke to me of the past, they always measured it in terms of the present, especially in terms of the

current fight against União Fabril. Likewise, this fight is configured in their discourse in terms of past relations between the company and the community, particularly of how they were during the era of Bernardo Martins Catharino as head of União Fabril. In cutting short the history of Plataforma, then, I would inevitably undermine the possibility of gaining any deeper understanding of the specific experiences of industrialization and change that I aimed at analyzing. This connection between past and present experiences in the memory of the community should also explain why, despite attempting to follow a chronological order of presentation, this work is set primarily in the 'ethnographic present.'

In order to unravel the threads of the process of sociocultural change in Plataforma and to understand the totality of class experience and its various undercutting's and alliances, I have thus taken the freedom to move back and forth between the past and present, between theory and praxis, and to cross the boundaries that delimit different disciplinary traditions. This, I believe, has helped me in gaining a better understanding of the history of capitalism in Bahia from the viewpoint of the workers-- women and men--who have been the main protagonists. It is precisely to this task that this work is ultimately dedicated.

PART II

A PATRIARCHAL FACTORY

INTRODUCTION

Early in 1875, Bernardo Martins Catharino, then a stocky fourteen-year old youngster, stood next to his father and posed for a very special photograph. Within a few days, Bernardo was to leave his native Vila Nova de Polares in the Portuguese countryside, travel towards Lisbon, on the coast, and there board the ship that would take him across the Atlantic to Bahia. In the photograph, Bernardo wears his best attire: a somewhat worn hat, a short sturdy jacket, and a pair of green velvet trousers which his mother had made him especially for the trip. Bernardo not only wore these trousers to board the ship and for most of his voyage but also saved and cherished them along with the photograph throughout his long and prosperous life, to serve as a proud reminder of his humble beginnings.

According to his wishes, Bernardo's treasured memoirs have been kept within the large family he sired and raised in Bahia. Passed down through the generations, the photograph now hangs on the wall of his grandson's office in the same building where, for many years, Bernardo himself commanded his Bahian textile empire and as part of it, Fábrica São Braz.

In Part II of this dissertation, I explore the life, times and legacy of Bernardo Martins Catharino as a means of tracing the history of Fábrica São Braz and of reconstructing how it operated on a day-to-day basis during the first half of this century. By making use of documents found in the archives of the factory, and coloring and contextualizing them with the

vivid reports of Bernardo Martins Catharino's heirs and his former employees, I aim at bringing to light not only the work process at Fábrica São Braz, but also the inner-workings of the system of 'patriarchal capitalism' which characterized the cotton textile industry in Bahia for a great part of its history, and which had in Comendador Catharino one of its last patrons.

As shall be seen in the following chapters, up to the mid-1940's this system at Fábrica São Braz was solidly grounded on the concentration of industrial capital and ownership of territorial property in Plataforma in the hands of Companhia União Fabril e Progresso Industrial da Bahia, then presided by Comendador Catharino. Moreover, this system was also ingrained in the exercise of a 'patriarchal' form of familial authority sustained by paternalistic dominance, to which in turn concurred the fact that the work force--made up almost entirely of Plataforma residents--was mostly black, young, and female. As most textile factories at that time, in Brazil and abroad, operated, so too Fábrica São Braz relied for the most part on the employment of women as spinners and weavers. Nevertheless, from the shop floor all the way to the president's office, the chain of command was essentially white as well as male.

As I will describe in greater detail further ahead, the code of conduct for employees in the factory was strict and rigidly observed, all violations being met with immediate suspensions and, in many cases, followed by dismissal. However, the inflicting of such punishments was left to the men in the lower echelons of command, thus protecting the image of

Bernardo Catharino as that of a benevolent patron, still remembered by some of his surviving employees as the 'true father of Plataforma.'

Beyond a description and analysis of how Fábrica São Braz was then operated, my quest in Part II is to unravel the web of social relations that were woven along with the textiles produced there. I aim at depicting, on the one hand, the nature of the relations established between capital and labor under those circumstances, and on the other, how solidarity among workers-- women and men--was built and expressed and what forms of consciousness of kind were constructed and/or emerged among them. In particular, I will look into the instances of collective actions that took place in that context, delineating how they were enacted and curtailed, and what kinds of response, if any, were given by the Plataforma community-at-large.

I concentrate on the work process at the factory and on the relations embedded in it, leaving the analysis of community relations to subsequent chapters. But I keep in mind that this was an instance of a 'factory-workers' villa system, that is, one in which the exercise of power and authority was actually strengthened within the factory gates because it also extended over to the so-called sphere of reproduction of the worker.

CHAPTER THREE

Retracing and Weaving Histories:

Patron and Factory

(1875-1960)

Beginnings

Let it be stated from the onset that even if unquestionably successful, Bernardo's story is not necessarily unique. As many of his fellow countrymen before him and others to follow, Bernardo Martins Catharino arrived in Brazil as a poor, semi-literate immigrant of rural origins who was lucky to 'marry up' and carve a sizable fortune of his own before dying at the age of eighty-four on this side of the Atlantic. To a large extent, in fact, Bernardo's success first as a merchant and then as an industrialist, as well as the subsequent slow crumbling to pieces of the textile empire he was to build, were more a product of the era in which he lived than that of a simple twist of fate or solely a result of his own doing.

During the quarter century prior to his arrival in 1875, Bahia had enjoyed a period of considerable economic effervescence and industrial enterprising. Indeed, it was in that period and in Bahia--and not in the now highly industrialized southern states--that the first strides towards industrialization in Brazil were staged.¹⁸ And here, as in other instances throughout the world, these first strides were cast with the development of a local cotton manufacturing industry.

In spite of no longer being the seat of government for Brazil, Salvador at the time was still a bustling center which concentrated a sizable community of merchants willing and ready for investment opportunities (Mattoso 1992, Santos 1974, 1977).¹⁹ Their presence in the city speaks of Salvador's long-standing importance as the commercial center of the region's agro-mercantile economy. For over three centuries the port of Salvador had been one of the major stopping sites in the triangular route between Europe, Africa, and the Americas through which slaves, raw materials, and manufactured goods circulated back and forth (Mattoso 1978, Verger 1967).

Up to the 1850s, Bahian economy had been ruled by the needs of sugar exports, and ruling over these needs were merchants acting as the middlemen in the circulation of money and commodities.²⁰ "It was to merchants that planters sold their sugar, and the merchants, in turn, dealt with overseas buyers, linking the sugar economy of the Northeast with the international capitalist market" (Sardenberg & Sankar 1979:33). Moreover, merchants became the creditors of the planters, often taking over their plantations when the latter's "reckless and spendthrift ways" resulted in financial difficulties (Prado Jr. 1971:344). Through this practice, merchants

¹⁸ Although the first cotton textile mill in São Paulo was built in 1811 (Dean 1969:12) thus preceding those of Bahia for at least two decades, it was not until after the 1890s that were to appear in that state in greater numbers.

¹⁹ On the merchants in Bahia during the previous century, see for example Flory & Smith (1978), Lugar (1980), and Ridings (1973).

²⁰ On the specific characteristics of merchant capital, see Marx (1975 III:277).

came to own sizable land-holdings upon which, some of them, would build their textile mills (cf. Oliveira:1975).

But interest in investing in manufacturing would only take hold after the 1850s, when sugar exports no longer offered prospects of sizable returns. Contributing to this shift of interest was also the availability of raw cotton raised in the hinterlands of Bahia. During the years of the Civil War in the United States (1860-1865) and the resulting decrease in their cotton exports, market demands had boosted the intensification of cotton production in Brazil as a whole and Bahia in particular. In 1861, for instance, cotton responded for 20% of Bahia's exports (Mattoso 1992:518). With the end of the Civil War, these percentages decreased considerably, lowering cotton prices in the local market and thus rendering investments in textile manufacturing more attractive.

In considering the 'pre-conditions' for the development of this industry in Bahia, Stanley Stein (1957:20-21) has also pointed at "its excellent harbor and river system" for the handling of heavy machinery, as well as to the existence of both a "large slave population and reservoir of free labor to consume coarse cloth" and of "several excellent water-power sites." Thus, when the provincial government of Bahia passed legislation placing supplementary export taxes in the use of imported bagging for exports, the final incentive was given for merchants to become industrial entrepreneurs (SEPLANTEC 1978). Between 1857 and 1875, eight cotton mills were established in the province, most of them in Salvador and its

environs which thus came to house 11 of the 30 mills in operation in the country (Stein 1957:21). Among these mills was Fábrica São Braz.²¹

As was the case of the creation of most mills, the founders of Fábrica São Braz--Manoel Francisco de Almeida Brandão and his brother, Antonio Francisco Brandão Jr.—were merchants who decades earlier had trailed the same path that young Bernardo was then taking: from Lisbon, in Portugal, across the ocean to Bahia (Pinho 1960).²² For reasons which can only be guessed--i.e., the availability of water resources and woodlands in the area for the powering of the machinery, the presence of a safe harbor for transporting machinery and products, the relative proximity to Salvador, and the building of a railroad linking the suburbs to the city--they chose Plataforma as a location, then part of *Freguesia de São Bartolomeu de Pirajá*. They erected the mill at the foot of a hill on the waterfront overlooking the Bay of All Saints where it still stands today.²³

²¹ COTTON MILLS IN BAHIA (1875)

Year Created	Mills	Location
1834	Santo Antonio do Queimado	Salvador
1835	Nossa Senhora da Conceição	Salvador
1844	Todos os Santos	Valença
1857	São Carlos do Paraguassu	Cachoeira
1858	Modelo	Salvador
1860	Nossa Senhora do Amparo	Valença
1870	São Salvador	Salvador
1873	Nossa Senhora do Pilar	Salvador
1873	Nossa Senhora da Penha	Salvador
1875	São Braz	Salvador

Sources: Sampaio (1975:60); Pinho (1960:69).

²² Warren Dean has claimed that “the importer, and no one else, possessed all the requisites of a successful industrialist: access to credit, a knowledge of the market, and channels for the distribution of the finished product...” (1969:20-21).

It is reported that as most Bahian mills at that time, Fábrica São Braz combined all operations from spinning to finishing, producing coarse cloth geared primarily for the clothing of slaves and free laborers as well as for the bagging of sugar to be shipped abroad (Sampaio 1975).²⁴ Although there is no information as to the initial number of spindles and looms nor of the size of workforce at the time of creation of the factory, it is known that by 1882, Fábrica São Braz was the largest mill in Bahia. The factory employed 340 workers who operated 5.920 spindles and 151 looms (Comissão de Inquérito Industrial 1882). The available reports do not contain information regarding the nature and status of this workforce, nonetheless, it would not be unwarranted to speculate that it was largely 'free,' young, and female, and that it was submitted to the factory-workers' villa system.

The Emergence of 'Vilas Operárias'

In this respect, it should be noted that although the earliest mills in Brazil are known to have relied extensively on the use of slave labor (Branner 1885, Stein 1957, Dean 1969), this practice became increasingly costly from 1850 onward, particularly in Bahia. Until abolition, some mills would continue to use slaves, possibly rented from their owners, for the performance of the heaviest tasks such as in the unloading of the bales of

²³ At present, the term *freguesia* translates clientele or customers but in the period here discussed, it referred to a parish or community of parishioners.

cotton from the boats and in the '*batimento*', the process of beating and cleaning cotton in preparation for spinning.²⁵ However, stricter enforcement of existing regulations against the slave trade coupled with the growing demand for slaves in the coffee plantations in the south, had driven the market prices for slaves to soaring heights, militating against the extensive use of slave labor even in the sugar plantations of the Bahian Recôncavo Area.²⁶ These developments greatly contributed to the observed growth of the free population in the province in the decades after 1850. Between 1855 and 1872, for instance, years for which census data are available, the proportion of freemen rose from 68.9 to 88.4 per cent in Salvador and its immediate environs (Andrade 1988:29). Moreover, the majority of this population was essentially poor and destitute (Mattoso 1978:166), and thus 'free' in the double sense delineated by Marx (1977,I:714).

Nevertheless, despite the existence of this pool of 'free' laborers and lack of ample opportunities for gainful employment in the area, recruitment of workers for the mills was not easily accomplished. This was particularly pronounced when it came to the performance of the heaviest tasks involved in production. Hard, manual labor was generally associated

²⁴ Stanley Stein reports that until the late 1880s, "Brazilian mill owners seemed in general to have been content with this preliminary success, turning out gray cloth, bagging, and Negro cloth"(1957:66).

²⁵ Similar procedures were observed in the mills located in the southern United States. Even after the end of slavery, these mills remained segregated, excluding blacks from 'production jobs' (Hall et al 1987:66-67). On the practice of 'renting out' slave hands in Brazil, see, for example, Andrade (1988) and Mattoso (1988).

²⁶ The decrease of slave labor in the northeast prior to abolition has been discussed by Eisenberg (1974) and Galloway (1971).

with the slave condition, and thus rejected even by the poorest among freemen.²⁷ In addition, the long workday and the strict supervision imposed upon workers at the mills were certainly not very attractive to free laborers. As Stein well notes, "...the regime of constant toil associated with the slave-operated plantations undoubtedly produced among free laborers a repugnance for unbroken, supervised toil in any form" (1957:55).

This 'repugnance', of course, was not unwarranted. The use of slave-labor in the mills had imprinted a patriarchal attitude on the part of owners and management towards the workers (Stein 1957:51); many of the mills were operated under an authoritarian, disciplinary regime. How strongly the free population tried to escape from this condition may be measured by the constant calls for the passage of forced labor laws that were made by Northeastern planters as slave labor became scarce in the region.²⁸

To solve the problem of the shortages of labor, many mills contracted both women and men operatives from abroad, mostly from England and Germany, not only to train the local workforce in the use of the machinery, but also as regular labor hands (Stein 1957, Dean 1969).²⁹

²⁷ Whenever possible, freedmen acquired slaves of their own (Oliveira 1988, Mattoso 1978).

²⁸ Peter Eisenberg notes that in Pernambuco, for instance, the suggestion made by planters that legislation be passed "...to require free people to work without recompense," found popular support (1974:196). Eisenberg also reports that planters called for "a law which makes work obligatory," demanding that "a severe police regime be imposed to which all individuals without trade or craft should be subjected" (*ibid*). On legislation prohibiting vagrancy and squatting, see also Dean (1971).

Another 'solution' encountered by the earlier entrepreneurs to secure a supply of laborers as well as 'domesticate' them to a factory regime (Rago 1985), was the use of children taken from orphanages, as in the case of Fábrica Todos os Santos in the city of Valença.³⁰

Brazilian elites, as a whole, viewed the working classes as lazy, inefficient, and in need of guidance (Stein 1957:56), thus the 'solution' encountered by Fábrica Todos os Santos was actually not an uncommon one, at least up to the late 1860s.³¹ Many other early mills also recruited workers "from local orphanages, foundling homes, and poorhouses, and from the unemployed urban classes of the cities of the littoral," providing them with housing, clothing, meals and instruction (Stein 1957:53). As such, entrepreneurs built for themselves a reputation of 'benefactors' of the poor for, as a group of entrepreneurs so claimed, "...there can be no undertaking more philanthropic and humane than to find permanent and

²⁹ Mills in the southern states were noted for contracting foreigners as spinners and weavers. According to Stein, one such mill employed "seventeen Brazilians (fifteen men, two women), five Italians (three men and two women), two Englishmen, two Americans, and eighty-three Germans (forty-three men, forty women)" (1957:51).

³⁰ Established in 1844 and noted at the time for employing an exclusively 'free' labor force, Fábrica Todos os Santos recruited young women and girls from the poorest families and boys from local orphanages. The youngsters were housed in a company owned boarding house adjacent to the mill, however, the youngsters at Todos os Santos were not free to come and go. After tending to spindles and looms from dawn to 7:30 PM with short breaks for lunch and dinner, they still had to attend classes until 10 PM. Regarded as a 'model' mill, Fábrica Todos os Santos was visited by Emperor D. Pedro II in 1859. It was reported that he spoke highly of the system in operation there, observing that "...besides learning their ABC's, the youngsters also had music and dancing classes, were properly tended by a chaplain and a medical doctor, and ate in a nice cafeteria where they enjoyed good and generous meals" (*in* Oliveira 1985:50, my translation). The owners were also praised by the President of the Province of Bahia who noted that when first arriving at the mill the youngsters were often "lazy and insubordinate but in time become good, and can be favorably compared with the best in Europe" (*in* Oliveira 1985:51, my translation).

suitable employment for this large and ever-increasing portion of the community" (in Stein 1957:54). As the 'capitalist Pharisees' of England who, as Marx (1977, I:354-355) noted, called for the employment of children so as to save them from a "physically and morally polluted situation," so too Brazilian early industrialists made use of paternalism to serve their interests.

These 'benefactors' obviously benefited more from these arrangements than their 'protégés' since the latter received no wages for their toils. Only the more qualified workers received regular wages, while the others, such as the youngsters at Fábrica Todos os Santos, received in exchange room, board, and an 'education.' It was only after 1866 that mentions as to wage payments to all employees in a mill began to appear (Stein 1957:62-63). Nevertheless, by the mid-1870s when Fábrica São Braz was created, wage-labor extensive to the majority of workers if not to all, was a practice being already followed by a number of mills.

However, the wages were to be notably low, particularly in the mills in the Northeast. In 1883, for instance, daily wages in the mills in Rio de Janeiro varied from the equivalent of US\$.43 to US\$3.87, while those in the mills of Bahia remained between US\$.15 to US\$2.20 (Stein 1957:63). More importantly, regardless of the region, mills paid higher wages to men than to women and children on account of their supposed dependency on a male bread-winner (Pena 1981; Moura 1982).

³¹ On the ideas held by Brazilian industrial entrepreneurs as to the 'nature' of the labor force, see also Carone (1977) and Rago (1985).

Here, then, the gender divide intrinsic to patriarchal family morality came in handy for industrial entrepreneurs. If on the one hand they would break with it by taking women away from 'domesticity', on the other, they exploited this domesticity by paying women lower wages. Not surprisingly, then, in a situation of labor scarcity, the institution of wage-labor in the mills increased the demand for women (and children) as labor hands. Thus, by 1872, the year in which the first national census was conducted, women already represented 76% of all factory workers in Brazil, and 95% of all of those employed as textile workers, most of them being 'free' laborers and Brazilian born (Directoria Geral de Estatística in Hahner 1986:19).

Note should be made that the subordination of women in the family would be sustained in the work sphere as they occupied the lowest positions in the mill hierarchy, always being under the supervision of men (Pena 1981:108). As shall be seen, this gender divide was maintained at Fábrica São Braz throughout its entire existence.

It is also important to observe that with the institution of wage-labor extensive to the majority of workers, mills then became true 'capitalist enterprises,' in the sense that they then began to buy labor-power as a commodity in exchange for wages. This would be accompanied by the transfer of the costs of reproduction of the workers to the workers themselves. Mills which paid workers regular wages no longer provided them with room and board as the earlier mills had. This did not mean that

the provision of housing facilities for workers would be entirely discarded. On the contrary, it continued to be a fundamental means of labor recruitment for the mills, particularly to those which had been built in locations away from population centers. However, this would now come on a different basis, that is, through the development of *vilas operárias*. Companies offered housing for workers and their families in exchange for monthly rents, while food could be purchased at company stores, the amount for both rent and food purchases being discounted from workers' wages.

Inspired by the "English Plan," that is, in the Tenant Houses of British factories, *vilas operárias* began to appear in Brazil towards the beginning of the last quarter of the 19th century. At first, such as in the case of the Petropolitana mill in Rio de Janeiro, houses were offered only for the master weavers and spinners contracted abroad (Stein 1957:57). By the end of the century, however, many mills throughout Brazil had extended this 'privilege' to most of their workers (Blay 1985). To do so, entrepreneurs began to purchase large extensions of land around their mills, concentrating in this manner not only the ownership of the means of production with the mills, but also landed property. As such, these entrepreneurs assumed a dual-role in relation to the workers, profiting through a dual mechanism of capital accumulation which granted them greater control over the workforce. On the one hand, the landlord/employer would extract both surplus value as well as 'rent' from his tenant/workers, often directly from their wages. On the other, he could

exert his rights as landlord/proprietor as a means of pressuring tenant/workers into a more subservient role in their negotiations (Blay 1980, 1985).

It is this particular meshing of social relations between industrial capitalists and their workers that has led Leite Lopes (1988:15-22) in using the expression 'bourgeois serfdom' (*servidão burguesa*); that is, a form of social relations in which the worker, in contrast to the 'classic proletarian' of the industrial revolution, was only partially 'free'. According to Leite Lopes, this form of social relations characterized the *fábrica-vila operária* system (mill-workers' village system), in that capitalists exerted control not only in the workplace but also over the sphere of reproduction. This control did not emanate solely from economic obligations spelled out in work/rent contracts, nor was it always imposed by means of force. It rested equally on a system of non-written rights and obligations between socially unequal parties mutually recognized by patrons and workers alike, that is to say, by means of paternalistic dominance. In this sense, the emergence of *vilas operárias*, did not implicate a break from but instead a continuation, even if on a different basis, of the 'patriarchal capitalism' of the earlier mills.

Historically, the emergence of *vilas operárias* organized in turn of the provision of company housing for families instead of dormitories for individual workers, coincides with the growing importance of the employment of women and children as well as of women with children in

the mills. This, of course, was not a mere coincidence. As Maria Rosilene

B. Alvim delineates:

In a situation of '*vila operária textil*', incentive for the hiring of female labor comes in a double manner. On the one hand, the proximity of the workplace to the place of residence will make it easier for women with children to work to the extent that they will not consume too much time between leaving the domestic unit to go to the industrial unit and vice-versa. On the other hand, this alternative of employment for women is guaranteed by the importance of female labor demanded by the textile factories (1979:100, my translation).

By the same token, the housing of families in *vilas operárias* also ensured the recruitment of children into the factories as well as the formation of a local pool of labor on a long-term basis through the exertion of social control over the workforce. By restricting access to housing only to factory employees and by keeping the cost of rent lower than that charged elsewhere, companies could tie workers to their jobs with greater effectiveness than paying higher wages would have. For the worker, a change of jobs would also mean having to find a new home for the family, a task which in the case of Salvador and environs was not easily accomplished.³²

Despite the lack of precise information regarding when Fábrica São Braz built the first houses for the workers, it is reasonable to believe that this was a very early development in the history of the mill. Data from the 1872 census indicate that, like all the suburbs, Freguesia Pirajá where Plataforma was located was still mainly rural, the population being considerably dispersed with small nucleation occurring only around the

³² See Santos (1992) for a discussion of housing shortages in Salvador during the period outlined.

main parishes (Mattoso 1978:116), thus not offering any significant local pool of labor hands for employment in the mill. At the same time, access to the area was mainly by small boats and rail which still did not run on schedule, making it almost impossible for workers to commute from the center of Salvador all the way to the Plataforma on a regular, daily basis. Nevertheless, by 1888, Plataforma was described as a "prosperous neighborhood ... almost completely inhabited by the people employed in the textile, shoes and soap factories of the industrial entrepreneur and great '*negociante capitalista*', Antonio Francisco Brandão..." (Aguiar, D. 1979:303-304, my translation).

The provision of housing for workers was thus among the earliest labor policies established at Fábrica São Braz. Furthermore, the type of housing provided indicates a preference for the employment of entire families, particularly women and children. Instead of the dormitories for workers erected by the early textile factories such as Fábrica Todos os Santos in Valença (Oliveira 1982, Stein 1957), the owners of Fábrica São Braz followed the pattern set by English factory-villages, opting instead for the construction of small houses for workers and their families.

From the very beginning, Fábrica São Braz was operated on the basis of a factory-workers' villa system and on the employment of women and children. And nearly five decades later when Bernardo Martins Catharino took over the factory, this system was not only still in operation, but would in fact allow him to keep this mill rolling throughout the decades of the gradual decline of the cotton manufacture industry in Bahia.

Converging Stories (1891-1932)

Bernardo Martins Catharino built his fortune and became owner of Fábrica São Braz by threading precisely on the misfortunes of the first generation of Bahian industrial entrepreneurs. Soon after his arrival in Bahia, in fact, young Bernardo would find himself dealing in the textile business. However, for reasons which still remain unknown, he landed but did not stay for long in Salvador, settling instead in Feira de Santana, a city 80 miles west into the interior. Possibly through arrangements made before his departure from Portugal, he found placement as an all-around apprentice with Moraes & Cia., one of the main importers and fabric dealers in Bahia.³³ Created in 1866 by José Joaquim de Moraes, Henrique José Fernandes, and Joaquim José da Costa (Pinho 1960:66), all of them of Portuguese extraction, Moraes & Cia. was a well-established firm in Salvador which had branched out to neighboring Feira de Santana as well.

Young Bernardo's first years in Bahia were difficult and demanding. As it was then customary among the merchant classes, as an apprentice Bernardo was taken in as part of the manager's household, living in a back room at *Casa Moraes*. This meant that he was not only subject to the constant authoritarian tutelage and whims and wills of his patron, but also forced to face a long workday, doubling as store clerk and cleaning and maintenance hand. As Bernardo Catharino would tell his grandchildren

³³ Hahner (1986) and Santos (1974) report that it was not uncommon for Portuguese merchants to take in poor relatives, boys or young men, as apprentices.

many years later, as an apprentice at Casa Moraes his days started very early, almost at dawn, as he was expected to sweep the entire store before it was opened to the public for its daily business. But he never resented starting at the bottom; he rather took pride in having to work his way up in the firm, eventually becoming the major stockholder. Indeed, as Castro Rebelo observed in reference to Luis Tarquínio, the founder of *Companhia Empório Industrial*, and noted social reformer who had similar humble beginnings: given the state of the arts of the trade at the time, starting as a clerk was "the best, or even perhaps the only way to prepare the future businessmen: the apprenticeship, the indispensable school" (in Pinho 1960:41-42, my translation).

Tending to customers, caring for the stock, and eventually balancing the books at *Casa Moraes*, Bernardo developed not only a keen eye and feel for fabrics, but also the necessary shrewdness that makes a successful businessman. Though he had no formal education and never dedicated himself to 'book learning' to amass the knowledge and literary skills of his contemporary Luis Tarquínio, he was good with figures and learned how to take advantage of a good deal when he saw one. Slowly but surely he started to move up the ladder in *Casa Moraes*. By 1890, fifteen years after his arrival in Brazil, Bernardo succeeded in not only marrying D.Ursula Moraes, his patron's daughter, but also in becoming a partner of Moraes & Cia. and moving to Salvador to take over the firm.

While Bernardo was in Feira de Santana learning to become a merchant and climbing up in life, Bahia began to embark in a downward economic spiral from which it has only recently escaped. Signs of the bad times to come were already given in 1873, when a severe shortage of cash led the *Associação Comercial da Bahia* (Bahia's Commercial Association) to address the governor of the province in a lengthy memorial, with warnings of the coming of an impending crash. The members of *Associação Comercial* were not wrong in their worries; in the following year, the crisis came to a climax when the banks exhausted all their funds.³⁴

As could be expected, the crisis had deep repercussions in the emergent industrial activities. After 1875, the pace at which mills were being created in Bahia began to slow down considerably. Whereas between 1866 and 1875 six new mills had been created, only one more appeared during the following decade (Table 3.1). At the same time, several mills were being put into operation in the southern provinces, Minas Gerais in particular, such that by 1885 it had already surpassed Bahia as the major cotton manufacturing center in the country. A position which soon was to be taken over by Rio de Janeiro, and later by the neighboring state of São Paulo (Stein 1957).

³⁴ As Azevedo & Lins relate: "In April of 1874 the economic crisis which in a certain way was an episode of the [process of] decapitalization of Bahia, and which resulted from the definite ruin of the sugarcane economy, hit its climax. From then on, except for temporary and illusive remissions, followed [the period of] the economic and political decline of the province" (1969:159, my translation).

TABLE 3.1
Geographic Distribution of Textile Mills
in Brazilian Provinces
1866, 1875, 1880, 1885

Provinces	1866	1875	1880	1885
Bahia	05	11	12	12
Rio de Janeiro	02	05	05	11
Minas Gerais	01	05	06	13
Alagoas	01	01	01	01
São Paulo	-	06	09	09
Maranhão	-	01	01	01
Pernambuco	-	01	01	01
Total	09	30	45	48

Source: Stein (1959:62); Azevedo & Lins (1969:178)

As such, by 1890, when Bernardo moved to Salvador with his family, Bahia had not only lost its leading position in textile production to the southern provinces, but was also experiencing the aftershocks of two major events which had seriously affected the local economy as final blows. Two years earlier, in May of 1888, during emperor D. Peter II's prolonged visit to Portugal, Princess Izabel, his daughter and acting ruler, had signed *Lei Áurea* (the 'Dawn Law) which abolished slavery by setting all slaves free. Though long overdue-- Brazil was the last country in the Western hemisphere to abolish slavery--this act promoted an economic chaos which

added to the mounting discontent against the imperial regime. In November 15, 1889, this regime was to be overthrown and a presidential republic established.

By and large, neither of these events had come as a total surprise. On the contrary, Republican aspirations had been in the air at least since 1822 when Brazil was declared independent from Portugal, and the signing of *Lei Áurea* was but the final act of a long battle marked by gradual victories on the side of abolitionists. Besides, in the Northeast Region, sugar planters caught in the double-bind of falling sugar prices in the international market coupled with the rising costs of slaves, had been forced to gradually rely on other forms of labor long before abolition. Nevertheless, the end of slavery significantly aggravated the crisis already at work in the sugar economy, with unavoidable spillover effects upon the textile industry.

Although early industrialization in Bahia had thrived on the problems and pitfalls of sugar planters, sugar had remained the province's leading export product, and still shaped the contours of its economic life. Up to that time, most textile factories produced lower quality fibers and cloth, geared mainly to the manufacture of sacks for the transport of sugar as well as for the clothing of slaves. Besides, industrial and commercial capital were closely linked as most factories were owned by local merchants and the latter were often the middlemen between sugar planters and the international market. Commercial capital dominated all sectors of the economy but it too was hit by the crisis, particularly as the interruption

of currency emission with the proclamation of republic, brought a severe cash shortage which lasted until 1891 when provisions for new emissions were made (Azevedo & Lins 1969:186).

Few importers escaped from being scorched if not almost totally ruined with the crisis. Even the more stable firms such as Moraes & Cia. found themselves in a bind of sorts such that Bernardo's first years in Salvador were dedicated to keeping it from going bankrupt. That he succeeded is demonstrated by the fact that a few years after coming to Salvador, Bernardo had already moved his family from a somewhat modest house in a middle-class neighborhood, to a stately mansion he had built in *Rua da Graça*, in the parish of *Vitória* where the richest families then lived.

Soon after coming to power, the republican government, keen to the problems created by the end of slavery and the proclamation of a republic, sought to facilitate the availability of credit and to break the pre-existing legal barriers for import/export transactions. In addition, with the promulgation of a new constitution, it became easier for companies to be organized as *sociedades anônimas* (joint-stock firms). They offered less risks for investing since in these firms investors were only responsible for debts incurred up to the value of the stocks emitted. As Katia Mattoso (1992:496) well noted, the new *sociedades anônimas* were capitalist enterprises 'per excellence' in that they did not have any responsibility for social debts incurred, responding only for the social capital constituted by investments and profits. This encouraged joint ventures, leading to the merger of different enterprises under one large company, a practice which

temporarily reinvigorated Salvador's shaken economy. In 1891, more than thirty such companies were organized ranging from industrial manufactures to mining and agro-industrial operations (Azevedo & Lins 1969:187).

TABLE 3.2
Textile Companies in Bahia
1891

Companies	Year Created	Mills
Progresso Industrial	1891	São Braz Paraguassu Pilar (Bomfim) São João
União Fabril	1891	Queimado Conceição São Carlos Modelo São Salvador N. S. da Penha
Empório Industrial	1891	Empório Industrial
Fabril dos Fiais	1891	Fiais
Valença Industrial	1886	N. S. Amparo Todos os Santos

Sources: Sampaio (1975); Oliveira, W. (1985)

As delineated in Table 3.2, within the area of cotton textile production, four new companies were to be created in that year, two of them through the merger of previously existing factories. Among the latter figured *Companhia Progresso Industrial da Bahia*. Created by Antonio Francisco Brandão, Jr., one of the owners of Fábrica São Braz, the new company incorporated along Fábrica Progresso, Nossa Senhora do Pilar, Paraguassu and São João, counting with investments from *Companhia Melhoramentos da Bahia* and *Banco Emissor da Bahia* (Pinho 1960:69). Antonio Francisco Brandão Jr., the major stockholder, was elected as its first

director. In 1893, Companhia Progresso Industrial listed among its assets 208 looms and 7.997 spindles, and reported a work force of a total of 500 employees for all of its four factory outlets (Sampaio 1975:66). União Fabril, the other major company created by similar means, incorporated six of the remaining textile factories, grossing through their fusion a total of 358 looms and 15.885 spindles, while employing at the time 805 workers (Sampaio 1975:67).

Despite the opening up of two new cotton mills--the Fabril dos Fiais and Luis Tarquínio's Empório Industrial do Nordeste (popularly known as the factory of 'Boa Viagem'), both located in Salvador--the textile industry in Bahia had already suffered an earlier loss in 1876, with the closing of Fábrica Todos os Santos, the most important textile mill in the country during the imperial regime (Oliveira 1985). Furthermore, faced with mounting debts, Nossa Senhora do Amparo, the other mill operating in Valença, had also slowed down production. In 1877, after the death of Antonio Francisco de Lacerda, its former proprietor, it was sold at a considerable loss by his heirs to Moreira, Oliveira & Cia. In 1887, this company also bought out the remains of Fábrica Todos os Santos, transferring its looms to Nossa Senhora do Amparo, thus creating Valença Industrial which, in addition to the mills, claimed property to other minor enterprises in the area (Oliveira 1985).

Though information regarding the specific steps leading to the creation of Progresso Industrial and União Fabril is not available, it is certainly not unwarranted to believe that their emergence equally involved

the difficulties then faced by mills in keeping up production with a margin of profit. With the abolition of slavery and the disorganization of the agricultural sector that followed, cotton production slowed down thus aggravating a problem already in course. While cotton production in the province had been sufficient to allow the earlier sprouting of textile mills, it could no longer respond to the demands of the local industry, forcing factory owners to import from neighboring states. This situation worsened such that, by the turn of the century, "...at least one third of the 4.500 tons of cotton worked in the mills was imported from Sergipe, Alagoas and Pernambuco" (Azevedo & Lins 1969:192, my translation), considerably raising the costs of production. This, in turn, precluded investments towards the modernization of the equipment which could cut the costs of production as well as improve the quality of the product. As a result, the fibers and cloth produced in Bahia continued to be of lower quality and thus unable to compete with foreign imports or even with what was being produced in the southern states for a slice of their markets.

Although cotton manufacturing then involved relatively simple techniques and fairly moderate capital requirements, obsolete machinery could easily put a mill out of business.³⁵ Most mills in Bahia had been created before major advancements had taken place in the development of

³⁵ As stated in a United States Senate Report concerning obsolescence in the textile industry: "For most of the staple cotton fabrics the margin between loss and gain is so narrow that obsolete machinery or methods can be tolerated only within narrow limits if the company is to survive. It is almost true to day that for mills making standard fabrics at least, a plant must be reasonably up to date if it is to exist at all as a going concern. As soon as a machine begins to decline appreciably in its efficiency it is either on the way to the scrapheap or to complete overhauling" (*in* Wolfein 1968:69).

cotton manufacture machinery. Though the 'ring' spindle, which proved to be significantly superior to the 'mule' in efficiency had been developing in 1828, it was not completely perfected until 1871 (Wolfbein 1968:71). Likewise, automatic looms such as the Northrop, which facilitated the weaving process allowing a significant increase in the number of looms that an operative could tend, were only placed in the market in 1895 (Smith 1944:100-101).

Most of the mills in the southern states, created as they were after improved machinery had been marketed, profited from the greater efficiency which the new machines offered. Those in Bahia, for the most part, used equipment which was not only obsolete, but also old. In the absence of a native Brazilian cotton machinery industry and of skilled mechanics and/or engineers who could adapt and update the existing equipment, it was necessary to import from Europe or from New England, as well as to hire foreign technicians to help in the installment and operation of the equipment and the training of personnel. This required a considerable capital investment which most mill owners were unwilling and incapable of, particularly because of the little confidence in industry as opposed to the more certain and immediate returns of import/export transactions upon which they had built their own fortunes. Not surprisingly, when faced with the shortage of raw materials, poor returns, and the need to invest sizable amounts to purchase new machinery, mill owners were only too willing to cut their losses by forming *sociedades anônimas* or, more commonly, sell out their mills even if at a loss.

Unfortunately, this situation did not improve significantly during the first two decades of the Republic. By 1904, though 141 manufactures were officially registered in the State, the number of mills in operation had fallen to twelve (Azevedo & Lins 1969). The revitalization of the sugar industry through governmental support for the creation of sugar refining plants (*usinas*), had attracted the attention of entrepreneurs, many of whom were happy to pass on the stocks they had tied in the textile companies to invest in something more promising. Cocoa exports were also on the rise at the time and the prices paid in the international market attractive. So too were the prices for latex rubber which, in 1912, reached an overall high, leading many entrepreneurs to buy and save, with an eye for future profits. However, in the following year, these prices fell significantly causing many bankruptcies and severely curtailing banking and commercial activities in the local economy. Thus, whereas industries in the southern states expanded during World War I, benefiting from the slowdown in production in Europe, those in Bahia lacked the necessary capital and interest to modernize their equipment and thus increase and/or improve production. Worse still, by the end of the war, instead of having conquered new markets, Bahia industries had sadly witnessed manufactured products from the southern states invade and gradually rob them of their own market.

Nevertheless, it is certain that not all entrepreneurs in Bahia were to be at the losing end. It is known that the misfortune of some is often the fortune of others and Bernardo Martins Catharino was to be among the latter. By staying out of the riskier ventures in which many had embarked,

he not only was able to keep Moraes & Cia. afloat as the economic situation in Bahia took a turn for the worse, but was also in a position to buy out stocks from the textile companies at rock-bottom prices or, as it was often the case, to receive them as payment from his debtors. In this manner, as the 1920s unfolded, he was able to amass a large portfolio--enough, in fact, to become president of Companhia Progresso Industrial da Bahia, to which Fábrica São Braz then belonged. By the end of the decade, he was also president of Companhia União Fabril and thus in the position to propose a merger of the two companies. In November 22, 1932, Companhia Progresso e União Fabril da Bahia, S/A., was created and soon after Bernardo Martins Catharino was elected president, a post he was to occupy until his death, in 1944.

As the major stockholder of Moraes & Cia. and of Companhia Progresso e União Fabril, Comendador Catharino thus came to control both sides of the textile business in Salvador, that is to say, textile production and commercialization. Nevertheless, from the 1920s onward, the cotton manufacture industry in Bahia entered a period of 'involution', severely intensified by the crisis engendered by the 1929 crash. In the midst of this crisis, several mills were forced to close down (Tavares 1966), as is revealed in the inventory list of the assets of both União Fabril and Progresso Industrial, compiled for the consolidation of the merger in 1932. Of the six mills that had been incorporated into União Fabril in 1891, only four were listed in the inventory and two of them—Fábricas Nossa Senhora da Penha and Santo Antonio do Queimado--as being completely

inactive. Companhia Progresso Industrial fared somewhat better with four mills in operation, Fábrica São Braz being the largest and better equipped among them all.

TABLE 3.3
Companhia Progresso and União Fabril da Bahia
Mills - 1932

Mills	Situation	Location	Products
Progresso			
São Braz	operating	Plataforma (SA)*	yarn & cloth
Bomfim	operating	Bomfim (SA)	cloth
Paraguassu	operating	Largo Papagaio(SA)	cloth
São João	operating	Cachoeira	yarn
União Fabril			
Queimado	inactive	Sto. Antonio (SA)	
Conceição	operating	Baixa do Fiscal(SA)	cloth
S. Salvador	operating	Fonte Nova (SA)	cloth
N. S. Penha	inactive	Penha (SA)	

S A = Salvador

Source: Cia. Progresso e União Fabril, Livro de Atas, 11/28/32.

However, the relation of the territorial property owned by this company remained impressive. Just in the area presently known as Subúrbio Ferroviário where Plataforma is located, Progresso Industrial claimed property "to a large extent of land with a total area of 9.144.250 ms², that is, 2.099 'tarefas' and 180 square 'braças', comprehending Plataforma, São Joao, São Braz, Cabrito, Cobre, Ilha Amarela, Oratório,

Casado, Dendezeiro and Outeiro...."³⁶ Furthermore, in addition to the building installations of Fábrica São Braz, the elementary school 'Dona Ursula Catharino', and other factory related buildings, Companhia Progresso Industrial owned more than 300 houses in Plataforma, rented out to factory employees.

Let it be noted that the property in the Subúrbio Ferroviário area, as extensive as it was, represented only one-third of the territorial property and building installations over which the newly created company had control. Therefore, it is not surprising that throughout the 1930s and 40s, Bernardo Martins Catharino was considered to be one of the richest men in Bahia, a status which earned him the title of *comendador*.³⁷ And it is also understandable why Companhia Progresso e União Fabril would in time neglect its industrial productive activities in favor of investments in land speculation and the administration of its vast real estate as true capitalist 'rentiers'.

But this shift of emphasis on the part of the firm--which began to be stirred already under Comendador Catharino's term--must also be seen in light of the increased difficulties faced by the Bahian cotton textile

³⁶ Companhia Progresso e União Fabril da Bahia, Livro de Atas, "Acta da primeira assembléa geral dos subscriptores da Companhia Progresso e União Fabril da Bahia S/A, realizada em 28 de novembro de 1932."

³⁷ *Comendador* pertains to a man with the title of commander in a charitable or honorific order. On 'comendadores' in Bahia see Santos (1977).

industry in the decades that followed.³⁸ Indeed, despite the installation of the Vargas regime in 1930 as a supposed 'solution' to the crisis, and in spite of the incentives that the *Estado Novo* regime (New State) would bring to the development of the Brazilian national industry, the process of decline of the cotton textile industry in the state was not reverted (Tavares 1965).³⁹ On the one hand, the protective policies enacted by Vargas in favor of the national industry, contradictorily made the importation of machinery and materials needed by cotton manufacturers very difficult. Consequently, machinery in the northeast was comparatively more obsolete.⁴⁰ On the other hand, better organized and numerically superior than their counterparts in the Northeast, entrepreneurs from the South were in a more advantageous position to fight for their interests (Stein 1957, Dean 1969). Thus, they were able to press for the elimination of the pre-existing interstate trade tariffs, and eventually succeed in invading Northeastern markets with their products.

During Comendador Catharino's term as head of the company, little was invested in the modernization of the mills. It was only in the early 1950s, in fact, some years after his death, that Companhia. Progresso e União Fabril made major efforts to update their equipment. For that

³⁸ In 1935, Bernardo Catharino built a hotel in the center of Salvador, noted to be “the most important building in Bahia for over twenty years, the highest, the most luxurious, the best in comfort” (**A Tarde** 10/22/94, my translation).

³⁹ On the incentives given to the development of industry during the Getulio Vargas regime see Dinis (1978).

⁴⁰ Stein (1957:103) observes that in 1950, half of all machinery operating in textile mills in Brazil were at least forty years old, dating from before World War I.

purpose, production was concentrated at Fábrica São Braz and Paraguassu, and all the other factories deactivated. In 1959, Fábrica São Braz was also closed down for reorganization and all the employees dismissed. Although it reopened one year later, with new equipment, it employed less than half of its former workforce. Moreover, as it will be discussed in greater detail in Part IV of this dissertation, the nature of the relations between factory and community would be significantly different from those that marked the era of Comendador Catharino, and through the decade following his death.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Era and Legacy of Bernardo Martins Catharino

(1930-1944)

Introduction

The era of Comendador Catharino demands special attention in this study not only for its relevant place in the history of the factory or to that of the cotton manufacture industry in Bahia as a whole, but especially because of its place and significance in the social memory of former factory workers and long-time Plataforma residents.

Indeed, whether delving into the past--both their own and that of Plataforma and the factory--or talking about everyday life in Plataforma today, the old-timers often evoke in their memories the era of Comendador Catharino as a time of 'community and plentiness'. It was then that "Plataforma really had value," some will say, it was in those days that the "company really cared for the workers and the neighborhood," others will add. Jobs were plenty and easy to get as D.Delana declared: "in those days, we would go to the factory, give our name, and that was it. The next day you would go to work like everybody else here." And "everybody were friends, everybody worked in the factory," D. Luciana has echoed.

In their recollections there seems to be no place for life in Plataforma before the factory and no history of the factory before Comendador Catharino. Even if 'Almeida Brandão', the founder of Fábrica São Braz has been honored figuring as the name of one of the streets in

the neighborhood, few are the residents who can readily answer why the street had been thus named, or associate the name in any way to the factory.

For all most present residents know or seem to remember, Fábrica São Braz has always belonged to the Catharino family. Some will even add that "os Catharino," as they are locally referred, "own this entire place," meaning the whole neighborhood. But when and how they came to 'own' it are questions which even those more closely involved in the present fight against União Fabril over the ownership of the lots in Plataforma are unable to answer. And let it be noted: in Plataforma, it is the name 'Catharino' and not União Fabril which is more often identified with ownership of Fábrica São Braz and the questions over land.

Far from being a misconception on the part of Plataforma residents as to the inner working of the factory's withholding corporation, this identification speaks closer to the de facto control of the Catharino's overall the company's assets and operations. This should not come as a surprise: family control and with it, the transposition of traditional familial authority to the factory system has been a widespread and well documented feature of early industrialization (Joyce 1980, Dublin 1975, Lown 1990). As observed in New England (Wolfbein 1968:92), for instance, so too in Bahia the early mills were established by families "which had made their fortunes as merchants" and which made of their new enterprise still a "family affair." Even when these enterprises changed hands or were incorporated into *sociedades anônimas* (anonymous societies), they merely went from the

control of one family to another. This was the case of the incorporation of Fábrica São Braz into Progresso Industrial as well as of the merger of the latter with União Fabril.

Although it was formed as a *sociedade anônima*, Companhia Progresso & União Fabril has been, right from the onset, a family affair--a Catharino family affair. This may be confirmed by a mere glance at the register of proceedings from the annual stockholders' meetings. Among those present or otherwise represented in the meetings--from the charter one, held in November, 1932, to the last one, in April, 1994--close to 75% bear either the Catharino or Moraes surname, while others, upon investigation, will be found to be also related to Comendador Catharino.

Family control of the corporation has been also asserted in the line of succession of the chief executive post. Following Comendador Catharino's death in 1944, the post of president-director passed on to his eldest son, Alberto, and after his death, to Luiz, his nephew, who will probably be succeeded by one of his sons. In addition, the Catharino's have invariably held a majority position in the company's Conselho Fiscal, the advisory board, the highest governing body of the company.

Of course, family control of the corporation has not always meant that harmony presided at the management level. Under closer scrutiny, the proceedings from the stockholders annual meetings would probably reveal not only a dwindling of the company's assets throughout the decades, but

also hints of internal disputes within the advisory board possibly as a result of family feuds among heirs for control of the company.⁴¹

However, nothing in those lines seems to have transpired during Comendador Catharino's years. On the contrary, those who knew him still remember that as head of the company and of his large extended family, Comendador Catharino acted equally with unquestionable patriarchal authority, leaving little room for open dissent under his wings. This was sustained by the by-laws of the company which granted to the director-president almost total autonomy over the operations of the firm, and further reinforced by the fact that one of his sons and a son-in-law filled two of the three seats in the advisory board. But more importantly, during Comendador Catharino's era, this system of traditional familial relationships prevailed not only as the central organizing principle at the level of management of the company but also for the operations and workplace relations in the mills and by extension, between the company and Plataforma residents as a whole.

Indeed, it is not uncommon to hear long-time residents referring to their neighborhood in those days as a 'big family', who had a 'true father' in Comendador Catharino. Reminiscing about Plataforma in the days of her youth, for instance, a former factory operative emphatically exclaimed:

How beautiful it was in the factory ! It was the best time that we lived. So good! Whoever speaks badly of the company does not have a heart. The

⁴¹ The proceedings from the 1975 meeting, for instance, register a discussion between two members of the Board of Directors over the alleged mishandling of the company's assets. That such discussions were not uncommon may be gathered by the request of one of the parties involved that the *ad-hoc* secretary record their precise words in the proceedings.

Comendador and the factory were the Father and Mother of Plataforma. If today I have my own home, I owe it to God and to the Catharinos.... I miss him and the factory. If the Catharino's factory reopened, I would go back to work just to be there. I am too old to run the machines, but I would work there even if to wash latrines.

Even those who today staunchly proclaim that they "want nothing to do with the Catharino's," refer to 'old man Catharino' or *o Catharino Velho*, as a "very kind man," who really "liked his workers." "He had a lot of consideration for his operários rios," recalled D. Delana who spent close to three decades as a factory operative. "When we needed money, and advance in our wages, he would never deny it," remembers D. Josefa, who gave twenty-four years of her life to the factory. Like them, many other former workers have equated everything that was good about the factory with Comendador Catharino's era, seeing his death as the end of the times of plentiness and concern for the workers:

During his time, there was the pharmacy, there was the nursery, and everything was good. After they took over (the relatives of the owner), they did away with everything. Everything was done away with when he died. No more cooperative, no more loaning money to us, nothing" (D. Zenaide).

The former owner of this factory was a very good man. On Tuesdays, we had the cooperative, we had everything there. But he (the owner) died, then came his grandsons, his relatives, and everything was gone (D. Josefa).

If as Leite Lopes (1988:32, my translation) suggests, "the vigor of a form of domination can be assessed by the degree it is interiorized by the dominated group," then the discourse of former employees of Fábrica São Braz bears evidence of the strength of paternalism as a form of domination. For it is, in fact, the legacy of paternalistic dominance,

carefully cemented by Comendador Catharino, that still hinges on the relationships between the company and Plataforma residents.

Paternalistic Dominance

Although rooted in pre-industrial land property relations, in Brazil as elsewhere paternalistic dominance not only survived the transition from the 'fields to the mills,' but is also known to have served the interests of the first generations of industrialists in different parts of the world as a means of legitimizing the new social order (Lown 1990, Parr 1990, Reid 1985). As Warren Dean has noted:

The tendencies towards paternalism are supposed to be very strong in the early stages of industrialization, since neither the worker nor the entrepreneur has cast off the reciprocal longing for security and veneration that is peculiar to traditional society (1969:156).

In the case of Comendador Catharino, it would be fair to say that the exercise of paternalism was a matter of "both inclination and necessity."⁴² It is well to recall that his first two decades in Brazil were lived within the realms of a patriarchal slave society. Although by the time of his arrival the decline of the sugar economy had significantly undermined the power of *senhores de engenho* (sugar mill) owners and with it, the foundations of the patriarchal family of the *Casa Grande* (manor) described by Gilberto Freyre (1939), traditional familial relationships were

⁴² I have borrowed this expression from Joy Parr (1990:34). She uses it to describe the owner of a mill in Ontario, Canada.

still predominant among the Bahian elites well into the present century (Borges 1992).

As in preindustrial Europe, during the colonial era in Brazil 'families' and 'households' were not coterminous as assumed to be today in that family-households included not only the immediate members of the family, that is, wife and children, but also slaves, aggregates and a different array of residents, all of whom came under the control and authority of the 'patriarch'. In return, he was responsible for providing for them, such that the relationship between the father/master and the other members of the household were both familial and economic.

Slaves were part of the patrimony passed on to the heirs and expected to be always subservient to their masters. However, the authority of the *senhor de engenho*, the head of the household over the 'free' population living on the sugar plantations was sustained through paternalist dominance, that is, through a system of mutual rights and obligations characteristic of patron-client relationships. Not rarely, part of their obligation to the patron/*senhor de engenho* entailed the defense of the estate, by incorporating local militia commanded by the landlord (Borges 1992).

This system of clientelism, though originally associated with rural social hierarchies linked to relationships to the land, found counterparts in the mansions (*sobrados*) of merchant families in the city. No doubt, as Borges (1992:61) has noted, the "the typical family of the city elite was smaller than that of the Big House of the countryside, in large part because

the latter occasionally included the entire plantation or rural neighborhood under the aegis of the 'family.'" However, this did not entail that merchant elite households were solely circumscribed to the so-called 'nuclear family'. To the core of parents and children were commonly added a host of other kin and dependents, the latter usually providing small services in exchange for room, board, and the 'protection' of the household head (Borges 1992:62; see also Graham 1992).

Until the late nineteenth century when the richer merchants began to build their mansions in the neighborhoods of Graça and Vitória, away from their places of business in Salvador's Lower City, apprentices and store clerks were also part of their patron's household as Comendador Catharino himself had been. Besides, as in the countryside, so too the merchant elites cultivated a large clientele which, though not necessarily living under their roof nor even nearby, was nevertheless equally obliged to their patrons and under their realm of paternal authority (Mattoso 1992).

However, unlike the arrogant prowess and rough despotism ideally cast for rural landlords, the patriarchal role in the city, inspired in European models, called for chivalry and more cosmopolitan manners. As Borges notes, by the turn of the century, a new image had been carved for the 'ideal' head of the urban elite households, which was to be sustained well the first half of this century:

The ideal man was not a lord - whether autonomous baron or subordinate coronel - but a man of affairs, a counselor. His power derived not from military chieftainship but from control of political influence or financial capital. Cosmopolitan urbanity was the ideal of the man's manner in public. His honor was not measured by military prowess but rather by

polish and 'education', education understood also to mean good manners. Philanthropy, the largesse of an enlightened benefactor of the community, was one means by which he translated his money into honor (1992:66).

Nevertheless, this 'new' image did not entail a lessening of their authoritative and commanding manners. As Borges (1992:67) further adds: "A big merchant was expected to exercise paternal authority over his clerks; the director of an establishment became the patron of his employees." For Bernardo Martins Catharino whose humble origins and status as a Portuguese 'new rich' were looked down by the elites of Bahia, philanthropy and paternalism thus became a means of building the image of a 'benefactor of the community' and in that manner, gaining access to a new social standing. In this respect, he followed closely the path set by Luiz Tarquínio, his major competitor and friend who became the spokesman for industrial paternalism in Bahia (Blay 1981).

Often portrayed as a 'progressive' social reformer for developing a model *vila operária* adjacent to his mill in Salvador, Luiz Tarquínio stretched the ideal role delineated by Borges to extremes. In this village, Luiz Tarquínio provided housing, a school, medical assistance, a bandstand, a company store, a nursery and recreation facilities for married workers and their families. However, these benefits did not come without strings in that they were extended only to those who adhered to high moral standards and decorum. These standards applied not only to the workplace but to the village as a whole. At a time when legal marriage was the exception rather than the rule among the working classes, Luiz Tarquínio

imposed it upon couples among his employees. He also established curfew hours and banned drinking whether in the village or outside its realm, threatening violations with immediate dismissal. All activities within the village were under the direct control of the company which encamped and patronized any initiative on the part of the workers. The company also published first a newspaper (**O Trabalho**) and later a magazine (**Vila Operária**) for the workers, where Luiz Tarquínio often wrote the editorials dedicating them to his *companheiros* or 'comrades', providing them with moralistic instructions and guidance. More importantly, dotting on the image of his factory as that of a 'big family', Luiz Tarquínio proposed that it be regarded by his employees as an "affectionate and grateful mother, with whom they can count in their difficult moments and as such love her, manifesting their love in a dedicated and willing laboring, the only (kind that is) really productive and proficient" (in Pinho, P. 1960:98, my translation; see also Sampaio 1975).

Unlike his competitor, Bernardo Martins Catharino neither entrusted his workers with similar instructions and guidance, nor exerted such a tight control over the private lives of those residing in company housing.⁴³ Nevertheless, he was equally involved in developing Plataforma as a *vila operária*. Even if the initiative to provide housing for the workers at Fábrica São Braz is to be credited to the former owners, it is

⁴³ Nevertheless, Henriqueta Martins Catharino, one of Comendador Catharino's daughters, was to become a well known educator in Salvador, founding the Instituto Feminino, a private school for young women (Passos 1994).

nevertheless certain that it was to be fully encamped by Comendador Catharino. Moreover, under his direction, the company was also to provide a series of other 'fringe benefits' to factory workers and Plataforma residents as a whole, which were to bring significant returns for the legitimization of paternalistic dominance.

As recalled by D. Zenaide and other women workers, among these benefits was a nursery for the infant-children of the women working at the factory, where they could go in their lunch break to nurse the babies. For this purpose, nursing mothers were allowed to leave fifteen minutes earlier for the break. Older children would go to *Dona Ursula Catharino's* School, thus named after Comendador Catharino's wife. The school offered classes from grades one through four to the children of the neighborhood and not exclusively to those of factory workers, a policy which paid off as a means of labor recruitment. Many former employees sat first at the benches of Dona Ursula Catharino's school before switching to those at Fábrica São Braz, often before their elementary schooling was completed.

For factory employees, the company offered medical assistance in the *Assistência aos Operários*, built exclusively for that purpose with a pharmacy and complete medical-surgical installations, where those in need were tended to by a trained nurse and a physician. A visit to the *Assistência* was in fact mandatory for all prospective workers. Before being hired, they had to pass a physical examination by the attending physician, who would certify if they were of a legal age to work and free of any contagious

diseases such as tuberculosis which at the time had a very high incidence among the Bahian working classes, striking many factory employees.⁴⁴

One of the 'benefits' which D. Zenaide recalled with nostalgia, was the *Cooperativa* or 'cooperative.' There, once a week, employees could purchase food, furniture, housewares, and clothing and not rarely, cloth they themselves might have woven, the amount of the sale being deducted later from their salaries. Through the *Cooperativa*, workers had access to goods not readily available in Plataforma and which, for lack of time to go shopping elsewhere as well as of ready cash to purchase them otherwise, they would not have been able to obtain. However, buying at the *Cooperativa* could and often would keep workers continuously indebted to the company. When added to their monthly rent the deductions often claimed most of their earnings such that, depending on the amount owed the *Cooperativa*, arrangements had to be made to carry the debt over to the following weeks or months, especially when subsequent weekly food purchases were made. Nevertheless, though aware of these implications, former employees still think of the *Cooperativa* as a major service offered by the company, and one which some attribute to the 'goodness' and consideration of Comendador Catharino towards his employees.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ This information was given by one of the present members of União Fabril's Board of Directors. It is known, nevertheless, that tuberculosis a major health problem in Bahia well through the 1950s, being the object of many thesis presented by graduating students of the Medical School of the University of Bahia. See, for example, Borges (1907), Silva (1908).

⁴⁵ It is not quite clear however when this service began to be offered and when it was discontinued. No records were available at União Fabril and the members of the Board of Directors consulted on this matter could not remember how long had the Cooperative operated. According to one of Comendador

He is also credited with having contributed to the building of the theater of the *Círculo Operário* (Workers' Circle), still standing in São Braz Square in Plataforma, where movies were shown and meetings conducted by religious leaders were held.⁴⁶ His heirs further claim that Comendador Catharino also contributed generously to the re-modeling of the Church of São Braz, as well as to the feasts held by the community every year on the third of February celebrating São Braz, the patron-saint of Plataforma, a practice which they have followed up until recently.

Nevertheless, it was on the third of July, on Comendador Catharino's birthday, that the company promoted its annual feast for the employees. It was then that paternalistic dominance was 'dramatized' in the community. On that day, every year, Comendador Catharino would come to Plataforma accompanied by his family to attend a mass celebrated on his honor in the Church of São Braz, where he would be welcomed by Plataforma residents with a special birthday greeting. Dressed on their Sunday best, children from the neighborhood would line up at the entrance of the Church, showering Comendador Catharino and his family with flower petals as they made their way in. "It was so beautiful," remembers Dona Tide, who as a child participated in these feasts:

Catharino's grandson whose father succeeded him as president of the company, the service was discontinued because it was always operating "in the red."

⁴⁶ 'Círculos Operários' or Industrial Workers' Circles were labor organizations sponsored by the Catholic Church. Like other such organizations, they had an assistentialist focus and were used "to instill religious values and beliefs while promoting harmony between labor and capital and improving the lot of the poor" (Hahner 1986:222). Although those interviewed could not remember the activities of the *Círculo Operários* in Plataforma, the analysis of its role in the community must be postponed until more information is made available.

We would stand there, all excited, wearing our best little dresses, holding the flowers. Sometimes the Comendador would even stop and talk to one of us, I will never forget.

But for Sr. Luiz the best part of this event would come later with what was known as *café da companhia* (company's coffee). Unlike the term suggests, however, this was not exactly a meal served to the employees by the company but instead an extra week's pay calculated on the basis of the previous week's earnings. Since the latter was based on productivity, on the week before Comendador Catharino's birthday those on the production line would work at their top most, to ensure a 'fat' extra paycheck. As Sr. Luiz confided:

Every year, when the 'old men' Catharino was still alive, they gave us the 'cafe da companhia' on his birthday. But it was not really 'café,' to drink. Maybe before my time they served 'café,', but what I remember is that in the week of his birthday we were paid in double. So, the week before, we knew what was coming and worked twice as hard. You see, we got paid by production, on how many meters of cloth we made per week. I think we had to make something like a minimum of 60 meters per week, but we usually made much more, and then on the week before the 'café,', we all worked like crazy to double our production. We were not dumb... But then they stopped that after the man died. He liked us workers. Those that came after him didn't.

Of course, Comendador Catharino was clearly aware of what went on and would at times jokingly comment on how nice it was to see a considerable rise in production at the factory in the week of his birthday. Nevertheless, he is reported to pride himself for being able to bestow this 'gift' to his employees on his birthday rather than being on the receiving end. His grandson also recalls with amusement that when new labor legislation made such 'extra paychecks' obligatory, he became infuriated for

being deprived of the pleasure of demonstrating his benevolence to mill workers.⁴⁷

Of course, benevolence and the construction of the image of the patron as 'father' is certainly part-and-parcel of industrial paternalism. However, paternalism thrives only as long as workers remain vulnerable, that is, in an "unselfconscious attitude of dependence" (Dean 1969:156). Under paternalism, the worker remains "morally and politically a child before the patrão." Therefore, paternalism is undermined when workers become conscious of this situation, cease to believe in the benevolence of the employers, and begin to 'unmask' them. No doubt, it is possible that under certain circumstances, paternalism may endure even after workers see through the 'benevolence' of their patrons, as an "exchange of services which is calculated on both sides" (ibid). But in either case, as a form of domination, paternalism is always 'two-sided', that is to say, it is a social relation for there cannot be 'patrons' without clients, nor paternal capitalists without 'child-like' workers.

Hence, how paternalism endured in Fábrica São Braz throughout Comendador Catharino's era, and why and how it began to be unmasked after his death, are questions which can only be fully dealt with through a closer look of the workforce and the work conditions to which it was submitted at the mill in the periods in question. The following chapter, therefore, will focus on an analysis of the workforce at Fábrica São Braz.

⁴⁷ This clause was included in the labor legislation packaged known as '*Consolidação das Leis do Trabalho*' (CLT) passed during Getúlio Vargas' regime. See, for example, Silva (1990).

CHAPTER FIVE

A Profile of the Workforce (1935-1959)

The Archives of Fábrica São Braz

Traditionally, the cotton manufacturing industry has relied primarily on the employment of women. Analyses of the occupational distribution of the female labor force in Brazil over the last century confirm this overall tendency. They have shown that despite gradual reductions, from 1872 until recently women have comprised the great majority of textile workers (Blay 1975, Madeira & Singer 1975, Pena 1983, Saffioti 1979, 1981). As shall be seen in this chapter, Fábrica São Braz was not an exception: it also relied largely on a female labor force. Moreover, employees' records indicate that the workforce at the mill was also young, black, and comprised primarily of Plataforma residents.

It should be noted that whereas Bernardo Martins Catharino took over Fábrica São Braz in the mid-1920s, the only available documents which contain detailed information on the workforce at the mill are more recent, dating from 1935. It seems that up to that time the company did not make great efforts to keep a close tab on the employees. In 1931, however, during Getúlio Vargas' provisional government, it was decreed that all commercial and industrial establishments were to prepare annual reports for the National Department of Labor (created at that time), and that they were to contain a roster of employees with information as to their "name, sex, age, marital status, nationality - and if Brazilian, the state in

which (they were) born -, category or occupation, ... wages and form of payment, degree of formal instruction, and data of admission."⁴⁸ It was also stipulated that this information be consistent with the listings of employees and their earnings on the payroll accounts, and the latter be made available for eventual inspections by government officials.

It may be gathered that Fábrica São Braz did not immediately comply with these stipulations for it was only from 1935 onward—1935 being the deadline set by the government for the implementation of the new policies in the Northeast (Leite Lopes 1988)--that detailed payroll records began to be kept. Likewise, the first all-around census of employees apparently was not taken until 1937 since this is the earliest data appearing on the available documentation. In the archives of Companhia Progresso & União Fabril which are kept at its central office, there are still approximately forty-five payroll books extending from 1935 to 1959, with an average of two books a year.

Bound in green cloth and titled *Resumo de Férias da Fábrica São Braz* engraved in gold letterhead on the covers, these large and bulky volumes have approximately five-hundred pages each, where, compiled in fancy handwriting, are the weekly entries under each employee's name. They provide information as to their assigned section or room number, number of days and hours worked in a given week, with a space for observations pertaining to maternity, sick, or accident leaves. In the case of apprentices,

⁴⁸ Article no.42 of the Decree no.20.291 of 08/12/1931 (Pereira dos Santos 1937:38).

their status is also registered beside the name. Up to 1942, however, there are no records pertaining to the weekly production of the operatives, only their weekly wages. From 1943 up to 1953, both wages and weekly production are registered, as well as eventual productivity 'prizes' and bonuses. Yet, starting in 1954, the wages ceased to be recorded, the same occurring in relation to prizes and bonuses.

In addition to the payroll books, the company also keeps in the archives the Register of Employees for Fábrica São Braz. They consist of eleven loose-leaf binders, each containing approximately three-hundred "*fichas de empregados*" or employees record sheets, one for each employee, arranged in a (first-letter only) alphabetical order. On the front page, these sheets provide a space for a photograph of the employee, biographical data, task or occupation assigned and the terms of the contract. On the verso are the entries pertaining to accidents suffered on the job, leaves taken, vacation periods enjoyed, and observations regarding suspensions, dismissals, and other job-related events. Along with the weekly notations in the payroll books, these notations offer not only information on the work histories of the employees, but also rich and colorful glimpses--sometimes on the funny, sometimes on the sad side, such as when depicting the accidents that occurred in the work process--of the operations at Fábrica São Braz.

For the purposes of this study, a sample of 385 *fichas de empregados* were selected from the Register of Employees for compilation and closer analysis. This sample, which represents roughly 15 per cent of the

documents available, was obtained through the selection of the first 35 files from each of the 11 binders, which were found to be legible and contained a picture of the employee in question. This criteria was selected to offset the lack of references to the race/color of the employee in the written information. It also became a means of determining the 'sex,' particularly in those cases when the name of the employee was 'gender-ambiguous', that is to say, was known to be used for men and women alike.

Unfortunately, in spite of several attempts, the disarray in the archives of employees' records and the gaps in the payroll books made it impossible to cross index the information between the two different sources of materials and thus obtain an accurate profile of the workforce in the factory for specific years.⁴⁹ This profile, then, will be delineated primarily on the basis of the sample drawn, which includes workers admitted to the factory from 1915 through 1959.

The Workforce

It is interesting to note that in their recollections of Comendador Catharino's era, former employees mentioned that at that time, Fábrica São Braz was the "Queen of Bahia" employing "close to three or four thousand workers," and that these numbers were cut in half after his death. However, the data available indicate that even during Comendador

⁴⁹ The attempt to accomplish such a task without the aid of a portable computer on hand as was our case, proved it to be nearly impossible. It would have taken us months to do so and thus overextend our stay in the company's premises much beyond the 'welcome' we were given.

Catharino's lifetime, the workforce at the factory did not exceed 1,500 employees, a figure which has been confirmed by the present director of the company. Moreover, the shrinking of the workforce of the factory seems to have been a gradual process, possibly started still under Comendador Catharino and which, except for 1959 when the factory closed down, did not entail mass dismissals.

TABLE 5.1

**Work Force at Fábrica São Braz
1935, 1945, 1954**

	1935	1945	1954
Employees	1,485	1,247	968

Sources: *Livros de Resumo de Férias da Fábrica São Braz* 1935, 1945, 1954.

According to the company's present administration, this reduction process was enacted through a policy of not filling in eventual vacancies. Nevertheless, the dates of admission and dismissal of employees included in the sample of 385 *Fichas de Empregados* selected from the Registry of Employees, indicate that despite this policy, new employees were being admitted well up into 1959. Although between 1945 and 1955, the total number of employees at the factory decreased by 279, the data depicted in Table 5.2 suggests that hiring policies did not change considerably over the years. Let it be noted, in fact, that 120 employees in the sample were hired

precisely in the five-year interval immediately following Comendador Catharino's death (i.e. 1946-1950).

TABLE 5.2

**Factory Employees in Sample per
Year of Admission
1915-1959
n= 385**

Period	#of Employees Admitted
1915-1920	08
1921-1925	08
1926-1930	17
1931-1935	28
1936-1940	63
1941-1945	64
1946-1950	120
1951-1955	54
1956-1959	13
Total	385

Sources: Registry of Employees

This apparent increase in the hiring of new employees in this period does not necessarily contradict some general tendencies regarding the Bahian cotton textiles industry. During World War II, a period which has been regarded as one of euphoria for this industrial sector in Brazil, textile production increased ten-fold (Stein 1959). However, with the end of the war and the decrease in textile exports that followed, it would be expected that the demand for new workers on the part of the mills would also decrease. This must have been even truer for Bahia, since textile

entrepreneurs began to face greater competition from their counterparts in the South for control of the local market (Dean 1969). When considering the data displayed in Table 5.2, however, it cannot be forgotten that in selecting a sample for this study, only those records which were still in a condition to be read were chosen. This created an unavoidable 'bias' that held in favor the 'newer' *fichas*, and thus tended towards employees who were admitted in later dates.

Nevertheless, it is important to observe that a relatively high frequency of dismissals paralleled that for admissions from 1950 onward. As displayed in Table 5.3, information regarding date of dismissal is only available in 138 of the *fichas* (or a little less than one-third) in the sample. However, it is still possible to verify a trend towards a higher frequency of dismissals in the period in question. Apparently, after 1950, the company hired new employees with the purpose of filling in upcoming orders and lying off the extra hands when the orders were completed.

There is also an indication that up to the 1950's, the company kept to an 'open door policy' regarding former employees, as attested by the rate in which many left the job at the factory at 'their own volition' and were readmitted later with seeming ease.⁵⁰ Cecilia França, for instance, who started working at Fábrica São Braz as a weaver in 1938 at the age of twenty-four, left the job eight months later 'at her own volition', being readmitted on August, 19, 1941. Carmelinda Francisca, also a weaver, was

⁵⁰ Leite Lopes (1988) reports that during this period, a similar 'open door' policy was also at work in Companhia Paulista, Pernambuco, object of his study.

first admitted in 1941 when she was seventeen, quit working at the factory in June of that same year, and returned in 1944 but worked for only a few months until her death on March of 1945. The case of the weaver Julieta L. Encarnação is even more pertinent to the point in question. From 1938 when she was first admitted until her final dismissal in 1959, she quit and was readmitted at three different times: 1937, 1941, and 1955.

TABLE 5.3

**Fábrica São Braz Employees in Sample
per Year of Dismissal
n= 385**

Years	#of Employees
1935-1940	14
1941-1945	11
1946-1950	36
1951-1955	33
1956-1959	44
N.I.A.*	247
Total	385
* No Information Available	

Source: Registry of Employees

Examples such as these are easily found in the Registry of Employees. Equally common are also those pertaining to the shifting of employees back-and-forth between Fábrica São Braz and the other two major mills owned by União Fabril. Such was the case of Dina Blanco Silva. First admitted at Fábrica São Braz in 1950, she was transferred to Fábrica Conceição in April 6, 1957, returned to her former position at Fábrica São Braz in 1958, and was dismissed from the job in 1959, just

before the factory closed down. The opposite path was trailed by the weaver Epifania do Espirito Santo. Admitted at Fábrica Paraguassu on May 16, 1933, she was transferred to Fábrica São Braz on January 23, 1947, remaining there also until it was closed in 1959.⁵¹

Let it be emphasized that the fact that the examples cited thus far in this discussion have focused essentially on women employees is not necessarily accidental: women did stand out as the overwhelming majority of workers in the factory. This trend is confirmed when one considers the percentages of women versus men among those employees listed in payroll books in selected years. As depicted in Table 5.4, for instance, women represented 83.5% of the workforce accounted for in Book 2 of the *Resumo de Férias da Fábrica São Braz* for 1945. This proportion is even higher when one limits the analysis to the listings for operatives: 91.2% of the latter were women against only 8.8% of men. Similar high proportions of women among operatives listed in Book I of the *Resumo de Férias da Fábrica São Braz* for 1954 were also found by Bevilaqua (1992:50); in those listings, 87.1% were women against 12.9% of men.

⁵¹ Similar shifts of employees between different factories owned by Companhia Paulista were also reported by Leite Lopes (1988).

TABLE 5.4

**Distribution of Workforce in
Fábrica São Braz per Sex
1945**

	Total Listings	Operatives Only
Women	83.5 (411)	91.2 (343)
Men	16.5 (68)	8.8 (33)
Total	100.0 (479)	100.0 (376)

Sources: Book No.2, *Resumo de Férias da Fábrica São Braz* - 1945

Women's numerically greater presence in the factory is also attested when the distribution by sex of the employees included in the sample selected from the Registry of Employees is considered (Table 5.4). Although in this case, the proportion of men is considerably higher (38.2%) than that obtained in the payroll books, women still respond for way over half of the employees selected in the sample (61.8%). In both cases, however, the proportion of women among factory workers is still considerably higher than that found on a national level for the period. As Heleieth Saffioti notes, for example, data from the 1940 Census reveals that in the textile industry, "though by a small margin, women still constituted a majority--51.2%--but had already lost the great supremacy observed in previous periods" (1981:22, my translation). Saffioti associates this loss of ground for women in textile production to the modernization of factories. She proposes that as factories substitute the old looms for more sophisticated machinery, the demand for skilled labor increases while, at the same time, the higher productivity obtained through greater

automation would engender the dismissal of non-skilled labor hands directly involved in production (1981:26). From this perspective, then, the high proportion of women found at work at Fábrica São Braz, would be an indicator of the antiquity and low sophistication of the machinery in use.

TABLE 5.5

**Workers in Sample per Sex
1935-1959
n=385**

Women	Men	Total
61.8	38.2	100.0
(238)	(147)	(385)

Source: Registry of Employees

Contrasting Forces: The Distinctness of Sex

It is important to stress that in delineating a profile of the workforce at Fábrica São Braz, significant differences are observed in the make-up of the female and male labor forces. This becomes evident when different characteristics in the sample drawn are considered in relation to sex. In plotting the ages at time of admission of women in men in the selected sample (Table 5.6), for instance, it can be observed that although, in both cases, the majority began to work at the mill between the ages of 16 to 20 years old, the proportion of women in that age bracket (41.2%) is significantly higher than that of men (34.1%). When these figures are added to the proportions corresponding to the younger bracket (10-15), it can be seen that over half of the women (53.8%) were admitted in the mill up to the age of 20. In contrast, the age distribution of men entering the

mill was more spread out, some of them (04) being already over 45 years old when first admitted.

TABLE 5.6
Distribution of Workers in Sample
by Sex and Age*
1935-1959
N=385

Age	Women %	Men %	Total %
10-15	12.6	11.6	12.2
16-20	41.2	34.0	38.4
21-25	18.5	23.8	20.5
26-30	15.1	12.2	14.1
31-35	5.5	8.2	6.5
36-40	4.6	4.8	4.7
41-45	2.5	2.7	2.6
46 and up	0.0	2.7	1.0
Total	100.0 (238)	100.0 (147)	(385)

*At time of admission

Source: Register of Employees

These findings suggest that there was a demand in the factory not simply for women, but especially for young women, thus confirming trends which have been observed in other factories both in the beginning of the century (Moura 1982) as well as in more recent decades. According to Heleith Saffioti (1981:86), for example, up to the 1970s, over 40% of the women employed in textile industries were between the ages of 18 and 24 years old. From this age bracket on up, there are gradual decreases, a trend which has been commonly associated with women's reproductive roles. That is to say, women tend to leave the labor force because of marriage and the birth of children. This is corroborated when marital

status and motherhood are considered. In the period observed by Saffioti, for example, 70% of women textile workers were either single or had no children (Saffioti 1981:86).

TABLE 5.7
Workers in Sample by Sex and Marital Status
1935-1959
n=278

Marital Status	Women	Men	Women+Men
single	87.1	86.9	87.0
married	10.4	9.6	0.1
widow/widower	2.5	2.6	2.5
other	0.0	0.9	0.4
Total	100.0 (163)	100.0 (115)	100.0 (278)

Source: Register of Employees

Similar tendencies may be observed considering the distribution of the workforce in the sample in terms of marital status: an overwhelming majority of 'singles' stand out not only among women but also of men (5.7). However, such figures must be looked at with caution since they apply to 'civil status' and thus do not account for common-law unions which then, as today, are the general rule among the Bahian working classes than 'legal unions'.⁵² In this respect, in fact, it is interesting to observe that of the nine employees in the sample who named '*esposa*' (wife) as a beneficiary, four are classified under 'civil status' as being single.

TABLE 5.8

**Workers in Sample Naming Children as Beneficiaries
Sex and Marital Status
n=68**

Marital Status	Women	Men	Women and Men
single	30	12	42
married	10	3	13
widow/widower	4	3	7
N.I.A.*	4	2	6
Total	48	20	68

*N.I.A.= No Information Available

Source: Register of Employees

The entries in the employees' files regarding beneficiaries also provide relevant information as to the employment of women with children in the factory. Of a total of 68 employees in the sample naming '*filhos*' (children) as their beneficiaries, for instance, 48 were women, and 30 of these women were listed as being 'single' (Table 5.8). It is also helpful to note that all but 4 of these single-mothers began to work at the factory at the age of 20 or older, possibly precisely because of their condition as sole providers for their children, and remained working there up until it ceased operating.

Overall, in fact, the women included in the sample generally tended to stay in the factory longer than men. As displayed in Table 5.9, although information regarding the length of permanence in the job is only available in 150 files in the sample, it is nevertheless possible to observe that 14.1% of the women as opposed to 32.3% (or almost one-third) of the men worked in the mill for less than one-year.

⁵² Mating patterns among factory workers will be discussed in Chapter Nine of this dissertation.

TABLE 5.9

**Distribution of Workers in Sample
by Sex and Length of Service
n=150**

# Years	Women	Men	Women and Men
less than 1	14.1	32.3	22.0
1 to 2	21.2	27.7	24.0
+2 to 5	25.8	16.9	22.0
+5 to 10	5.9	4.6	5.3
+10 to 15	24.7	12.3	19.3
+15 to 20	2.4	3.1	2.7
more than 20	5.9	3.1	4.7
Total	100.0 (85)	100.0 (65)	(150)

Source: Register of Employees

Note that whereas 64.7% of the women worked in the mill for at least two years, 60.0% of the men left precisely before completing two years in the job. A relatively high proportion of women, in fact - 33.0% - , remained in the mill for more than ten years, 5.9% of them working for over twenty years. No doubt, the availability of maternity leave and a nursery for working mothers, and more importantly, the proximity between place of work and residency, made it less difficult for women to conciliate their productive and so-called reproductive roles, thus contributing to their relative stability on the job.

It is also relevant that although the overwhelming majority of the women in the sample--82.8% (Table 5.10)-- were in fact Plataforma residents, the factory also attracted women from the nearby suburban communities, which appear as place of residence for 15.1% of the female workforce. Only a very small fraction of this force, however, were willing

to travel greater distances between home and work. Yet, though the proportion of men who did so was higher than that of women - i.e., 5.4% against 1.3%, respectively - the overwhelming majority of workers, regardless of sex, were either Plataforma residents or came from nearby communities. Moreover, it is also important to observe that over one-third of the factory workforce included in the sample were in fact Plataforma 'natives', this proportion being significantly higher in the case of women (i.e. 40.3%).

TABLE 5.10

**Distribution of Workers in Sample
by Sex and Place of Residence
1932-1959**

Place of Residence	Women	Men	Women and Men
Plataforma	82.8	83.7	83.1
Other Communities in the Subúrbio	15.1	8.8	12.7
Other Locality in Salvador	1.3	5.4	2.9
Total	100.0 (238)	100.0 (147)	(385)

Source: Register of Employees

Indeed, as displayed in Table 5.11, the women in the sample tended to be generally more 'local' than men: 96.6% of them were born in the State of Bahia as against 92.5 % of the men. Furthermore, 71,8% of the women were natives of Plataforma and its surrounding communities while only a little over half of the men (59.2%) fell in those categories.

TABLE 5.11

**Distribution of Workers in Sample
by Sex and Place of Birth
1932-1959**

Place of Birth	Women	Men	Women and Men
Plataforma	40.3	30.6	36.6
Other Location in Salvador	31.5	28.6	30.4
Other City in Bahia	25.6	32.0	28.1
Other State	3.4	7.5	4.9
Total	100.0 (238)	100.0 (147)	(385)

Source: Registry of Employees

It should be observed that these differentials are reflected in the distribution of the workers in the sample by color and sex. Of all the metropolitan areas in the country, Salvador and its surrounding suburbs are noted for having the highest proportion of blacks and mulattos in the population, a tendency which is also revealed in the composition of the workforce in the mill. As depicted in Table 5.12, 81.8% of all workers in the sample were either black or mulattos. However, this proportion was considerably higher in the case of women - 84.5% against 77.6% for the men-- a difference which could possibly be explained by the fact that the female workforce in the mill included more natives of Salvador and its suburbs than the male workforce.

TABLE 5.12

**Distribution of Workers in Sample
by Sex and Color
(1935-1959)
n=385**

Color	Women	Men	Women and Men
Whites	15.5	22.4	18.2
Mulattos	37.8	38.8	38.2
Blacks	48.3	38.8	43.6
Total	100.0 (238)	100.0 (147)	(385)

Source: Register of Employees

Of course, the observed differences as to sex, age, and color in the composition of the workforce in the mill, though interesting enough for comparative purposes, only gain relevance for the problems at hand when considered in light of the operations and division of labor involving the work process in the factory. As it will be seen in the following section, these differences were given social significance within the factory; they became determining factors in the way men and women, blacks and whites, as well as young and old experienced life at the workplace, and how they were to respond to the conditions through which they were submitted.

CHAPTER SIX

The Work Process and the Gender, Age, and Color Division

Introduction

It may be said that, overall, as in any other factory, so too the experience of workers in Fábrica São Braz was shaped by the combination of three major factors: the nature and organization of the work process, the technology applied, and the general material conditions of the workplace. As different aspects of the work process, these factors are interrelated. However they may vary independently, granting specificity to different factories. For instance, even though some basic procedures are common to all cotton textile manufacturing factories, regardless of time and place, the manner in which they are organized and coordinated, the type of machinery used, and the general conditions of the workplace may vary even from factory to factory set within the same time and space coordinates. As to the workers, their life in the workplace will be conditioned not only by these varying conditions, but also by the specific place and occupation they hold in the work process.

Traditionally, cotton textile production has involved a three step process--spinning, weaving, and finishing--each involving specific steps of their own. The entire process is relatively simple:

...first, the fibers pass through the mechanical processes of cleaning and paralleling; next, they are submitted to processes of stretching and twisting, and as a result of friction, they are transformed into even and

continuous threads of predetermined diameters. The textile itself is produced through the interweaving of vertical and horizontal threads in a plane (straight cloth), or through the formation of rows of stitches with an ensemble of parallel threads (knits). The last step, the Finishing, consists in giving to the raw cloth, the result from the Weaving step, characteristics that give it its final aspect: coloring, print, dimensional stability, aesthetic aspect, smoothness or roughness to the touch, resistance to chemical agents or to wear, etc. (Pereira 1979:49-50, my translation).

Although the three basic steps are interconnected, they are in fact independent, each resulting in a final product which can be produced at different mills. For instance, a yarn mill (*fiação*) usually concentrates in the first step of this process (spinning), that is, in the transformation of raw cotton fibers into threads or yarn, selling them to a weaving mill (*tecelagem*) where they will be woven into coarse cloth, while in a third establishment the cloth will gain its final treatment.

As were most of the early mills in Bahia, Fábrica São Braz was 'vertically integrated' in the sense that it combined all of these steps, to produce its own yarn which was woven into cloth and finished on factory premises. It also processed yarn produced at other mills owned by the company such as Fábrica São João which specialized solely in the manufacturing of thread and yarn. Throughout Comendador Catharino's era and up to its closing in 1959, Fábrica São Braz produced cotton cloth, both whitened and tinted, distributed and sold through Moraes & Cia.

The Work Process and the Division of Labor

The mill complex consisted of two large one-store buildings and several barrack-like constructions (*barracões*) laid out adjacent to the railroad lines of the *Companhia Leste Brasileiro* which stretch along the coast of the Bay of All Saints from Salvador into the Recôncavo Area. A detailed description of the layout of the complex is to be found in the inventory of the company's assets which was taken in 1932 when *Companhia Progresso & União Fabril* was created:

The main building of the factory, divided in two blocks separated by a corridor..., is built in its own lot and measures 163,60m in width and 65,00m in length; it has an iron gate in the front ... The supplementary building (is) divided in two adjacent blocks, the first measuring 24,30m in width and 8,80m in length and the second 78,00m by 19,35m, is built on a lot rented from the National Farm... There are three barracks, three of them are contiguous and face the main building of the factory, with their back to the ocean; the fourth is in the back of the first block of the supplementary building. All of them are built on land rented from the National Farm; the first one is equipped with a gate and a large crane for loading and unloading... All the constructions are made of brick... Besides these buildings, the factory also owns two areas for the deposit of wood, the first one faces the main building, next to the three barracks, and the other on the back of the second block of the supplementary building... (*Livro de Atas da Cia. Progresso e União Fabril da Bahia*, S/A 1932:04, my translation).

The work process at the factory started with the arrival of the bales of cotton at the factory's own dock, transported from the Port of Salvador in the *Saveiro São Braz*, which was a schooner owned by the company. The bales were unloaded into the first barrack and then carried, one by one, into the second barrack, where they would be prepared for spinning. First, they would go through the processes of opening (*abertura*) and beating (*batimento*), and then pass through the carding section (*cardas*) where the cotton fibers would be cleaned and paralleled. They would then be ready to

be sent to the pressers (*passadores*) and drawers or twisters (*maçaroqueiras*) who in turn would tend to the special machines which attenuate and impart a small twist in the cotton fibers, so as to accomplish the final stretching and paralleling of the fibers in preparation for spinning.

The factory employed approximately two-hundred spinners and apprentices in the spinning sector who worked in a large room in the main building and prepared two basic types of cotton threads: 'number 2' and 'number 4'. This distinction was based on the diameter or thickness of the fibers (*titulagem*). The apprentices helped in the process of 'doffing,' that is, in removing the spools of raw cotton threads from the spindles and replacing them with empty bobbins, as well as placing the filled ones in carts to be taken by the serving attendants (*serventes*) to another large room on the premises where the preparation for weaving would take place.

A number of operations had to be performed before the materials were ready for the looms, most of them pertained to the appropriate rolling and warping of the threads for use in the machinery. First, for instance, the threads had to be transferred to larger bobbins or reels, a task performed by the '*conicaleiras*,' and then sent to the '*urdideiras*' or warpers who would machine-wind the ends of yarn or wider threads from the bobbins onto the warp beams of the loom. Finally, the beams would be mounted on the loom frame or *liço* by special operators (*liçadeiras*), while another set of operators (*espuladeiras*) would work with the narrower threads, warping them around small bobbins or '*espulas*' that went in the

loom-shuttles to produce the weave. It was only after all these operations were accomplished that the weavers could in fact start their looms.

Up to the late 1950s, there were two large weaving salons in the main building that were subdivided in workrooms set for the production of coarse cloth, each one housing between two-hundred and twenty to two-hundred and fifty weavers. Most of them were in charge of running two looms, often assisted by a helper, usually an apprentice or trainee. After they had woven a set length of cloth, the piece would be removed from the loom and sent to the dye house for the finishing process which involved either the whitening or dyeing of the raw cloth produced.

At Fábrica São Braz, there was also a third salon in the additional building where approximately fifty weavers operated looms for the production of plaid textiles. For this purpose, part of the spools of raw cotton thread from the spinning sector would be thus sent to the dye house, and then installed in the adjacent barrack in the back of the building, before they would go through the different steps in the preparation for weaving. Once woven, the plaids were ready to be packaged and distributed for sale.

The different steps in the process of yarn and textile production involved a series of specific tasks and thus, of workers trained to accomplish them. But in addition to the personnel directly involved in production, Fábrica São Braz also employed a number of workers involved in supporting activities. Within the factory compound, there was a repair shop where mechanics, electricians, loom adjusters and other repairmen

were to be found. The factory also employed '*pedreiros*' or construction workers for the needed repairs in the factory buildings and the construction and maintenance of the houses rented to factory workers. To keep the boilers running, wood had to be in supply and workers--the '*empilhadores de lenha*' --were needed around to carry it, pile it up, and feed them to the boilers. In addition, there was also the need for a nurse in the *Assistência aos Operários*, for a cook to prepare meals and coffee for the manager, and maintenance workers in charge of cleaning the factory. A number of *serventes* or service helpers were needed for moving supplies and materials around and carrying out minor tasks, not to forget the clerks in the office, in charge of the paperwork.

The Chain of Command

It must be emphasized that the work process involves not simply a division of labor and a given organization of the various tasks and activities according to the steps involved in production, but also--and what is perhaps more important--means of coordinating the workforce so that it can 'cooperate' or combine forces to guarantee the flow of the process.⁵³ This involves the imposing of discipline that, in the words of Foucault (1995:164), can "construct a machine whose effect will be maximized by the concerted articulation of the elementary parts of which it is composed." To achieve this, a given set of rules and regulations must be

followed--especially those pertaining to the appropriate use of time.⁵⁴ This entails 'supervision' of some kind and thus those posts or occupations that relate to the enforcement of the existing rules, that is to say, to disciplinary power. Let it also be remembered that the ultimate aim of capitalist production is to maximize the extraction of surplus value; capital thus needs to maintain a real and effective control over the work process. In this sense, the work process involves both a division of labor in terms of tasks or occupations as well as a chain of command in the exercise of authority to coordinate the flow of production so as to ensure capital, a *de facto* control over the work process.

At Fábrica São Braz, this chain of command started with Comendador Catharino at the top as director-president of União Fabril. He personally appointed a manager to each one of the mills who responded directly to him. But to make sure that the managers kept production levels at a high in the mills, every morning, before heading to the company's office, Comendador Catharino would sit in his study and call each and every one to check how the mills had fared on the previous day. And to each and every manager, upon hearing the answer, he would announce that the other mills had produced much more. 'What was keeping their operations so behind the others?', he would then ask. Often, he would try to find out for himself by making unannounced visits to his factories. On

⁵³ As in the words of Marx (1967, Vol. I:312): "...the special productive power of the combined working-day is, under all circumstances, the social productive power of labor, or the productive power of social labor. This power is due to cooperation itself."

these occasions, he would take time to walk through the workrooms, usually stopping to greet and talk to the workers.

Within the mill, however, it was the manager who had the control and authority over the entire work process and the workers. It was the manager who oversaw all production activities in the numerous departments of the mill, and it was to the manager to whom all overseers reported, particularly when it concerned the conduct of employees. Even though the screening of prospective employees was done by the physician in charge who was the only figure in the factory who was not under the supervision of the manager, the manager ultimately decided, at the local level, which should be hired, suspended, or fired.

It was no wonder workers feared the figure of the manager. Former employees recall, in particular, a manager who was especially authoritarian and took to the heart his position as superintendent. As D.Adélia, a former weaver remembers, he used to 'sneak in' the shop floors unnoticed,

and since he was very tall, he could stand at the door and see everything. He could see even far at the back of the room if one of us was talking to our machine neighbors. If he by chance caught someone talking like that, he would lecture, tell the whole room off, and then point at who was talking. When he left the room, it was the overseer who would start yelling. He could even suspend the person for the day.

At Fábrica São Braz, there was one '*mestre*' (overseer) for each of the large workrooms of the mill, who was assisted by a '*contra-mestre*' (assistant). The *mestre* was responsible for the productivity of the operators in the room under his charge and reported to the payroll clerk

⁵⁴ As Foucault (1995:151) also reminds us: "Time measured and paid must also be a time without impurities or defects; a time of good quality, throughout which the body is constantly applied to its

weekly on the number of days and hours worked by each operative and on their daily output. In addition, assisted by the *contra-mestre*, the overseer had the responsibility for the upkeep of all the machinery in the room and for supplying materials to the operatives. Moreover, with the aid of his assistant, the overseer also was responsible for supervising the conduct of the workers under his charge, making sure that they complied with the mills' norms and regulations. As such, overseers and assistants had the immediate power over these workers: though they had no voice in the hiring, they had the authority to suspend those who did not behave in accordance to the rules and, depending on the nature and frequency of these violations, call for their dismissal by the manager. Not surprisingly, overseers and assistants could become the objects of fear and hate on the part of the operators and not without reason. They could and often were in fact ruthless in the exercise of their power over their fellow workers, taking full advantage, sexual and otherwise, of their situation as men in charge of mostly young and single women. Indeed, as observed in the case of D.Alice, it was not uncommon for assistants (or even overseers) to 'seduce and abandon' the women they supervised, especially when a pregnancy resulted from the seduction.

Note should be made to the fact that spinners and weavers were always in a situation of dependency in relation to overseers and their assistants: it was up to these supervisors to ensure that the materials they needed were always at hand and the machines operating properly. Delays in

exercise. Precision and application are, with regularity, the fundamental virtues of disciplinary time."

the flow of the needed materials or in getting the machines fixed when by any chance they broke down, would result in a smaller output for the day and in a reduced paycheck at the end of the week. In point of fact, most of the machines were actually quite old and would often break down for one reason or another. And sometimes, they could not be fixed right away which would mean that a whole day of work could be 'wasted', as D.Alice so confided:

When the machines broke down, we often wasted our day. There were people to fix them, the assistants were supposed to fix them. But sometimes they didn't come right away, and when the machines didn't run, we lost our day. It was our bad luck when they broke down, for instead of weaving cloth, we fell behind and earned nothing.

To be sure, since the paycheck of overseers and assistants varied according to the output of the workrooms they oversaw, they had vested interests in seeing that the machines and the flow of materials were kept running so that operators could work at their top most. One particular assistant was noted for being kind and considerate, helping those under his charge when needed. D.Adelaide who was often in need of help, so confided:

I was not very good at all at weaving, at making cloth. I could not get it into my head. I was always making mistakes and the second-hand took pity on me, and would often come to my aid, helping me to see if I could learn. He would teach me and when I made a mistake and stopped the machine to correct it, he would come and try to teach me again.

Because of his patience and consideration, this assistant was particularly successful in raising the productivity of those under his charge, leading them in winning production prizes. As told by D. Lucia:

What we earned at the factory depended on how much you produced...and this often depended on the assistant; if he took interest and knew how to work. There was an assistant who helped those in his section win prizes. I myself wan prizes because I worked in his sections, but it was not like that in the other sections.

This assistant was apparently an exception, not the rule. Indeed, most were notorious for their ruthless manners in dealing with the operators. Yet, this did not stop them from favoring the young and pretty girls in tending to their machines and in supplying them with the needed work materials. Let it be noted, in fact, that though supposedly severely curtailed by the management, sexual advancements on the part of second-hands towards the young women in their charge were not rare occurrences. Nor was it uncommon for supervisors to have affairs with and/or children by their operators. But when this happened, the blame usually fell on the woman who was the object of attention. It was said that she "*deu ousadia aos chefes*", that is, she encouraged them in making advancements so as to gain their favors.

Curiously, however, the only instance of 'sexual harassment' on record was against a young man, not against a woman. Nevertheless, the victim in this case --i.e. an apprentice in the spinning sector by the name of Arnaldo Freitas Paiva--was a minor who ended up being fired in the end for reacting violently against a third person involved in the case. The occurrence, registered in a typewritten document attached to Arnaldo's ficha de empregado with the headline, "Serious Offense in the Factory's Precints on April 25, 1952," is certainly worthy of a full transcription:

This morning, a little after 8 o'clock, the minor apprentice Arnaldo Freitas Paiva was in the space reserved for the men's latrines in the Spinning Sector waiting for his turn, when the operator Milton Alencar of the Preparation Section-Cardas showed up and started an indecent conversation with the referred minor. Either by sadism or by the utmost indecency, (the operator) tried to stick his finger in the minor's anus. Being repelled by the latter, he then advanced, armed with a cart, and threw it against the minor. According to the witness Manoel Santos, the minor was not completely hit because he defended himself with his arm while Milton Alencar continued to invest against him. The operators Manoel Santos, Pedro Pinheiro, Djalma Francisco Lima, and Edson Teixeira Guimarães witnessed the occurrence, and prevented it from having greater consequences.

The minor, Arnaldo Freitas Paiva, then went to look for the section overseer to report what had occurred. Returning later to the latrines, he was insulted by Artur Alves Lobo, the latrines' keeper and responded by lashing against the latter in a corporal fight. The reason was that (the keeper) was reprimanded by the overseer for not preventing the earlier shameful scene. The fight grew worse as the minor who was armed with a knife, attacked Artur Alves Lobo, and was separated by the cited witnesses.

All three contenders left the fight with excoriation.

Incriminated: Milton Alencar, admitted on July 27, 1942, Artur Alves Lobo, admitted on April 30, 1941, and the Minor Arnaldo Freitas Paiva, admitted on February 2, 1952.⁵⁵

Arnaldo Freitas Paiva was dismissed on the same day (April 25, 1952) for "indiscipline on the job, that is, he hurt his colleague." But no record of the incident appears on the files of the other two workers involved nor if and when they were subsequently dismissed as well.

Gender Divisions

At Fábrica São Braz, women workers stood at the bottom of the chain of command in the factory, a situation which was intrinsic to the

occupations and activities allocated to them in the division of labor in the work process. Despite the variety of occupations and tasks found at the factory, those open to women were considerably limited. With the exception of the occupations and/or tasks more consistent with women's traditional 'domestic' activities--i.e. cook, nurse, nursery attendants, etc.--women's work at the factory was restricted to the spinning and weaving sections. In these sectors, however, their presence was massive, outnumbering that of men many times over.

This is apparent when the distribution by sector and occupation in the factory of the women and men included in the selected sample from the Register of Employees is considered. As seen in Table 6.1, 98.7% of the women in the sample were directly involved in production, 84.0% alone in the weaving process. However, none of them were assigned to tasks in the finishing process, and a mere 1.3% were employed by the factory in the support activities.

These figures contrast sharply with those found for men. Whereas 57.8% of them, that is, more than half were also directly involved in the production lines, the percentage of those assigned to supporting and supervisory activities did not trail too far behind (48.3%). Indeed, the male workforce in the factory was much more evenly distributed throughout the different tasks and occupations, while the percentage of weavers among them was relatively small.

⁵⁵ Dated April 26, 1952, this document is signed by all the cited witnesses. See copy in the addenda.

TABLE 6.1

**Distribution of Workers in Sample
by Sex, Sector, and Occupation
n=385**

Sector/Occupation	Women	Men	Women and Men
Spinning			
Preparation	13	05	18
Spinners	19	17	36
Apprentices	03	06	09
Sub-Total (in %)	14.7	19.1	16.4
Weaving			
Preparation	39	02	41
Weavers	150	22	172
Apprentices	07	15	22
Sub-Total (in %)	84.0	26.5	62.1
Finishing			
Whitening	-	08	08
Tinting	-	01	01
Sub-Total (in %)	0.0	6.1	2.3
Supporting Occupations			
Unskilled Helpers	02	41	43
Skilled/Artisans	-	17	17
Wood Tenders	-	08	08
Office/Clerical	-	02	02
Professional	01	-	01
Sub-Total (in %)	1.3	46.3	18.4
Supervising	-	03	03
Sub-Total (in %)	0.0	2.0	8.0
Totals	100.0	100.0	
	238	147	385

Source: Register of Employees

Overall, in fact, the percentage of men among the weavers employed at Fábrica São Braz was never very impressive. As depicted in table 6.2, in 1943 for instance, men represented only 15.3% of the weavers. This

proportion was reduced to 8.8% in 1945, as a result of Brazil's official entrance in World War II joining the Allied Forces against Germany, and the subsequent drafting of men in the factory into military service and other war-related activities.⁵⁶ With the end of WWII men returned to the factory but in 1954, nearly a decade later, they still represented only 12.9% of the weavers employed at Fábrica São Braz. As demonstrated ahead, this would have a negative impact on union organizing and collective action on the part of workers in the factory, since as a rule, during the period considered, it was among the weavers and among male weavers, in particular, that participation in organized collective actions was most commonly found in Brazil.⁵⁷

TABLE 6.2

Distribution of Weavers by Sex in Selected Years

	1943	1945	1954
Women	84.7	91.2	87.1
Men	15.3	8.8	12.9
Totals	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Book # 1, *Resumo de Férias da Fábrica São Braz - 1943*, in Bevilaqua (1992:48); Book # 2, *Resumo de Férias da Fábrica São Braz - 1945*; Book # 1, *Resumo de Férias da Fábrica São Braz - 1954*, in Bevilaqua (1992:50).

It should be recalled that despite the overwhelming predominance of women in the production lines at the factory, all the overseers and

⁵⁶ Sr. Luiz, a former second-hand at the factory, reports that during the war years, he was called to work in the construction of the runway of *Aeroporto Dois de Julho*, the local airport, which was to be used as a base for the Allied forces.

⁵⁷ These issues will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter Seven of this dissertation.

assistants were in fact men. And in most cases, these men came from the ranks of weavers, many of them having started working in the factory as young boys. Sr. Luiz, a former assistant, was a case in point. He was thirteen years old when, following his parents' death, he was forced to quit school and find a job in the factory to support him while living with his godmother. As he relates:

A buddy of mine suggested that I work in the factory. But I was only thirteen, and could not be hired at only thirteen. Since in those times nobody had documents, my buddy told me: 'You go and tell them you are fifteen and they will take you in'. So I went to see the doctor in the factory, told him I was fifteen, and he cleared me to work at the factory.

Starting as an apprentice, within less than a year he was already responsible for tending two looms, producing considerably more than the set minimum weekly quota of sixty meters of cloth. Then, when he was in his twenties, the company sent him to take a training course to become an assistant. He was good in fixing the machinery and in dealing with the workers under his care, and was chosen by the manager to go on and become an overseer. Nevertheless, as he pondered it, family matters prevented him from further advancement:

I could not continue because the company could not support my family while I was gone. By then, I already had eighteen children, and could not leave the family and go to São Paulo for the course, to get the 'theory'. I already had the practice.

Sr.Luiz's story shows that the company was willing to invest in the employees, offering opportunities for men weavers (*tecelões*) to be trained and advance to supervising positions. However, these opportunities were

never opened to women. No matter how good a *tecelã* (female weaver) she might have been, the only 'advancement' in a woman's work career was that from an apprentice to a regular weaver or spinner. Nor was there too much room for horizontal mobility. Those who started working in the spinning sector, for instance, would most likely remain there--often tending the same machines-- throughout their entire work history in the factory.

The story of D. Carlinda, a seventy-nine year old former employee who worked in the factory for close to twenty-five years, is illustrative as to this lack of mobility for women. D. Carlinda started to work in the mill as an apprentice in the weaving sector in 1925 when she was barely eleven and had to make use of a step-stool to be able to reach the machine. A few months after being admitted, she was assigned to work in the section of *lesoura* or *liço*, mounting the loom frames manually. She was to perform the same task day in and day out for the next twenty years: it was only in the late 1940s, in fact, when new machinery was purchased, that her task changed a little in that it could then be performed faster with greater automation. But until she left the factory in 1950--at her own volition because she could not stand the work any longer--she was confined to the same room, place, and task, and was never allowed to wonder about or see what went on in the other rooms of the factory.

For D. Alice, the place of 'confinement' was the second weaving salon: she spent fifteen years there, tending first one, then two, and finally

three looms, until she also tired out, began to produce less and less, and was eventually fired.

It is important to stress, nevertheless, that none of the former female employees interviewed voiced any resentment as to the lack of mobility imposed upon women. In fact, even though the figure of overseers and assistants were generally seen with fear and/or dislike, the women did not resent the fact that these were 'men' ruling over women, nor that these supervising positions were then not opened to women.⁵⁸ Indeed, the interiorization of gender ideology worked towards keeping women in a subordinate position; they took it for granted that since these positions required a certain amount of physical strength and skill and/or the ability to fix the machinery, they were naturally better suited for men, or vice-versa, men were naturally better suited to assume these positions.

It should also be emphasized that a similar gender-based rationale explained the wage differentials which existed between men and women. Up to the mid-1950s, spinners and weavers were paid on the basis of 'productivity', that is to say, on how many meters of thread or cloth they produced weekly. Former employees have thus affirmed that men usually earned more because they were stronger and faster than women, and could thus produce and earn more per week. The analysis of the payroll records shows that indeed, the average rate of productivity and weekly wages for

⁵⁸ It should be noted, nevertheless, that D. Joseildes has reported that in the 1960s, after the factory was reopened under new management, there was a woman working as a second-hand. According to D. Joseildes, "she was just as mean as the men." Besides D. Joseildes, however, no one else remembers this assistant.

men were higher than those for women. However, as depicted on Table 6.3, it also shows that on the average, men started with an advantage over women in that their basic tariff was generally higher than women's. That is to say, whereas men averaged Cr\$ 0.23 (twenty-three *centavos*) per each meter of cloth or yarn they produced weekly, the average basic tariff paid women only amounted to Cr\$ 0.20 (twenty *centavos*).

TABLE 6.3

**Mean Weekly Productivity and Wages per Sex
1945**

	Women	Men
Production (in meters)	283.23	295.22
Wages (in <i>cruzeiros</i>)	58,22	68,84
Mean Basic Tariff (in <i>cruzeiros</i>)	0,20	0,23

Source: Book #2, *Resumo de Férias da Fábrica São Braço*, 1945.⁵⁹

Though on the average men usually produced more, some of the more experienced women weavers could produce over 500 meters of cloth working two looms. In the last week of May, 1945, for instance, the weaver Euzelina Santos, a twenty-two year old woman who had been working in the mill for over five years, produced a total of 789 meters of cloth earning a total of Cr\$116,60, an amount which included a bonus of Cr\$41,80 corresponding to 15% paid to each meter of cloth produced over the minimum quota of 60 meters per week. However, although Euzelina was the 'top producer' for the week in question, she earned less than the

⁵⁹ The average is based on computations regarding wages and productivity rates reported for the 20th week (last week of May) of that year.

weaver João Batista, a twenty-seven year old man who turned in only 351 meters but reaped Cr\$152,70 in wages (with a bonus of Cr\$50,20). The wage differentials in this case rested on the fact that whereas João Batista received an average of Cr\$0,29 for each meter produced, Euzelina Santos was being paid only Cr\$0,15 as a base tariff.

TABLE 6.4

**Mean Weekly Productivity and Wages
of Minors and Apprentices per Sex
1945**

	Women	Men
Production (in meters)	220.22	244.31
Wages (in <i>cruzeiros</i>)	40,5	47,60
Basic Tariff (in <i>cruzeiros</i>)	0,17	0,19

Source: Book 2, *Resumo de Ferias da Fábrica São Braz*,-1945.⁶⁰

That women could in fact be 'top producers' and yet earn less than men for what they produced thus allowing for the extraction of higher surplus value for the company, explains the preference for female rather than male labor in the production lines. The same rationale explains why the company was willing to hire minors, including those below the legal minimum age of fourteen set by the Code of Minors of 1912, and forego the presentation of proper documentation.⁶¹ Minors and apprentices produced less than adults in their prime, nevertheless, these production differentials were offset by the fact that they were paid lower basic tariffs--

⁶⁰ Corresponds to wages and production for the 20th week (last week in May), 1945.

⁶¹ On the *Código de Menores*, see for example Moura (1982) and Silva (1990).

even lower than those paid to women--making their presence in the production lines more profitable for the company (Table 6.4).

Not surprisingly, most of the men employed in the production lines were under the age of eighteen, that is, were minors, many of them apprentices. As seen in Table 6.5, for instance, 51.3% of all the men employed in the Weaving sector were minors, over half of them were apprentices. Moreover, as observed in the case of women, the overwhelming majority (i.e. 88.6%) of minor lads were employed in the production lines, either in the Spinning (31.4%) or in the Weaving sector (57.2%), while none were assigned to work in the tasks related to the Finishing process.

Overall, the spinners and weavers in the sample tended to be young, most of them under the age of twenty-five. In contrast, all the supervisors included in the sample were older men, all of them over the age of forty-five and, more importantly, all of them white.

TABLE 6.5

Distribution of Male Workforce in Sample

by Occupation and Age Group*

N=147

	10-17	18-25	26-35	36-45	46+	Totals
SPINNING						
Preparation	-	03	02	-	-	05
Spinners	05	08	03	01	-	17
Apprentices	06	-	-	-	-	06
Sub-Totals	11	11	05	01	-	28
% of Occupation	39.3	39.3	17.8	3.6	0.0	100.0
% of Age Group	31.4	18.6	16.1	7.7	0.0	
WEAVING						
Preparation	02	-	-	-	-	02
Weavers	07	13	-	02	-	22
Apprentices	11	04	-	-	-	15
Sub-Totals	20	17	-	02	-	39
% of Occupation	51.3	43.6	0.0	5.1	-	100.0
% of Age Group	52.2	28.6	0.0	15.4	0.0	
FINISHING						
Whitening	-	05	-	02	01	08
Dyeing	-	-	-	01	-	01
Sub-Totals	-	05	-	03	01	09
% of Occupation	0.0	55.6	0.0	33.3	11.1	100.0
% of Age Group	0.0	8.5	0.0	23.1	11.1	
SUPPORTING						
Unskilled	04	16	15	03	03	41
Semi & Skilled	-	05	06	04	02	17
Wood Tenders	-	05	03	-	-	08
Office/Clerical	-	-	02	-	-	02
Professional	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sub-Totals	04	26	26	07	05	68
% of Occupation	5.9	38.2	38.2	10.3	7.4	100.0
% of Age Group	11.4	44.1	83.9	53.8	55.6	
SUPERVISING						
Sub-Totals	-	-	-	-	03	03
% of Occupation	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	100.0
% of Age Group	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	33.3	
TOTAL Absolute	35	59	31	13	09	147

Source: Register of Employees

*At time of census

Table 6.6

**Distribution of Male Workforce in Sample
by Color and Occupation**

	Whites	Mulattos	Blacks	Totals
SPINNING				
Preparation	02	02	01	05
Spinners	01	07	09	17
Apprentices	-	05	01	06
Sub-total	03	14	11	28
#in Occupation	10.7	50.0	39.3	100.0
# of Color Group	9.1	24.6	19.3	
WEAVING				
Preparation	01	-	01	02
Weavers	08	07	07	22
Apprentices	02	05	08	15
Sub-total	11	12	16	39
#in Occupation	28.2	30.8	41.0	100.0
# of Color Group	33.3	21.1	28.1	
FINISHING				
Whitening	04	04	-	08
Dyeing	01	-	-	01
Sub-total	05	04	-	09
#in Occupation	62.6	44.4	0.0	100.0
# of Color Group	15.2	7.0	0.0	
SUPPORTING				
Unskilled	06	15	20	41
Semi/skilled	02	09	06	17
Wood tenders	02	02	04	08
Office/clerical	01	01	-	02
Professional	-	-	-	-
Sub-total	11	27	30	68
#in Occupation	16.2	39.7	44.1	100.0
# of Color Group	33.3	47.3	52.6	
SUPERVISING				
Sub-total	03	-	-	03
#in Occupation	100.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
# of Color Group	9.1	0.0	0.0	
TOTAL				
	33	57	57	147
# of Color Group	100.0	100.0	100.0	
# of Male Workforce	22.4	38.8	38.8	100.0

Source: Register of Employees

In this respect, it is important to note that whereas in the case of women age and color did not seem to operate as relevant attributes in their specific placement in the factory--nearly all women were confined to the Spinning and Weaving sectors, regardless of age and color--the same did not occur when the male workforce was concerned. This is clear in the case of age, as discussed earlier. As to color, however, the differentiation is more subtle but still present. As displayed on Table 6.6, white men were more evenly distributed among the different sectors and occupations of the factory than their mulattos and black counterparts. Ironically, in fact, no black men in the sample were found to be among those working in the finishing process--neither in the 'whitening' nor in 'dyeing' activities. Likewise, none were employed in the office nor in clerical tasks. Instead, they tended to be more concentrated in Supporting activities, particularly as *serventes* (i.e., 'attending helpers' or 'servants') and *empilhadores de lenha* ('wood tenders'); they represented nearly half of all men in these occupational categories. Even those included among the 'semi/skilled' workers, were more likely to be semi-skilled construction workers, working for the minimum wages.⁶² Indeed, like their slave ancestors in pre-abolition times, so too the black male workforce at Fábrica São Braz was generally in charge of the labor intensive tasks, that is to say, those tasks requiring more physical force than skills.

The Working Day

Regardless of color, sex, age or occupation, all workers at Fábrica São Braz worked a minimum of eight hours a day, six days a week from Monday through Saturday, putting in a work load of at least forty-eight hours per week. Up to the mid-1950s, before the factory started to have a night shift, the regular working hours were from 7:00 in the morning until noon, and from 1:00 until 4:00pm, giving workers a one-hour lunch break. Nursing mothers enjoyed a longer break: they could leave at 11:15 so as to nurse their babies.

Most spinners and weavers, including minors and apprentices, were asked to put in extra hours. During the third week of May, 1945, for instance, 96.4% of the weavers listed on Book #2 of the Registro de Ferias da Fábrica Sao Braz (payroll book) for that year, worked overtime, most of them (i.e. 81.7%) putting in five extra hours (Table 6.7). Let it be noted that among the 13 women who did not work overtime, 12 were on maternity leave while the thirteenth was on leave due to an accident suffered in the factory. But working overtime was the rule, not an exception at Fábrica Sao Braz. During the late 1950s, when signing their employment contracts, workers were also asked to sign an agreement in which they were "obliged, when necessary, to work two (2) extra hours per day."⁶³

⁶² The minimum wage was first instituted along with other labor legislation enacted during the Vargas regime. See Silva (1990).

⁶³ A photocopy of a contract is included in the addenda of this dissertation.

Table 6.7

NUMBER OF EXTRA HOURS WORKED BY WEAVERS
PER SEX AND CATEGORY⁶⁴
N=382

# of Hours	Minors		Apprentices		Adults		Total	%
	M	F	M	F	M	F		
0	-	02	-	01	01	10	14	3.6
1	-	-	-	-	-	02	02	0.5
2	01	-	-	01	-	07	10	2.7
3	-	-	-	01	-	10	11	2.9
4	01	-	-	02	07	23	33	8.6
5	01	10	01	10	26	264	312	81.7
Total	03	12	01	15	34	316	382	
%	0.8	3.2	0.3	4.0	9.0	82.7		100.0

Source: Book #2, *Resumo de Ferias da Fábrica Sao Braz*-1945.

As a rule, the workday at Fábrica São Braz started very early--at 6:00 in the morning--when a first whistle was sounded at the factory, announcing to all of Plataforma that a new day had broken and to workers that it was time for them to get ready for work. Half an hour later, at 6:30 am, came the second whistle, warning workers that they should get on their way to the factory. Exactly at 7:00 o'clock sounded the *xereta*, the last whistle. At its sounding, the factory gates were closed and once closed, nobody else was allowed to go inside.

Gatekeepers were instructed to be rigid in keeping this rule and were threatened with a dismissal if they failed to enforce it. And to make sure that they followed instructions, the manager would often stand nearby at the sounding of the *xereta*. As D. Adelia, a former weaver relates:

⁶⁴ The tabulations correspond to extra hours worked during the last week of May, 1945.

When the first whistle was sounded, it gave you the signal. Once it sounded, you had to stop everything you were doing at home and leave because when the '*xereta*' sounded, they closed the gates. Oh, how many times I ran, ran, only to find the gates closed: 'Let me in, for God's sake, let me in!', I would say, and the gatekeeper would then answer: 'No way, I can't, look, there is the manager, I can't.' Then I would whine, 'Please, let me earn my daily bread...' to no avail.

Faced with a locked gate, some workers, out of despair, would venture in by jumping over the back gates of the factory. If caught, however, they would be out of the job. That is exactly what happened to Edson T. Guimarães, a sixteen year old spinning apprentice, whose employee's record has the following notation: "Dismissed on 06/03/52 for jumping the back gate of the Factory after the last whistle."

Even if by any chance workers were successful in talking their way in through the gatekeeper or in jumping the back gate without being caught, their tardiness in coming to the machines would already have been noticed and recorded by the overseers. In D.Josefa's words:

When we came in, the overseer was already by the looms and knew who was there. Those who were not in or not ready, or were late from lunch, he would write off, record them as absent, and they would lose their day.

Latecomers to the machines could work if they so wished: but being late meant that they would not receive the '*recuperado*', that is, their Sunday's 'rest pay', as D.Linda complained:

If we arrived five minutes late, we would lose the '*recuperado*', the payment for our Sunday's rest, so we had to do everything possible to avoid being late at our machines. We could be on time from Monday through Friday, but if for instance we were two minutes late on Saturday, we would lose our rest pay.

Rules and Regulations and the Gender of 'Docile Bodies'

Inside the gates of the factory, a 'no smoking' rule was strictly applied, all violators being punished with a suspension and sometimes with immediate dismissal. Most workers did not resent but welcomed this rule as a precautionary measure. In D.Amelia's words:

Nobody could smoke and if they smoked, they were suspended for two or three days... because you really couldn't. One cigarette could start a fire and spread to the whole factory. They had people around watching to make sure nobody smoked, and to catch those who did. It was very strict, right ? Can you imagine a textile factory afire ?

This rule applied even to those who did not work in the production lines. On November 24, 1953, for instance, Deusdete M. de Oliveira, a twenty-four year old woman who had been employed in the factory for nearly five years as a *servente* tending to the women's lavatory, was summarily dismissed for smoking on the premises.

As mentioned earlier, for those working in the production lines or operating a machine, a 'no talking' rule was also severely enforced. Indeed, talking during work hours could bring a suspension or even a dismissal, as Eunice C. de Oliveira, a sixteen-year old weaving apprentice was to find out. In her records, the following observation was registered: "Admonished by the overseer in 08/17/59 for constant chatting. Dismissed on 02/21/59."

The reason given to workers for the imposition of this rule was that 'talking' took their attention away from the machine, putting them in danger of having an accident. As related by D.Adelia:

We could not talk. Well, let's say, during lunch time, when the machines were not running, we could talk... But once you started running the

machine, when the factory started running again, then there was danger. They did not want you to talk because it was really dangerous.

As it will be shown ahead, accidents were rather common occurrences particularly in the weaving sector. However, no one who witnessed such accidents has confirmed that those who suffered them had actually been talking at the time of their occurrence. On the other hand, even if this rule was warranted as a precautionary measure, it must also be seen as part of a total process of imposing and impounding upon workers the factory's 'shop floor discipline'.

Not surprisingly, most of those suspended and/or dismissed for 'insubordination' or 'indiscipline' were minors, many of them apprentices, and thus still in the process of being molded according to the factory's ideal model of the subordinated worker. Let it also be noted that it was especially among the men that acts of indiscipline, insubordination, or behavior otherwise not in accordance with shopfloor discipline were to be manifested and punished. Apparently--and possibly as a result of the workings of 'gender ideology' which depicts boys as 'naturally' more unruly than girls--the management was more willing to accept 'misbehaving' on the part of young men than in the case of young women. For instance, whereas young men's misbehaving did not necessarily lead to a suspension followed by a dismissal, all of the women in the sample--young and older--who were suspended, were subsequently dismissed.

This relatively higher degree of tolerance on the part of management in relation to young men is apparent in the case of Milton Freire Alencar.

Admitted at the factory in 1941 when he was only thirteen years old to work in the section of cardas in the Spinning sector, Milton's records show that he was suspended at least four times without being dismissed for 'indiscipline', as follows:

"05/23/41. Milton Alencar and Gilberto Sacramento suspended for indiscipline and fighting, and placed in custody of the Manager."

"08/25/47. Suspended the rest of the week for smudging his colleagues' head with tar. By order of the Manager."

"10/19/49. Suspended for 10 days for having been found sleeping behind the machine. By order of the Overseer."

"02/29/52. Suspended for one day for arguing with his colleague Reinaldo Santos. By order of the Manager."

Mill management was also equally tolerant of Vivaldo José Costa's misbehaving. Before being dismissed in November of 1953, this sixteen year old spinning apprentice was suspended three times in a row for being away from his assigned post and catching a nap in one of the barracks instead of working. In contrast, Edina Pires, Gersi Pessoa, Tereza de Almeida, Odete Lopes dos Santos, and Eunice C. de Oliveira, all of them women weavers, sixteen years old or younger, were suspended for 'indiscipline' and dismissed immediately after without further ado.

Indeed, at Fábrica São Braz, the 'docile bodies' that Foucault (1995) describes, had a gender—it was women as a whole who were expected to be much more subdued and were to conform to the company's rules and regulations more readily than men. As the cited examples indicate, those who did not conform had no place in the mill: they were out of a job at the first showing of insubordination.

This situation was also a result of the gender divide in the mill. Since nearly all women worked in the production lines, they were actually much more likely to be under close surveillance and supervision than their male counterparts, and thus much more likely to be caught when transgressing the rules.

A Real 'Sweatshop': Hazards and Accidents

Regardless of sex, however, those working in the production lines, whether in the spinning or weaving sector, worked under very harsh conditions. "It was hell in there," remembers D. Elenita, and indeed, the workrooms were true 'sweatshops'. To the normal heat of Salvador which can get up to a high of 35 C (90 F) in the summertime, was added that of the machines in operation, bringing the temperature in the shopfloors to way over 40 C (100 F). And there could be no windows opened for fresh air to come through since the wind and cooler temperatures often made the cotton fibers break, resulting in constant interruptions in the workflow. As described by D. Linda:

Sometimes, it was so hot in there, it was like an oven, you couldn't breathe. And there could be no ventilation since the wind could break the machine or make the cotton fibers break or '*cair na prega*', that is, fall out of place. When it would fall out of '*prega*'...it delayed your work, and then you would have to speed up your machine to catch up.

Besides the intense heat, operators also had to put up with the loud noise from the machines. Indeed, former employees have often observed that it was so loud in fact that the rule of 'no talking' might as well be one of 'no shouting' for even those working close together could not hear each

other unless screaming at the top of their voices. "The noise in there was such that one of my friends went totally deaf," reported D. Elenita, to which D. Linda then added:

The noise of the machines, the 'tic-tac' of the machines in your ears all they long, it drove you crazy. I would never wish you a job in a factory. It was awful.

For D. Josefa, however, the worst thing in the shopfloor was the dust produced from the cotton fibers. As she commented:

It was really something, that dust. A lot of people got sick in their throat, got sick in their lungs because of that dust. I myself was always hoarse because of that cotton dust.

Of course, the long hours spent in the factory under intense heat, hearing the uproar of the machines, and inhaling the dust from flying cotton fibers had harmful effects. Sick leaves due to prolonged illnesses were not uncommon among workers, particularly those working in production lines. Surprisingly, however, despite the harsh working conditions to which workers were submitted in the mill, the rate of recorded accidents requiring medical attention among those in the selected sample is quite low. As shown on Table 6.8, for instance, only 7.0% of them suffered accidents of greater proportions and/or had them recorded. However, this rate was nearly twice as high among women (8.4%) than among men (4.8%). But, again, this differential rested on the fact that more women than men were to be found in the production lines and particularly in the weaving sector, where the greatest number of accidents apparently occurred.

TABLE 6.8
Accidents Requiring Medical Attention
by Sex and Sector/Activities

Sector/ Activities	Total Workers in Sector	Accidents Reported			%
		Women	Men	W + M	
Spinning	63	02	02	04	6.3
Weaving	235	18	03	21	8.9
Finishing	09	-	-	-	0.0
Supporting	71	-	02	02	2.8
Supervising	03	-	-	-	0.0
Total	385	20	07	27	7.0
% of Sex		8.4	4.8		

Source: Register of Employees

In this respect, it is significant to note that none of the workers in the sample involved in supervising activities and in the finishing sector, and only 2.8% of those in supporting activities were reported to have accidents. In the weaving sector, however, this rate reached 8.9%, followed by the spinning sector, with an accident rate of 6.3%.

Accidents suffered by spinners usually involved their fingers and/or hands and many of them were not recorded on the employee's file. Since they worked between two machines holding and twisting the yarn to go in the spindles, they would often burn their fingers in the machines, as recalled by D.Linda:

I used to burn my fingers all the time touching the machines, I often burned all my fingers. But I sort of got used to it because if I got a blister today, tomorrow I would have to work anyway. My hands were really rough, I had many calluses, I still can feel them. Our hands always felt like animal paws.

Fingers also got caught, crushed, and sometimes mutilated by the spindles and other machines in the sector. For instance, in the employee's records of the stretching machine operator Maria Izabel Silva, the following observation was recorded:

On 08/11/53, at 11:00 am, Maria Izabel Silva suffered an accident in the stretching machine, losing the first phalanx of the index finger in her left hand, and was then transported to the Hospital do Pronto Socorro where she remained from the date of the accident until 12/16/53, according to the Factory's Medical Certificate.

Less common but much more dangerous were the accidents caused by the spindles coming loose and flying around. On 03/16/55, one such accident took place, that hit the 16-year old apprentice Geraldo da Paixão in his right eye. As a result, Geraldo became blind in that eye and was subsequently dismissed from the factory. According to the observations in his records:

On 03/16/55 at 11:15 a.m. this worker suffered an accident on his right eye. In not being accepted by the National Insurance Company on the same date, he received the legal indemnities for the dismissal on 06/14/55.

In the weaving sector, the major sources of accidents were the loom-shutters. They would often come loose and fly around, hitting and injuring the weavers in different parts of their bodies, usually on their left-side, as witnessed in the following entries on employees' records:

On 03/14/51 Izabel dos Santos suffered a strong blow by the loom-shutter on her left ear and was directed to the National Insurance Company.

On 12/05/55. Odete Santos suffered an accident. Strong blow by the loom-shutter.

On 01/30/56. Olindina Batista suffered a traumatism on her left arm and on the left breast region. Loom-shutter blow.

Some of workers were subject to more than one accident. According to the entries in his *ficba de empregado*, for example, José Francisco dos Santos, a 16-year old apprentice weaver, suffered two different accidents in one year, both caused by the loom-shutter:

04/23/55. Victimized by an accident. Concussion and laceration injury in the palm region of the left hand.

12/15/55. Victimized by an accident. Concussion and laceration injury in the left eyebrow.

Former employees recalled that when an accident occurred, the victim was immediately rushed out of the shop floor and taken to the physician's quarters for first aid. Depending on the extent and seriousness of the injury, they would be taken to the City Hospital and later directed to the National Insurance Company (*Companhia Nacional de Seguros*) to claim accident related leave and compensation.⁶⁵ But on the shop floor, '*mestres*' and '*contra-mestres*' worked hard to hush and/or cut short any comments related to the accident. Not rarely, in fact, they acted so fast in removing the victims and in bringing things back to normal around their work space, that many people in the same workroom would only learn of the accident on the following day, when their fellow workers did not show up for work at the mill. So testified D. Linda and D. Adelia:

⁶⁵ On legislation pertaining to accident leaves and compensation, see Silva (1990).

There were a lot of accidents, but they were covered up by the factory. There were mutilated fingers, hard blows by the loom-shutter, but they hushed it all up so we wouldn't find out about them (D.Linda).

When accidents happened we would only learn about them on the following day. They didn't want anybody to know there had been an accident (D.Adelia).

One particular accident, however, was so serious that the factory closed for the day. Though no records were found to confirm it, all former employees seem to remember it well and comment upon it to emphasize how dangerous working in the mill could be. As told by D.Heloisa, who at the time worked in the preparation for weaving area and claims to have been an eye witness:

I saw a very serious accident happen. One of my colleagues bent down and as she did it her hair got caught in the chain of the machine and it pulled everything, it nearly scalped her completely. She did not die because God was watching over her. Everybody started screaming 'Stop, stop'. The whole factory stopped everything that day. It was awful.

As was often the case, the management found the victim's carelessness to be the cause of the accident. As a result of this accident, however, the company finally decided to apply some precautionary measures; on the following day, it was decreed that all women with long hair had to tie it up for work.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Gender, Class, and Protest

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I have painted a gloomy picture of work conditions at Fábrica São Braz. However, it should be clarified that they were not necessarily any worse than those faced by workers in other factories in Brazil in the period under consideration. Furthermore, as other workers throughout Brazil, they long voiced their protest and organized struggles to improve their condition.⁶⁶

In this chapter, I discuss the forms of resistance, organization and protest in which workers at Fábrica São Braz engaged and the social relations in which their actions were embedded. It is also my intention to delineate how they are remembered, and how the recollections of the women differ from that of men who were involved in the struggles.

An overall picture of workers' protest in Brazil is provided by Edgard Carone (1969) in the introduction to his three-volume anthology on Brazilian labor movements. According to Carone, labor movements reflected regional disparities engendered by the uneven process of capitalist development. As such, the major events and strides in the

⁶⁶ The growing interest on Brazilian labor history observed in the last two decades has engendered the appearance of a number of studies in which the harshness of industrial workers' condition during the first half of the century has been well documented and analyzed. To a large extent, many of these works have dealt with denouncements by workers themselves appearing in the *imprensa operária*, that is, in the different labor journals published at that time, but most of them in the southern states. See, for example, Carone 1979, Decca 1982, Fausto 1983, Hahner 1986, Hall & Pinheiro 1979, Maram 1979, Pena 1983, Rago 1985, Rodrigues, L. 1969. On the 'imprensa operária', see Ferreira 1978.

'making of the Brazilian working class' have taken place primarily in the southern states (Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo in particular) where most of the industrial workers have concentrated. In addition, it was also in this region that in the first decades of the century the largest contingents of European immigrants were found. They had brought along not only a previous experience in labor organizing and collective action but also the ideologies of the different currents of thought--i.e., socialist, anarcho-syndicalist and later, communist--brewing in Europe at the time. Thus, not by chance, during that period labor movements in the south tended to reflect the "ideological and organizational complexity" of the European experience (Carone 1979:5).

To a certain extent this would be true in other parts of the country as well. However, in the northeast, labor movements strode at a slower pace and with less intensity than in the south. Industrial workers still comprised a very small percentage of the labor force in the region at the time and, for the most, they were Brazilian-born, illiterate and less exposed to foreign ideas. Even local labor leaders had little contact with their counterparts in the south. Instead, the predominant currents among organized labor in this region tended to be much more 'reformist' in their views.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Unlike anarcho-syndicalists who regarded unions as organs for struggle and 'direct actions'—e.g., boycotts, sabotage, public minfestations and general or partial strikes—as the major instruments of the struggling working classes (Fausto 1977:75-76), labor leaders in the northeast still upheld for their organizations the artisan tradition of self-help and self-improvement”(Hahner 1986:96). One such organization was the *Centro Operário da Bahia* (Bahia Workers' Center). Created in 1894, it aimed at

In part this was due to the patriarchal/service tradition and the paternalist attitudes that characterized work relations in the northeast which served to deter unionization. This patriarchal tradition also contributed to a greater accentuation of the gender divide within the Brazilian labor movement itself. The tendency to exclude women from unions was pronounced even within textile factories where women were numerically prominent. As June Hahner noted, despite regional disparities and ideological differences, "the world of organized labor in early twentieth-century Brazil, like the world of elite politics, remained overwhelmingly male" (1986:232).⁶⁸

Many labor organizations did not see the presence of women in their midst with favorable eyes; some actually barred membership to women (Hahner 1986; Pena 1983). Even when unions welcomed women, organizers did not elect them to the directorates nor allow them to rise to leadership positions (Hahner 1986:223).

Like other men, labor leaders saw the employment of women not only as villifying the female sex and humiliating men but also as a threat to

defending 'the cultural and moral development' of workers and 'fight for their interests.' Nevertheless, it acted more as an 'assistentialist' rather than as a 'syndical' organization, being controlled by groups of workers who collaborated with and were strongly influenced by conservative politicians. It was only after 1910—when it came under the influence of Bahian socialists—that it began to take a greater part in workers' movements (Fontes 1982:102,n11). On the conservative character of trade unions in Bahia up to the first decade of this century see also Santos (1974). On anarcho-syndicalism in São Paulo, see Fausto (1983) and Maram (1979). For a discussion of socialism and trade unions in Brazil, see Rodrigues (1969, 1970).

⁶⁸ This, of course, was not unique to Brazil. See, for example, Milkman 1980, Milkman et al 1985, Rowbotham 1973.

their own jobs and wages.⁶⁹ This applied even to those leaders who otherwise demonstrated awareness of the double exploitation suffered by women workers. They still regarded them as a threat--as revealed in this excerpt of a document endorsed by the Tailor's Union of Rio de Janeiro, published in 1913 in the labor periodical **A Razão**:

Women are by far the most exploited people in our profession, and, although we regret saying so, at this time they are our most dangerous competitors, contributing mightily to our distress (in Hahner 1986:233).

As a rule, however, during the first decades of the century, organized labor in Brazil portrayed women as physically and morally 'fragile' beings, in need of male guidance and protection (Rago 1985). Not surprisingly, instead of fighting for equal wages for women, unions assumed a 'paternalist' attitude in calling for protective legislation which, although namely tending to the 'needs' of women (such as legislation limiting the work of women in night shifts), would also result in the creation of obstacles to their employment. In this respect, organized labor and bourgeois legislators alike shared the view that "woman's place was in the home." This view was clearly expressed by a Congressman in the early 1920s in proposing protective legislation for working women:

⁶⁹During a meeting of the Union of Workers in Textile Factories in Rio de Janeiro, for instance, a male weaver, charging that factories were replacing men with women, emphatically proclaimed: "We should not teach these women who tomorrow will substitute us; we should make them understand that their place is at home, caring for and educating their children...; hopefully, they will understand their role as educators of those who tomorrow will take our place in the struggle for our (daily) bread and in conquering the well-being of humanity. In this manner, they will demonstrate to society that they are true queens in their homes. The role of a mother is not to abandon her children at home to go to the factory to work; this abandonment often brings lamentable consequences. It is better that men produce such as to provide for the needs of their families" (in Fausto 1983:116, my translation).

We are all in agreement in considering that work (out of the home) is the abasement and enslavement of women since it means the end of conjugal solidarity, of the family. The true kingdom of women is the home. If she abandons it, if she does not know how to tend to her husband and children, she loses her power, her influence is gone (in Moura 1982:132, my translation).

Margareth Rago (1985) has further observed that even anarcho-syndicalists and socialists, who otherwise called for 'equal pay for equal work' and supported the political and judicial equality of women, shared in those views. Rago notes then, that as a whole, the Brazilian labor movement "attributed to itself the right of leadership over women, be it for their 'fragile physical constitution,' or for the lack of combativeness which characterize the 'feminine nature' (1985:67, my translation). Worse still, June Hahner reports, they often "blamed women for their own victimization, claiming that the exploitation of women was due to their lack of cohesion and solidarity" (1986:233).

Curiously, however, despite such claims, reports appearing in the journals published by these and other currents of organized labor indicate that women were often in the front-line of many of the strikes within the factories of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro at that time (Pena 1981, Pena & Lima 1983, Rago 1985). Indeed, women were active participants in the strike movements; yet, as Maria Valéria Pena (1981:183) well observes, their combativeness was 'disorganized,' in that it was expressed primarily in spontaneous manifestations—those "not originating from a calculated or pre-planned political practice." More often than not, women's protests arose out of indignation with incidents born out of the day-to-day

dynamics of the work process and the dual exploitation--that of 'class' as workers, and that of 'gender' in virtue of their sex--to which they were submitted. Thus, the first major strike staged by textile workers in Rio de Janeiro (1903), was in protest to the dismissal of a woman who had taken time off on maternity leave. She was actually dismissed by the very overseer who had deflowered her and fathered her child (Fausto 1977:115).⁷⁰

Labor Protest in Bahia

A full account of labor movements in Bahia during the period under consideration is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Nevertheless, it is relevant to outline their wider contours and pinpoint the highlights so as to place the actions of workers at Fábrica São Braz and their recollections of these actions within a historical setting. In this sense, it pays to point out that in spite of the non-radical stance of labor leaders and the predominance of so-called 'yellow' unions in the northeast, strikes were not necessarily uncommon events in Salvador during the first decades of the century. As José Raymundo Fontes (1982) has shown, not only were they relatively frequent but, more importantly, they involved different categories of workers struggling for better working conditions as well as

⁷⁰ Similar incidents related to the brutal and arbitrary actions of overseers were also the 'drop in the bucket' which led women in other factories to start a strike. However, as Pena emphasized in discussing the strike staged by 700 women in a factory in Rio de Janeiro (back in 1901), "the women themselves legitimated male authority: they were able to paralyze the factory, to form picket lines, and to fight against the scabs, but delegated the negotiations to the male sex" (1983:186).

the recognition of their unions.

More commonly, railroad workers led the major strikes, however, textile workers did not trail too far behind. As early as September of 1895, for instance, five of the factories incorporated a few years before into União Fabril (Queimado, São Carlos, Modelo, São Salvador and Nossa Senhora de Penha) were paralyzed for three days when workers went on a strike in protest against the system of piece-work payment (**Jornal de Notícias** in Fontes 1982:253). In 1907, another major strike --this time demanding higher wages--paralyzed production in different textile factories around the city (**Diário de Notícias** in Fontes 1982:254).⁷¹

However, it was not until the end of World War I that labor movements in Bahia were to reach a high point. During the war, Brazilian economy had experienced a boost in production which had been sustained through the intensification of the work day.⁷² At the same time, the cost of living had risen sharply, particularly in the cities, while wages were compressed even more (Fausto 1986). By 1919, workers' grievances had escalated considerably.⁷³ In June of 1919, after a wave of partial strikes, a

⁷¹ The strike started on 09/14/1907 at the factory in Boa Viagem (owned by Cia. Empório Industrial do Norte founded by Luís Tarquínio) where workers demanded that wages be based on meters of cloth produced, raises on wages of day workers (*jornaleiros*), and extinction of the system of fines. By 09/17, the strike had already spread to two other factories, among them, Fábrica São Braz. The movement ended on 09/24 with workers going back to work with the promise that their demands would be partially answered (Fontes 1982:79-80).

⁷² In 1915, for instance, workers at the Boa Viagem mill (owned by Cia. Empório Industrial do Nordeste created by Luís Tarquínio) went on strike protesting against too much work (Fontes 1982).

⁷³ In January of 1919, for instance, workers at the Boa Viagem factory went on strike and were joined a few days later by those at Fábrica São Braz (Fontes 1982).

general strike hit Salvador paralyzing the city for more than a week (Fontes 1982). By then, many categories of workers already had their own unions, textile workers being organized into two major unions: the Weavers' Union of Bahia (*União Geral dos Tecelões da Bahia*) and the Union of Workers in Textile Factories (*União Baiana dos Trabalhadores em Fábricas de Tecidos do Brasil*). They stopped their machines to demand recognition of these unions and for the institution of the 8-hour day.

Employers responded by calling the police to intervene and workers were violently beaten. They attempted to demobilize workers by dismissing the leaders of the movement. But workers held on until they were assured that their demands would be answered. By August, however, textile factories had yet to comply to the terms of the negotiations and in protest, workers at Fábrica Conceição (then owned by União Fabril) went on another strike (**A Tarde** in Fontes 1982:261). This strike reawakened the wave of dissatisfaction among textile workers so that less than a month later, nearly all textile factories in Salvador--Fábrica São Braz including--were paralyzed by a major strike. This time they demanded recognition of their unions and the readmission of their dismissed leaders.

Although textile workers succeeded in having their unions officially recognized, the companies stood firm against the readmission of those fired as 'instigators' of the movement. In response, in January of 1921, there was another major strike involving workers in factories owned by Progresso Industrial, Fábrica São Braz among them. Once again, workers demanded readmission of their colleagues; they also demanded the

revocation of the system of fines which had plagued textile workers for generations.⁷⁴ But Progresso Industrial would not abide by their demands; instead, they severely repressed the movement, calling the police to break up picket lines and imprison the leaders as "disturbers of the order" (Fontes 1982). Moreover, emulating their counterparts in the south, local industrial entrepreneurs began to compile and circulate lists of the dismissed "disturbers of the order," so as to ensure that they would not find employment again in factories in Salvador.⁷⁵

With the imprisonment and exclusion of their leaders, collective actions in Bahia began to dwindle down to almost a complete stall in the following years.⁷⁶ The crash of 1929 and Vargas rise to power in 1930 rekindled industrial labor movements. Vargas encouraged unions but placed these organizations under the tutelage and control of the State, prohibiting the formation (or survival) of independent unions. Furthermore, he continued the deporting of foreign 'agitators,' a policy established by his predecessors.⁷⁷ At the same time Vargas was to cooptate

⁷⁴ Although it is known that workers were subjected to fines at Fábrica São Braz, no documentation was found regarding this matter. On the different types of fines imposed on workers in factories in Rio de Janeiro, see, for example, Goes 1988.

⁷⁵ On the circulation of these lists in the south, see, for example, Dean (1969), Gomes (1979), and Leme (1978).

⁷⁶ According to Fontes (1982), only a minor strike--held by workers at Fábrica Conceição in 1926--was staged by textile workers during this period. In the south, however, workers continued their protest. Even if their actions were less frequent and intense than in the previous decade, some response came from the State in the form of the passage of labor legislation. For a discussion of the strikes that took place in São Paulo during the period of the legislation then passed, see Silva (1990).

⁷⁷ This policy was applied particularly to anarcho-syndicalists, socialists, and communists (Fausto 1977; Dulles 1977). It would be intensified even more so with the so-called 'Intentona Comunista' (Communist Conspiracy) of 1935; after this episode, leftist parties became illegal and their members and sympathizers

the support of workers and the non-organized masses at large, earning the appellation of 'father of the poor' (pai dos pobres). He also created the Labor Bureau establishing by Decree (Decree no. 19.770 of 3/19/1931) the regulation of the unionization of the patron and labor classes (Silva 1990). While these policies would be a blow to the existing unions, particularly to the more progressive ones, it benefited the still unorganized laborers as well as the unions that had been repressed by employers such as those in the Northeast (Lopes 1988:209).⁷⁸ Furthermore, in June 1932, while a wave of strikes erupted in Sao Paulo, Vargas responded by promulgating by decree the regulation of women's working hours in commercial and industrial establishments and instituting the eight-hour workday, for long demanded by workers.⁷⁹

By 1944, however, discontentment with Getulio Vargas' dictatorial regime was brewing throughout the country. The creation of a minimum

were forced to go underground or face persecution and imprisonment. See, for example, Fausto 1977, Dulles 1977.

⁷⁸ Silva (1990:97) notes that although initially the more progressive unions, particularly those largely influenced by anarcho-syndicalists (such as that of the Railroad workers in Sao Paulo), protested and resisted the control of the State, gradually the 'domestication' of the unions would be accepted. For Silva, this came especially under the influence of the Communist currents which accepted the imposed tutelage, in the hopes of working within the unions to change them. For a discussion of the 'bureaucratization' of unions in Brazil, see Souza Martins 1979.

⁷⁹ It is well to note as does Zélia Lopes da Silva (1990:93), that many of these demands were incorporated in the text of the new legislation merely as 'principles.' Warren Dean points out, for instance, that the effect of the limitation of the workday to eight hours "was lessened by a clause that permitted an extra two hours of work if both parties agreed" (1969:191). Nonetheless, they still had the effect of demobilizing workers while at the same time promoting the image of Getulio Vargas as pai dos pobres. This image would be consolidated with the passage, in 1943, of a series of labor related laws which 'consolidated' in one package much of the pre-existing legislation--thus becoming known as *Consolidação das Leis do Trabalho* (Consolidation of Labor Laws) or simply C.L.T.--while also introducing new ones such as the establishment of a minimum wage, more extensive maternity benefits, longer paid vacations, retirement benefits and the like, most of which are still valid today. On labor legislation in Brazil, see also Gomes (1979).

wage and passage of the *Consolidação das Leis do Trabalho* (C.L.T.) with extensive labor legislation had encountered dissatisfaction and resistance on the part of the entrepreneurial classes, mining their support of the government. This was compounded with Brazil's entrance in World War II by joining the Allied Forces against the totalitarian regimes of the Axis. With the defeat of the latter and victory of the 'democratic' forces, the Vargas' regime lost its remaining legitimacy. In 1946, Vargas stepped down and Marechal Eurico Gaspar Dutra was elected president, while a Constitutional Congress, elected for the drafting of a New Constitution took office.

In the 'power vacuum' created by the underlying crisis of hegemony, labor movements found space for revival. During the war years, Brazilian textile industries had lived a period portrayed by Stanley Stein as one of 'euphoria' as they were "called upon to market goods in Latin America, Europe, and the Near East and, in 1944, even to supply both UNRRA and the Conseil Français d'Approvisionnement with a total of 150,000 yards of cloth" (1957:165). To accomplish this task, manufacturers intensified production, running their mill around the clock when and wherever possible. To secure the availability of labor, they also succeeded in having official approval for the policy under which workers "could not leave one cotton mill for a job at higher pay in any other industrial establishment without permission from employers" (Stein 1957:177). These wartime measures of curbing workers' mobility and the intensification and extension of the work day increased dissatisfaction among textile workers.

In São Paulo this led to 75 strikes, 60 of them during the first two months of that year alone. In 1947, there were another 18 major strikes, and, in 1948, 25, many of them involving textile workers (Paoli 1987:90).

Bahia also experienced a period of mobilization and action in the years immediately after World War II. This 'new' period was marked initially by attempts to create an umbrella-like organization that would bring together different syndicates. The Movimento Unificado dos Trabalhadores-MUT (Workers' Unified Movement) was formed in Salvador in April of 1945, under the initiative of the communists. A great part of the efforts of the MUT was directed towards combating the spread of the Movimento Popular Integralista (Popular Integralist Movement), a fascist-linked group, among workers and their unions.⁸⁰ Towards that end, in June, 1945, MUT sponsored the "Labor's Week Against Integralismo" holding several meetings and rallies in Plataforma (**O Momento** in Vazquez 1988, Addendum I).

Of special note were the II and III Syndical Congresses of Bahian Workers held on May of 1945 and May of 1946 in Salvador, to formulate a common program in defense of workers' demands and interests (Vasquez 1988). In both of these congresses, delegates voted unanimously in favor of syndical autonomy, that is, freedom from governmental control of the unions.

Government control served to limit the growth of independent

⁸⁰ On 'integralism' in Brazil see Chasin (1978).

unions. It remained as a major point of contention between labor organizations and the State for decades to come. Nevertheless, unions were strengthened as they grew to become the official voice of workers, the legal organs for the channeling of their demands and complaints and for collective bargaining. Legislation enacted during the Vargas period did however affect the forms of labor actions. 'Spontaneous' strikes, which had been nearly the rule in earlier periods, had become illegal. Strikes could be called by the unions only after workers present in assemblies so decided by a vote. To the above limitations one has to add the passing of security measures which outlawed strikes during the war years.

With the end of the war, workers once again began to organize strikes. In August of 1945, textile workers led by the *União Babiana de Trabalhadores nas Fábricas de Tecidos* staged a strike for higher wages and bonus. Workers at Fábrica São Braz would join in. On January, 1946, it was the *União de Tecelões da Bahia* that led another strike; 6,000 weavers in Salvador--among them weavers from Fábrica São Braz--stopped their looms to demand payment of their Christmas Bonus. In March of the same year, 10,000 weavers mobilized for collective bargaining (*dissídio coletivo*), asking for a 100% wage raise. But their demands were not answered; worse still, textile companies responded by dismissing strikers (**O Momento** in Vasquez 1988, Appendix II).

Nonetheless, the stage for newer struggles was set. During the following two years, weavers and textile workers as a whole staged a number of strikes involving large numbers of workers and paralyzing all

textile factories in Salvador. Laborers in other factories of Salvador and in other major cities in the country also intensified their actions. That eventually led to severe repression. By 1949, several of the unions would be under governmental interdiction, their leaders imprisoned, and the Communist Party, then cast as the perpetrator of all of this 'disorder,' was decreed illegal and its members and sympathizers once again persecuted.

In the early 1950s, Getulio Vargas, well aware of the level of combativeness that labor movements in Brazil had then reached, attempted to capitalize on it and attract the support of organized labor. He created the populist Partido Trabalhista Brasileiro (PTB), the Brazilian Labor Party, which was to thrive with the support of unions allied with the dominant classes (Weffort 1980).

During Getulio Vargas' presidential term--which initiates the so-called 'república populista' (populist republic) in Brazil--the labor movements were largely under the tutelage of PTB.⁸¹ By the late 1950s, when more progressive currents began to gain adherents among workers, the traditional textile industry in Bahia was already experiencing the crisis created by the increased competition from the industries from the South. Like Fábrica São Braz, many factories were on the verge of closing down. With their jobs threatened by the crisis and their numbers dwindling, Bahian textile workers withdrew from major union struggles.

⁸¹ On the rise of populism in Brazil, see, for example, Conniff (1981), Costa (1986), Gomes (1987); on populist syndicalism see Weffort (1973).

Lost Memories and Gendered Memories

The period under consideration in Part II of this work --1930/1960-- begins then with the installation of Getulio Vargas' government and thus with a period in which labor movements in Brazil were to experience a reflux that lasted for over a decade. This was the period when some of the former workers I had the opportunity to interview or their parents were growing up in Plataforma. Several of them had begun to work in the factory precisely when labor movements in Bahia had escalated and major strikes (such as the one staged in 1921) had paralyzed Fábrica São Braz for a number of days.

Aware of these facts, I had hoped to gather either their first-hand recollections of those agitated days in Plataforma, or those that their parents had cared to relate. I was especially interested in what they might have to tell me about the strike movements of the early 1920s not only because very little is still known about them, but more importantly, because what is available in the literature about Bahia makes no mention as to women's presence in the struggles. Indeed, it has been conspicuously silent about their presence which seemed surprising since women had for long comprised the great majority of workers at Fábrica São Braz. I expected to learn something about their participation from the recollections of my informants. In addition, I also hoped to learn about relations between the previous owners of the factory and workers (and the Plataforma community at large) and how they differed from those

established during Comedador Catharino's era.

I must also confess that at the time, I had (finally) finished reading **Memória e Sociedade: Lembranças de Velhos** authored by Eclea Bosi (1979) that focuses on social memories of the old. I remember I had been particularly impressed not only with how childhood memories were highly vivid for the women and men she had interviewed--a fact that I would find to be true of my own informants--but also that even those who took no active part in the labor movements here discussed, still shared a 'heroic image' of that past. Surely, so I thought, as a *vila operária*--a working class community par excellence--Plataforma would have a long oral tradition about the workers and their struggles.

To my surprise, despite repeated prompting on my part none of the people to whom I talked were able or cared enough to talk about the struggles of the generation of workers who had preceded them. These were lost memories in Plataforma. As James Fentress and Chris Wickham clearly point out,

The stakes are high in industrial society: when a dominant culture loses hegemony in a working-class community (as, say, among South Welsh miners), the latter will typically be highly radicalized and difficult to 'control'; conversely, when such a society is effectively controlled by external cultural influences, local senses of belonging, local memories, and the very concept of class identity may cease to exist. Some working-class groups are better able to withstand the dominant historical discourses of the ruling classes than others; and different elements of hegemonic discourses affect different groups in different ways (1992:125).

In the case of Plataforma, this control was achieved through paternalistic dominance. And it is through the lenses of paternalism that

former textile workers in Plataforma have viewed the gains obtained by the struggling working classes in the first three decades of the century. In particular, they understand them not as resulting from workers' struggles but as concessions bestowed to them either by Comendador Catharino or, more often, by Getulio Vargas. Perhaps here lies the reason why they seem to have erased them from their memories.

Indeed, for the workers of Fábrica São Braz (as in the case of Eclea Bosi's informants in São Paulo as well), the labor legislation introduced by Getulio Vargas in the 1930s was "the great historical watershed of the century in Brazil" (Fentress & Wickham 1992:124). Even Sr. Luiz who worked for some time for the weavers' union, firmly believes that it was Getulio Vargas who 'gave' workers their rights. In his own words:

When Getulio Vargas gave the 'coup of 1930,' he traveled around the world, all the different countries to see what they had of good to bring to Brazil. Because before that, we workers had no vacations, no rest, we had nothing. We earned on a productivity basis: if you worked, you earned, you got paid. If they dismissed you, you had no rights, no laws, you had nothing. Getulio Vargas was the one that came with these laws, he gave us the 13th wages [Christmas Bonus], vacations, he formed the syndicates. He gave us everything.

References to Getulio Vargas often appear in the discourse of the workers interviewed, often identified as *pai dos pobres*. D. Linda, who was still a young girl in 1954 when Getulio committed suicide, remembers that for days after his death,

...people would come to work at the factory crying. I remember a woman whining: 'My God, the *pai dos pobres* is dead, the *pai dos pobres* is dead !' I didn't understand much then, I was just a girl, I was a young working girl. I was still a child and already working, I didn't even have breasts then, I was a child. But I remember all of this well, I do.

Sometimes, the references about Getulio Vargas come along with

those about Comendador Catharino. When asked about the relations between owners and workers at Fábrica São Braz, for instance, D. Carlinda made the following association between the two:

Old man Catharino was a good man. He was like Getulio, he was good to the workers. Do you remember Getulio? He was a very good man, he did everything for us workers. Where would we have been without him? When he died, I cried and cried.

A similar association was made by D. Delana:

I am very grateful to the Catharinos, the old man, and to Getulio Vargas. I still have Getulio's picture, do you want to see? The old man Catharino was the father of Plataforma and Getulio was the father of all the 'small people' [*dos pequenos*], the *pai dos pobres*. During his time, we didn't even have to vote. We wanted Getulio! But those times are gone, you don't find good people like them anymore.

Of course, it is not difficult to understand why their images are associated--one reinforcing the other--in the social memory of these former workers. Both of them shared the same paternalistic attitude towards workers. Furthermore, Vargas came into power in 1930, approximately at the same time that Comendador Catharino took over Progresso Industrial which then owned Fábrica São Braz. And Comendador Catharino died in 1944, just a year before Vargas' Estado Novo came to an end. The 'era of Comendador Catharino,' then, coincides roughly with that of Vargas' authoritarian (but paternalistic) regime when the 'watershedding' labor laws were passed.

It is equally important to observe that the 'era of Comendador Catharino' comes to a closing with his death in 1944 precisely at a moment in which production was being intensified to meet World War II market

demands and discontentment was beginning to brew among the laboring classes. By the end of 1945 when labor movements were to take a new turn in Salvador, União Fabril (and with it, Fábrica São Braz) was already in the hands of Comendador Catharino's successors--his relatives (*'os parentes'*) whom, in the memories of former workers, "put an end to everything which was good in the factory" (*'acabaram com tudo que tinha de bom na fábrica'*).

It is not surprising then that workers at Fábrica São Braz would mobilize for action, adhering to the strikes called for by the unions in that period. Nor does it seem odd that these struggles, unlike the earlier ones, have found a place in individual recollections as well as in the social memory of the community as a whole. They are also closer in time and even those who claim that they took no part in them, as many of the women so declared, remember that there were "many strikes" in those years. Nevertheless, their recollections of these strikes are not only vague and fragmented but also often conflicting. For example, whereas Sr.Lauro has affirmed that the major strike was the one staged in 1945, Sr.Luiz swears that the real 'big one' was in 1947. And Sr.José who likes to be very precise with his dates has firmly stated: "the biggest strike we had here was in 1948. I am sure it was in 1948 because it was not during the time of Getulio, it was during Dutra's time."

There are also conflicting statements as to whether these strikes were general or partial. Some, as in the case of D.Luciana, have affirmed that "when the people from the strike command (*comando de greve*) came and

said: 'Stop the machine,' everybody stopped." But D.Linda remembers that not everybody followed these orders: "there were always ass-kissers (*'os puxa-saco'*), right ? they didn't stop." According to D.Din , in fact, "in spite of the commands, many people would take advantage to produce even more."

But while the men interviewed have disagreed as to the precise dates of the strikes and the women do not seem to come to terms among themselves as to their scope (that is, if they were 'general' or 'partial' strikes), the greatest bridge in their recollections runs along gender lines: it runs between men and women. Indeed, it is the women who tend to be much more vague in their memories or even to claim no knowledge or recollections of the strikes whatsoever.⁸² In point of fact, none of the women could remember in what approximate time-period the strikes had been staged, much less their exact years and dates. They were equally vague about what had led workers at Fábrica São Braz in joining the strikes. When asked what were the major objectives of these actions, for instance, their responses revealed not only ignorance but also no great interest in pursuing the matter further:

I don't know. I suppose it was for a raise or it might have been for better work conditions. The *operários* liked to get paid by the week, but the pay was little (D.Josefa).

It beats me. It could have been for wages, they were so small (D.Heloisa).

I have no idea (D.Alma).

⁸² On the issue of 'gender and social memory', see Perrot 1989, Fentress & Wickham 1992, and Bosi 1987.

I don't know for sure. It might have been for more money (D.Marlize).

I cannot tell you, I don't know (D.Zenaide).

I can't remember. I just remember them telling us to stop the machines. People here say it was the communists, but I really don't know (D.Luciana).

I don't know. It could have been because of the communists. It was Lourival and his people that called the strikes (D.Elenita).

These responses contrasted sharply with those given by the men; even Sr.José, and Sr.Lauro who claim to have taken little part in union affairs, have come up with firm answers as to the objectives of those strikes:

Why do you think we '*operários*' would strike ? We worked for wages and the '*patrões*' (employers) always tried to pay us as little as they could. So we had to fight for our wages. It is still like that, right ? It boils down to that, to wages, to money (Sr.José).

Well, here we got paid by production. We got paid according to how much we produced. We had tariffs ('*tarifas*') for the quotas produced. The strikes were to raise the tariffs so we could get paid more (Sr.Lauro).

Contrary to the women, the men also seem to have been less permeable to the hegemonic discourse which then blamed the communists as the perpetrators of the disorder.⁸³ In discussing the strikes, for example, Sr.Fernando (a former 'union man') has strongly denied that claim. In his own words:

While I was working at the factory, there was one big strike, it was in 1945. It was for a raise in the tariffs. Everybody joined the strike. If I am not mistaken, back then there were nine factories here in Salvador, and all the nine went on strike... But they used to say it was the communists, they used to blame communism, although it was not because

⁸³ See Leite Lopes (1988) and Grossi (1988) for accounts of persecutions of 'communists' in other factories in Brazil.

of communism, it was not. It was simply because the operários wanted a raise, that's all (Sr.Fernando).

Like Sr.Fernando, Sr.Luiz has also made such a disclaimer although admitting to the presence of communists among their midst, even among the leaders. As he explained:

Back then, you could not talk about communism. One of the guys who was leading the strike, a nice guy, he was okay, he would say, 'more bread to the *operários*,' and that was fine. But then, when we got to the Labor Court (*Justiça do Trabalho*), the man makes a speech and opens the game: 'Communist here it's me. I am communist!' And what happens, you could see everybody running away... But I have always been for Getulio (*'getulista'*). If you said you were communist back then, the police would beat you up, they really did... There were some communists in the factory, but they were very few, mainly men. But they were not all dismissed with the strike because the union took paternity over them and would not let anybody be dismissed. Communists or not, the case with the *'patrões'* goes as follows: when someone who knows his rights shows up, the company doesn't like it, the company only likes the poor guys that don't know their own rights, only those that can be had by anybody, that's it (Sr.Luiz).

Another important difference observed between the recollections of the men and women interviewed pertains to their attitudes towards the strikes; the men interviewed were much more likely to see them as positive actions leading to concrete gains than were the women. For instance, whereas Sr.Luiz, Sr. Lauro, and Sr. Fernando stated the strikes achieved their objectives in bringing the desired raises, the women had this to say:

Results ? There were no good results, everything continued the same (D.Marlize).

I don't know what kind of result they had. I didn't mess around with these things. I didn't like violence (D.Alma).

It all ended up being the same. The salary didn't go up at all. They went on strike because they wanted to, they knew it would not solve anything. That's why I stayed away from that mess (D.Heloísa).

The strikes led nowhere. A lot of violence, people getting beaten up but

nothing changed (D.Carlinda).

Are you kidding ? There were no good results. The 'big guys' (owners) did not like us then. What they said was law (D.Dinah).

People that go on strike are no good. Why go on strike? You get nowhere with violence. What can the 'little people' (*'os pequenos'*, the poor) get ? (D.Delana).

As revealed in these statements, the association of violence with the strikes, that is, the more negative aspects of those movements are often emphasized in the social memory of women. This occurred not only during the individual interviews (which with a few exceptions were usually conducted in their homes), but also when I brought up the matter of the strikes when two or more of the women were together.

One such occasion came up when my two field assistants (Ana Cristina and Atília) and myself had gone with D.Telma to meet and set up and interview with D.Nina, her neighbor and former colleague at the factory. From the back of her yard where she was hanging the laundry on a chord to dry, D.Nina, upon recognizing D.Telma at the door, yelled at us to come on in. After the proper introductions were made and she had accommodated us in a little patio adjacent to the kitchen, I began to tell her about the objectives of the interviews. This got D.Telma and D.Nina talking about their work in the factory where both had worked as spinners. As they together recalled the noise, the dust, their fingers getting cut in the machines, the rudeness of the assistants towards the women, I asked them what people did back then to try to change those conditions, to which Ana Cristina then added: "Did they go to the union to complain? Did the union

do anything ?." "The union?," replied D.Telma ironically,

The union? The union didn't do much for us women, no way. They had a bunch of communists there, right Nina ? They called the strikes... Do you remember that one, Nina, when it 'rained police' (*'choven policia'*) here in Plataforma ?

D.Nina immediately retorted:

Of course I remember, can't forget that, they beat up everybody, men, women, operário, residents (*'moradores'*), they didn't care.

It was then that D.Telma stood up to tell us the story of D.Marinalva, accompanying her words with sounds and gestures to recreate the scene she swore to have witnessed. Although I will not attempt to describe here D.Telma's dramatization of the incident, her performance boiled down to a policeman beating up a pregnant woman, such that this woman, D.Marinalva, finally falls to the ground, bearing her weight on her left arm and on a twisted left foot which would result on a broken arm and a sprained ankle besides several bruises and escoriations from the beating. But for D.Telma, the catch of this story lies not necessarily on the fact that the police demonstrated utter brutality in beating up a pregnant woman. What she finds most amazing is that,

the baby daughter Marinalva gave birth to came out with a clubbed left foot, twisted exactly the same way the mother had twisted her own when she fell! Can you believe it? They operated on her, the daughter, but she still walks sort of funny. It was from the beatings, you know?

This seems to have deeply impressed her since a week later, D.Telma retold this story to the group of senior women meeting at AMPLA (though this time with less dramatization than at D.Nina's house). And once again,

I was the one who prompted her into reviving that incident. On that afternoon, I had come to the meeting just after talking to Sr. José who had then told me about the 'big strike of 1948.' When I saw D. Telma at the meeting, it occurred me to ask her if the strike he mentioned could have been the same in which the D. Marinalva's story had taken place.

What happened next would make me wonder for a while whether I was being an instrument in the revival or re-creation of workers' struggles in the memory of the community--a negative memory, that is. Indeed, claiming not to remember the year that strike had taken place, D. Telma would check with D. Georgina and D. Georgina with D. Rosa, and very soon everybody in the room was talking about the strikes, that is, about the beatings. They all talked at the same time making it impossible for me to record anything; I missed much of what they were saying. But as I looked around, I could see that D. Telma was relating her eyewitness story to D. Regina, a newcomer to Plataforma, while D. Georgina and D. Rosa, sitting next to her, would throw in their comments and nodding. When D. Telma came to the amazing finale, D. Altina who had remained quiet until then broke into the conversation. Though never an opera singer but having seen much and heard much like any other 92 year old would, D. Altina calmly remembered that one of the policemen involved in those beatings lived in São João, in a section of Plataforma. And then, when her comments seemed to bring no immediate or apparent reaction from those around, she turned to me and added: "You know, his son still lives around here. That boy still asks for my blessing wherever he sees me."

I must have been so entranced with the turn that my simple question had taken that afternoon, that although I did jot down D. Altina's priceless observations in my journal, I never thought to explore its possible implications any further, or better, not until beginning this discussion. Surely, that at least one resident of Plataforma had ostensibly sided with the employers and worse still, was directly involved in the violence perpetrated against his own neighbors, must have had some impact on the community; otherwise, why should D. Altina remember it or care to relate it so many decades later? Unfortunately, this question must go unanswered for the moment. However, D. Altina's observations show that when the women associate the strikes with 'violence', it is not a generic, abstract violence they are talking about but one that comes with vivid images (as in D. Telma's recollections), known names, and recognized faces--and not only on the victim's but also on the perpetrators' side.

To be sure, such images, names, and faces are also part of the memories of men. Sr. José, for example, recalls that the police, not satisfied with beating a supposed communist leader who lived in São João de Plataforma, also beat the leader's wife. "She was a teacher," he informed, "a woman that everybody liked very much, she was good to everybody. But the police didn't care, they beat her just the same, they hurt her badly."

Note should be made to the fact that in this case as in the one related by D. Telma, the victims were women, not men. Doubtless, men were also being beaten, probably much worse than women. Nevertheless, the images that remain in the memory of the people of Plataforma are

those of violence against women, not to men. This is consonant with notions ingrained in gender ideology and associated with the dichotomy '*casa/rua*' (house/street), prevalent in Brazil, which define 'street'--the 'public' sphere, the space of disorder, of 'danger', of violence--as the domain of men (Da Matta 1985).⁸⁴ Unlike women, then, whose domain is the 'house'--the 'private' sphere, the space of order, familiarity, the place of retreat--men would be more commonly exposed to violence. The battering of women, especially of a pregnant woman, therefore, would be a much more shocking scene; one that people would not forget very easily.

By the same token, the association between strikes and the exposure to violence legitimates women's less active participation in these movements; indeed, it would not be proper for women to find themselves associated with the 'confusion.' D.Heloísa would then be justified in stating, "I stayed away from that confusion." The same would apply to D.Carlinda when she says: "When there was a strike, I would stop my machine and go home. I would only go back there when they said the strike was over."

Not rarely, 'staying away from the confusion' was also imposed by fathers or other members of the family. As D.Telma so revealed:

During the strikes, my foster father wouldn't let me set my feet out of the house. He threatened me saying that he would go to the factory and tell the manager that I was in with the people who started the strike. "I'll get you fired, you'll see," he used to threaten me.

⁸⁴ The symbolic and practical implications of the dichotomy 'house/street' in Plataforma are discussed in greater depth in Chapter Ten of this dissertation.

Obviously, this did not seem to have kept her always away; otherwise, how could she have been an 'eyewitness' to D.Marinalva's sad story? And what of D.Marinalva herself? Have they erased the strikes and the fact that they too were there in the middle of the 'confusion' from their memories or is it that they do not believe it is proper to talk about them?

Present or not in these actions, women, unlike the men, tend to use always the pronoun "they"--never "we"-- when referring to the strikes. The women say "they went on strike," "they did this," "they did that," and never "we went on a strike" (or did this and that), thus disassociating themselves from any active part in the process. Of course, they are not entirely wrong in putting themselves in a marginal position: for the most, they were in fact marginalized. Let it be recalled that in 1940s, the decision-making process regarding the strike movements was largely restricted to the unions. And the unions, back then, were still almost exclusively the domain of men, not of women. As D.Carlinda firmly stated: "The unions belonged to the men, not to the women."

Note should be made to the fact that according to the stipulations included in the CLT, membership in the unions, though not open to minors, was open to all adult workers, regardless of sex. However, in practice, the paths towards the recruitment of women into organized labor remained largely blocked as they had been in previous decades.⁸⁵ In

⁸⁵ Unfortunately, governmental interdictions on the local unions – particularly the severe repression they suffered in the post-WWII years, and more recently, during the period of the military dictatorship in the country – have resulted in the destruction of most records, making it nearly impossible to evaluate with

particular, patriarchal gender ideology still played a determinant role in keeping women away from the unions. Defined primarily not as workers but as homemakers and mothers, the women themselves regarded the matters related to the workplace as secondary concerns to them; as D.Luciana so proclaimed: "I had too much to do at home, I didn't have time to deal with the union." Even if finding those matters to be of their concern and the necessary spare time to deal with them, women were often barred from attending the meetings by fathers, husbands or boyfriends who thought otherwise. According to D.Telma, for instance, her foster father would never allow her to go to union meetings; it was not a place for 'nice' girls to be.

Indeed, as in previous decades, the notion that only women of 'ill-repute' participated in union affairs seems to be still running strong in the 1940s. It is not surprising then that nearly all the women interviewed denied to have been a member of the unions. Even D.Lucia whose husband (Sr.Fernando) was more directly involved in union affairs as a union delegate (delegado sindical), stated: "I was never interested on those things." Few of the women, in fact, showed any knowledge of the objectives of the unions nor of what kind of support they might give to workers. As the following comments so attest:

precision the percentage of women in relation to men who were actually active members of those organizations. It was known, nevertheless, that women were rarely in leadership positions. For example, in the study conducted by Fontes (1982) concerning labor movements in Bahia in the decades prior to Vargas' rise to power, the name of only one woman appears among union leaders. She was a member of the organization of workers in cigar factories. Likewise, although Leite Lopes (1988) registers the testimony of women workers in the mills of Paulista, Pernambuco, who affirmed to have participated in the strikes, the same author does not name any women among union leaders.

I don't know anything about the unions, I was never involved with them (D.Josefa).

I didn't like the union, it was useless (*'pura besteira'*). All they wanted was to get our money (D.Din).

I don't know anything about that, I didn't participate in any of those things (D.Heloísa).

I never heard anything about unions. I never needed that kind of thing, I was never without a job (*'nunca andei'*). I think there was a union office in the back of the factory, but I really don't know (D.Alma).

I cannot tell you anything, I never needed the union (D.Adelaide).

I don't know anything. Unions were for men, not for women (D.Zenaide).

Women, Resistance, and Solidarity

The emergence of labor unions and strike movements have often occupied a central position in studies on labor history. Strikes represent important moments in the forging of a consciousness of kind--or to use E.P. Thompson's (1968) now famous expression, of the 'making of the working class.' They became the process through which male workers of Plataforma recognized and articulated their common interests against those of capitalists. From this perspective, the attitudes of women workers at Fábrica São Braz would confirm the view that they were to blame for their own victimization or that, at the very least, women showed little 'consciousness of kind.'

However, strikes are not the only means through which workers can express solidarity, resistance, or can struggle and voice their protest. Anarcho-syndicalists understood that sabotaging could be an equally

powerful instrument in the fight against capital. They often urged workers to act either individually or collectively to undermine production and thus drain capitalists of their profits (Fausto 1976). More recently, during the worst years of the military regime, workers in Brazil were found to engage in a series of minor acts of sabotage as a means of expressing their discontentment and fighting off exploitation. For example, they raised the speed of the machines to break them, they produced defective pieces, and they wore out their tools (Frederico 1979:71-72). Other times they would simply just 'kill time', making use of different strategies to escape the surveying eyes of their supervisors (Rainho 1980:292).

It has also been reported that during this period, women workers in factories in São Paulo often resorted to 'invisible practices' (as opposed to the visibility of strikes, for example), such as staying longer in the bathroom than it was permitted, pasting to the wall of the bathrooms articles speaking of the precariousness of work conditions, denouncing instances of sexual harassment through anonymous notes sent to the company bulletin and the like (Lobo et al 1986:138-139).⁸⁶

No doubt, such practices are probably much more common and widespread than it has been documented, especially as they often go 'unspoken' and do not necessarily have an overt or symbolic objective. To the contrary, such practices may constitute simply expressions of what

⁸⁶ One of the most interesting cases of resistance has been described by Aichwa Ong (1987). According to her, women textile workers in Malaysia express their resistance to the capitalist discipline by going into trance.

James C. Scott has termed 'everyday forms resistance', that is, forms of insubordination which not only disavowal 'public and symbolic goals' but are also "informal, often covert, and concerned largely with immediate, de facto gains" (1985:25).

At Fábrica São Braz where a piece-work system prevailed making slowdowns and acts of sabotage 'self-defeating', these practices were often means of counteracting the 'domestication' and 'atomization' imposed on workers by the work process--they were acts of resistance to the logic of the disciplinary power.⁸⁷

Some of these acts were but common practices developed by workers throughout the industrial world which Willis (1981) has termed "shopfloor culture." Among, them, for instance, was the use of specific gesturing or of particular 'words of order' as signals to warn others in the floor that an overseer, or worse, the manager himself had walked into the premises and that all should thus go back to their own machines and stop talking around. D.Luciana remembers, for example, that because of the noise of the machines, much of the communication between workers in the room she worked was by means of gesturing or 'mimics.'⁸⁸ Thus, by raising and waving their right elbow with their fingers pressed to the palm and the thumb stretched out towards the back, she and her colleagues signaled to

⁸⁷ Thus, inverting Foucault's expression, Leite Lopes has referred to such practices as "microphysics of resistance" (*microfísica da resistência*), which he sees as including: "from a reaction and response to the despotism of the hierarchy of factory administration, to the creative reinterpretation and re-adaptation of the harsh work conditions in the factory" (1988:81, my translation).

⁸⁸ See also Leite Lopes (1988:84) for a discussion of similar strategies used by workers in Paulista, Pernambuco.

each other that a supervisor or overseer was around and they better behave according to the rules.

At Fábrica São Braz, women workers also counted with the complicity and solidarity of their colleagues in covering up for them or watching their machines when they needed to stay longer in the bathroom. As D.Joseildes, in complaining about the short time they were allowed to tend to their necessities so revealed:

You had a set time to go to the bathroom and come back. He [the overseer] would check the clock in the machine of the time we left and that of which we came back, he would look to see how many minutes we spent in the bathroom. One day, I stayed in the bathroom for five minutes and the overseer complained, he even raised his finger to my nose. Many times we were there changing because we were menstruating and that took time, of course, but he didn't like. We also used the time to rest a little because you know, nobody is made of iron [*'ninguém é de ferro'*].

In such circumstances, a shopfloor neighbor would get the machine going to set the timer on before her colleague returned from the bathroom and, in this manner, transgress the rules so as to give her a little more time to change a sanitary pad or simply rest. D.Zenilda's next door neighbor, who was also her nearest 'shopfloor' neighbor, used to cover up for her when her legs gave way:

Sometimes in the afternoon, I used to go to the bathroom to kill time (*'fazer cera'*), to rest and take a nap and she would work my loom. When I'd get back, I would find the cloth already at the mark to be taken out of the loom.

This type of assistance and help was often given by colleagues during pregnancies, particularly to women approaching their time of

delivery. As D.Luciana recalls:

We all helped each other in the room I worked. The colleagues would help those that were close to having a baby [*'perto de ter menino'*] to take the cloth down from the loom. Those things were heavy, they needed help with them, it wasn't easy.

This assistance, as noted, was supposed to be given by the overseers and second-hands but they were rarely there when one needed them. In a statement registered by Samira Bevilaqua (1992:59), for instance, D.Telma, a spinner, so revealed:

When it rained the cotton used to get caught in the irons, can you imagine taking the cotton out of the iron? My machine had two sides, it was bigger than this house, you tied up in one side and when it got to the other there, the yarn would break off. Then you wouldn't earn anything, you would spend the whole day there, wear off you shoes, your clothes, the food and then when Saturday came, you would earn a little nothing [*'aquela pichinchinha'*]. When the machine broke, the overseer would not fix it, he would put nothing, he would say: "do what you can, do what can you [*'se vire, se vire'*], it is like that, you didn't do anything today, tomorrow you will."

But colleagues would be there; despite the rules, the women would see it fit to assist each other, even if that meant stopping their own machines and thus incurring in a reduction in their productivity and consequently in their own wages:

My colleagues always helped. When the loom broke, when the yarn escaped, they would come running to give you a hand, they would be there (D.Alice).

The relations among colleagues were very good, everybody helped, if you ran out of material, they would bring you some of theirs so that you wouldn't have to stop working and waste time. They would give you their own material, they were very nice (D.Marlize).

The overseers didn't want you to stop working to go help the others. But we did it anyway, we did it when he wasn't looking (D.Dinah).

You know, when the machines stopped [*'esbarravam'*] you always had somebody to help you, the colleagues always came to help you (D.Alma).

Furthermore, although taking pride in their work and in their capabilities to produce well above their weekly quotas, women often resisted the 'spirit of competition' imposed on them by the factory through the system of bonuses and prizes by letting their own work go in order to help others to reach the established minimum quota. Such assistance aimed at counteracting the company policy of dismissing those who did not have good productivity rates, as well as help others to earn more at the end of the week. As D.Adelaide, who admits being a less than average producer, explained:

Some people worked here until they had cuts [in personnel] in the factory, they cut those that did not produce, they dismissed them. We didn't have a contract. If you didn't bring profits, if you didn't make the quantities of cloth that you were supposed to make, then they would let you go. They let me go because I didn't produce enough, I wasn't very good with the loom. But my colleagues always tried to help me. When I didn't get things right, they would teach me how to do it right so that I could get the set quantity of cloth, right? They would help me to get it. It was like that, on Fridays, they would come to help me get the right quantity of cloth, so that I could earn more. They were really nice, it was a very good relationship with the colleagues.

Although usually diffuse and atomized, everyday forms of resistance in the shopfloor often involve at the very least a certain amount of complicity on the part of fellow workers. And this complicity, in turn, though not necessarily dependent on a high level of 'consciousness of kind', does imply the awareness on the part of workers of the commonality of their condition and interests, particularly in fighting off the disciplinary power imposed upon them.⁸⁹ From this perspective, therefore, it may be

⁸⁹ As such, observes Amn ris Maroni, in placing themselves against their everyday exploitation, workers "develop practices which even if individualized, aim at preserving their identities as workers [*identidade oper ria*] for, in breaking machines, workers differentiate themselves from objects, demonstrating that

said that women workers at Fábrica São Braz expressed class-awareness (and thus could not be labeled as 'alienated').

Of course, not everybody would be solidary. Indeed, there were always the 'greedy ones' [*as morta de fome*] as D.Alma testified, or the 'usurers' [*as usurárias*] according D.Adelaide, who would never leave their machines risking a drop in productivity to assist their colleagues. Like the women who played to the sexual advances of overseers and second-hands to win their favors, the 'greedy ones' were seen by the others as outsiders, people who were not real 'colleagues'. 'True colleagues' resisted the disciplinary power of the factory through everyday acts of solidarity. They were also the ones who, when the Carnival season arrived, would work overtime helping others get their quotas for the week done so that all could take time off to dance in the streets in the 'Bloco do Bacalhau.'

Women's Protest: "O Bloco do Bacalhau"

Carnaval, the mass festival held throughout Brazil during the week preceding Lent has been commonly recognized as the "chief and most eloquent expression of Brazilian popular culture" (Linger 1992:8). Accordingly, it has attracted the attention not only of those interested in understanding Brazilian cultural identity (Da Matta 1985, 1979; Linger 1992; Parker 1991), but also enjoyed a privileged status in studies and/or

they do not accept the reification process that vies at transforming everything into a commodity. It is, as such, the expression of living labor against dead labor (1982:45-46, her emphasis, my translation).

theoretical reflections on rituals (Turner 1983).

In Bahia, the 'Bloco do Bacalhau' was also the vehicle through which women workers at Fábrica São Braz voiced their protest. "Bloco" literally means 'block' but in the context of Carnival it refers to a group of people (usually but not always neighborhood-based) that play music and dance together in the streets. 'Bacalhau' means 'codfish' or 'salt cod,' but it is also one of the many popular terms used in reference to the female genitalia, specifically the vulva, because of the supposed similarity of odors between the two when the latter is not properly washed. The expression 'Bloco do Bacalhau' refers to a group of women who dance around to ward off the odor of 'bacalhau.'

This association was actually given to me by Sr. José when I asked him why the name 'Bloco do Bacalhau.' Hiding a sneer while at the same time excusing himself, with due respects to me, the '*professora*', Sr. José, explained:

Well, it was like that. The operárias would go out in the Bacalhau right after work, right after a full day of work, they would come out seating, you know, and the people would say, 'there comes the Bacalhau...'

In Plataforma, no one remembers when was that the Bloco do Bacalhau was first organized and who actually organized it. Nevertheless, everybody agrees that even if men joined in the singing and dancing, it was primarily a block of women, of operárias who performed it. There are some disagreements as to whether the Bacalhau was performed on the Thursday or the Saturday preceding Lent but all agree that the block left from the

gates of Fábrica São Braz led by women, oper rias, and would then travel through the surrounding streets up to São Braz Square, gathering followers along the way.

More than a celebration of singing and dancing in the streets, however, the Bacalhau was a privileged space in which women would cast away their supposed demureness, their frailty and passivity by taking initiatives which were commonly seen to be part of the male role. Indeed, in the Bacalhau, the women could invite men standing on the sidewalk to dance and join the block, reversing their role in sexual initiatives. Likewise, in the Bacalhau, the women could also sing songs full of sexual connotations which otherwise would be seen as utterly improper to female lips and voices. This was precisely the case of the song specifically identified with the Bacalhau such as in the following verses which were repeated over and over:

Look at the Bacalhau stuck on the stick,
Look at the Bacalhau stuck on the stick,
Here comes the Bacalhau stuck on the stick...
*[Olha o Bacalhau enfiado no pau,
Olha o Bacalhau enfiado no pau,
Lá vem o Bacalhau enfiado no pau...]*

The 'stick' (*pau*) in Brazil is also one of the different popular terms for 'penis' and some of the women did carry pieces of bacalhau stuck on wooden sticks. This behavior on the part of women went totally against the prevailing social order of the sexes. Thus, like in the agricultural rites described by Max Gluckman (1969:110) in which Zulu women and girls

"committed public obscenities and acted as if they were men," so too the women of Plataforma played out a reversal of social roles.

In discussing these rites, Gluckman termed them 'rituals of rebellion' proposing that they usually flourish in hierarchical societies and instances in which formal channels for the expression of a presumed questioning of the established social order are either non-existent or otherwise blocked (e.g. repressed by force, inhibited by custom, etc.). They are allowed because they are in fact temporary but as Gluckman adds, "socially, the lifting of the normal taboos and restraints obviously serves to emphasize them" (Gluckman 1969:114). Like Victor Turner (1968), however, Gluckman sees these rites as preserving the social order by providing a escape valve for rebellion In their view, then, rituals of rebellion would not have a 'revolutionary' but instead a 'cathartic' effect. Moreover, by presenting the reversal as a burlesque, mocked utopia, as the ridicule, they acted as a means of reinforcing the status quo.

More recently, however, "rituals of rebellion" and "conflict" have received different interpretations. For example, Daniel Linger (1992:10-11) has pointed out that if, according to Gluckman, "revolution is ruled out at the start, then why should such rituals be necessary ?" He further contends that Gluckman, by not taking into consideration "the prevalence of acts of resistance in everyday behavior," could not see the full, multivalent meaning of "full-blown rituals of rebellion."

To support his argument, Linger refers to Robert Dirks's (1987, 1988) findings regarding the "Black Saturnalia" of West Indian plantations,

where the reversals did not consist in a negation but actually in a mocked performance of what really went on. Whereas commonly slaves engaged in furtive stealing of food from their masters, during the rituals of Black Saturnalia they "danced right up to the front door in groups, figuratively demanding food otherwise taken on the sly" (Dirks 1987:187).

Linger also calls for a consideration of Natalie Davis' (1978) analysis of preindustrial European symbolic inversions of women's roles. According to Davis, the portrayals of the "woman on top" had a dual image. On the one hand they rationalized the subordination of women by playing out the reverse, on the other, this reversed/inverted image of women was appropriated in the staging of riots and struggles that challenged the established order. Linger then sums up his argument by recommending caution in the analysis of ritualized rebellion. In his own words: "We need to pay close attention to what is being reversed; in any case, the event is likely to communicate diverse, and possibly contradictory, messages" (1992:12).

I have followed the tracks of Linger's argument precisely because the focus of his discussion is Carnival, Brazilian Carnival. And for Linger, Carnival is also a ritual of rebellion which is multivalent and ambiguous. So too, I argue, was the Bloco do Bacalhau. Indeed, at the same time that it rationalized the subordination of women in the factory by playing with the burlesque, it was also a means through which women, by playing out a reversed role, could vent out their protest against this subordination. This, as shall be seen, applied more readily to the situation in the factory, but

not in the community as a whole. In point of fact, from the perspective of the 'backyards of the factory,' the Bloco do Bacalhau, as a ritual of rebellion, did not necessarily involve a negation. When the women walked from the factory to the streets, they symbolically acted out their roles in the community.

Indeed, just as the Bacalhau left from within the gates of the factory to cross the streets of the neighborhood, so too women's roles cut across the boundaries between workplace, the community, and the family. And in these spheres, that is to say, in the 'backyards of the factory', women workers were far from emulating the passive, subordinated or frail image of the operária that Brazilian society wanted them to be. Demonstrating that this was precisely the case will thus constitute the objectives of Part III of this dissertation.

PART III

LIFE IN THE BACKYARD OF THE FACTORY

(1930-1950)

INTRODUCTION

The original idea for the title of this section (and which I have also appropriated for the title of the dissertation) is not my own. It was given to me quite unintentionally by Dona Telma in one of the many conversations we have had throughout the years on occasion of my visits to the meetings of the Senior Women Group (*Grupo de Idosas*) at AMPLA. Dona Telma, who will be eighty-five on her next birthday, worked at Fábrica São Braz for close to forty years as a spinner. We have often talked about her work in the factory but on that particular occasion, she was telling me about her childhood--how she was born in the countryside (*na roça*) and then given away as a little girl by her mother to a family in Alagoinhas (a town in the interior of Bahia). When she was around eight (she cannot remember exactly), the family moved to Plataforma where she has lived ever since. It was remembering her childhood in the neighborhood that she came up with the expression: "I grew up right here in Plataforma, right here in the backyard of the factory (*nos 'quintal' da fábrica*)."

In the chapters that comprise Part III of this dissertation, my objective is to reconstruct and analyze family-household dynamics and everyday life in Plataforma--what it was like to 'grow up in the backyards of the factory'--during the decades in which the neighborhood was still a workers' villa under the patronage of the Catharino family (1930-1960). Relying primarily on family histories and the testimony of former factory workers and other long-time residents, Chapter Eight provides a general

description of the neighborhood and of the occupational make-up of the population in that period, depicting and analyzing the nature and extent of the imprint and domain of the factory on the community.

Chapter Nine is based essentially on information drawn from life-history materials. Starting with an analysis of the distinct life experiences of workers as children and their 'romantic' experiences, it goes on to delineate and analyze family dynamics and household organization and how they varied according to the gender and occupation of the breadwinners.

Chapter Ten focuses on the symbolic and social dimensions of the house/street dichotomy in the community, analyzing the spaces of sociability and the patterns of gender and community relations that unfolded in that setting.

Together, the three chapters aim at unraveling and analyzing the web of shared/diverse experiences of women and men workers in the community. They also deem to demonstrate that despite the imposing figure of the 'patriarchal factory,' and in spite of the observation of a gender divide--indeed, of the sustaining of patriarchal gender ideology by the community-at-large--women were far from being passive subjects or an easily subordinated lot. On the contrary, the greater reliance on the employment of women in the mill enhanced their position in the domestic sphere, contribution to the weaving of more egalitarian gender relations. Moreover, bending patriarchal ideology to their own service, women found strength in numbers, spinning networks of mutual assistance and cooperation.

CHAPTER EIGHT

From the Gates of the Old Factory

Introduction

Those who visit Plataforma today and are not familiar nor interested in the history of the community may never learn that in the not-too-distant past it was still a *vila operária*, a workers' villa, home to a large textile mill. Nowadays, visitors will most likely arrive either by bus or by car, taking the access road from Avenida Suburbana which leads right into the square where AMPLA is located, next to the Church of São Braz. Standing on the church steps, at the top of the hill, one has a view of the ocean peeking behind the many mango and banana trees that edge the alleyways carving their way down to the Bay of All Saints. But no spot on the square offers even the slightest hint of the contours of the large building that once housed Fábrica São Braz. Sitting at the foot of the hill on the waterfront but precisely in the opposite direction of the incoming road from Avenida Suburbana, the factory is now hidden away from the eyes of visitors. And, in the absence of the well known signs of factory activity--the tall chimneys puffing smoke up into the sky, the loud whistles sounding in the early morning calling people to work or sending them home in the afternoon--nothing around offers any clue to the visitor that some decades back, Plataforma was home to one of the largest textile mills of Bahia.

Until the 1960s, however, first impressions of Plataforma were bound to be much different. There was no Avenida Suburbana cutting

across the northwest area of Salvador all the way to the Port of Aratu, making it easier for cars and buses to maneuver their way into the Subúrbio. Access to the neighborhood was either by train or by boat, but one or the other always landed the incoming visitors right at the gates of the old factory. To this day small boats carry passengers back and forth between Plataforma and Ribeira cruising across the Bay of All Saints. And the train, albeit now considerably dilapidated, still remains one of the fastest and cheapest means of transportation for the people of the Subúrbio.

Some years back when I was just beginning to work with the women from AMPLA, there was an article in one of Salvador's newspapers calling attention to the neglect which had befallen Bahia's rail system.⁹⁰ Recalling that during the decades of the military regime, great effort had been directed towards the development of the national automobile industry and to the building of highways at the expense of the more traditional means of transportation such as railroads, the article pointed out that very few regular passenger trains still ran in Bahia. But it was noted that among the few surviving ones was the train to the Subúrbio, still making several daily trips from Roma Station in the Lower City all the way to Paripe with stops in Lobato, Plataforma, Coutos, and Periperi.

True, the article warned that riding this train could be a dangerous adventure since in addition to the poor state of conservation of the cars, it

⁹⁰ "A perigosa aventura de uma viagem de trem no Subúrbio," **A Tarde**, 01/29/89.

was common for 'hidden attackers' alongside the tracks to throw rocks and other similarly dangerous objects against the windows, having more than once hit unsuspecting innocent commuters. Despite the warning, however, I decided that I should take my chances and go on a train ride on my next trip to Plataforma.

Suburban trains in Brazil are notorious for being too crowded, uncomfortable, and normally late, fostering riots and acts of vandalism ('*quebra-quebras*') on the part of angry commuters.⁹¹ But arriving at the station almost at mid-morning, I had long missed the crowds, finding mainly women and children making their way across the station's waiting room towards the ticket booths. I could calmly witness the utter decay of Roma Station, the remnants of its turn-of-the-century pompous style stubbornly surviving amongst the broken glass, the dirty and worn out floors, and the stench of dirty latrines. Surprisingly, however, the train was promptly on time--a real surprise since nothing in Bahia ever is--and the ride relatively smooth. Like the station, however, so too the train compartments with their broken seats and boarded up windows (supposedly to protect passengers from flying rocks), showed the chronic neglect by governmental authorities towards public services that cater primarily to the poorer communities of Salvador.

A ride in this train leaves no doubt that the Subúrbio is in fact one of the poorest areas of the city. As the train started on its way, I could see

⁹¹ On '*quebra-quebras*' in Brazil, see Silva (1984), and Moisés & Martinez-Allier (1977).

in the distance, through the cracks in the boarded windows, the wobbly *palafitas*, the houses on sticks stuck on the muddy and polluted waters that make up Alagados, one of the largest squatter settlements (*'invasões'*) of Salvador. Crossing Cabrito Cove (*'Enseada do Cabrito'*), already in territory of the subdistrict of Plataforma, I watched skinny children with swollen stomachs crawling unattended through the little wooden bridges that link one hut to the other. They were listless to the misery that surrounded them.⁹² As I glanced at my fellow passengers in the car, I saw shabbily dressed laundresses accompanied by their equally shabbily dressed children, carrying large bundles of clothes probably picked up in some fancy neighborhood in the High City to be washed in the waters of the Subúrbio. In the front of the compartment, a half dozen other women carried bags with produce they had likely bought at the São Joaquim street market, in Água de Meninos, where operators of street selling stands (*'barraqueiros'*) buy the supplies they sell at a small profit in the Subúrbio. Two little boys, probably under the age of ten, swung along with the seesaw of the train peddling cheap candy carried in boxes they had strapped to their necks. But adding a picaresque touch, so peculiar to Bahia, rode a toothless old man singing traditional country tunes to the beat of an ancient and strident viola. As I passed him to get to the door when the train approached Plataforma, he stuck out his worn hat where I deposited all the change I found left in my pockets. I realized he would

⁹² On life in Alagados see Woortman (1987); see also the article, "Morte e Vida sobre barracos em Alagados," **Tribuna da Bahia**, 03/26/90.

probably use it to replace the nearly empty bottle of sugarcane whisky, kept by his feet, for a brand new one.

Plataforma is the second stop from Roma Station and in that portion of the road, the rails run high above the ground so that the landing area is actually on a terrace. From this terrace, one has a breathtaking view of the Bay of All Saints-- that postcard view of serene blue-green waters reflecting wavering sun rays well into the horizon that constitutes one of the few luxuries of life in Plataforma. But I became much more entranced by the sight of Plataforma itself. Dominating almost its entire front view, from side to side, rose Fábrica São Braz, its dirty yellowish façade framed by immense palm trees hovering portentous upon the waterfront. Everything else--the church, the school, the roofs on the rows of little houses encrusted in the hillside--crept behind the old factory, as if, in fact, they were merely outgrowths on its upward sloping backyard.

No wonder that Dona Telma who seldom leaves Plataforma still thinks of her childhood as taking place in the backyard of the factory. Indeed, coming to Plataforma by rail or by water it is nearly impossible to overlook the imposing presence of Fábrica São Braz on the waterfront. Nor can one ignore the rows of little houses made of stucco, one just like the other, strung behind the factory like a garland. They stand as visible signs that the community in the past was a workers' villa, a *vila operária*. Walking from the landing area towards São Braz Square, one is reminded of the legacy of the Catharino family. The main avenue of access to the

square is named after Dona Ursula Catharino, Comendador Catharino's wife. Half-way up this hilly avenue, one comes across the school where generations of Plataforma residents learned their first ABC's and which still bears the name of Dona Ursula Catharino depicted in bold black lettering on the front of the building. But what Plataforma actually looked like back in those years requires an effort of imagination. If any camera eye did in fact capture images of the villa in a still, the photographs it produced are yet to be found.

The provision of housing for workers has been such an integral part of the history of industrialization that workers' villas are found throughout the industrialized and industrializing world. However, in Brazil as elsewhere, the villas have varied considerably as to size and the kinds (and quality) of the houses and services the companies provided to the workers. Typically, they consisted of a few basic elements: clusters of single-family dwellings for the workers and their families, a separate, larger house for the superintendent, a school, a company store and, depending on the size of the villa and its distance from the nearest parish, a Catholic Church.⁹³ In Bahia, however, the idea of 'vila operária' is usually connected to the villa built by Luis Tarquínio for his workers in the nearby neighborhood of Boa Viagem at the turn of the century. Modeled after the best British tenement houses, Luis Tarquínio's villa was within an enclosed area where workers' houses, set in neatly arranged clusters, were probably larger than many middle-class homes at the time. They consisted of two-storied

dwelling with living rooms, dining rooms, two bedrooms, and large kitchens, with little gardens on the front and with the luxury of indoor bathrooms. They also included amenities such as piped water and electricity which only the Bahian elites then enjoyed (Sampaio 1975).

Plataforma had all of the typical features of *vilas operárias* but it was certainly a long way from emulating Luis Tarquínio's 'model villa'. Quite the contrary, looking at the clusters of company-owned dwellings still standing in Plataforma today, one gets the impression that the source of inspiration of the owners of Fábrica São Braz might have been the '*senzalas*', the slaves' quarters of the large sugar plantations. At the very best, the rows of houses they built resembled large barracks-like compounds.

These compounds consisted of rows of individual dwellings originally separated by flimsy walls, the dwellings being at their most very modest. Basically they consisted of two-room units, a front room with one or two windows, and a back room used as a kitchen, with a door leading to a common backyard. Over decades of occupation, residents have made improvements in these homes--for example, building a dividing wall in the front room, cementing the floors, fencing the backyards, adding a bathroom, putting a cement slab (*a 'laje'*) and building a second floor, and the like--but the original quarters were essentially crude, with none of the urban amenities found in Luis Tarquínio's villa. Yet, they were probably not worse nor much different from the dwellings of the rural poor or of

⁹³ See Blay (1985) for descriptions of different workers' villas in São Paulo.

the poor population of Salvador as a whole (then and still today). They were built according to traditional designs and with the use of building methods and materials that were inexpensive and familiar to local construction workers.

When Companhia Progresso and União Fabril was created in 1932, there were a little over 300 company-owned homes in Plataforma rented out to factory workers. According to company records, more than three-fourths of these homes (approximately 240) were set in the barracks-like rows, in streets adjacent to the factory buildings, while the remaining dwellings were spread out over the neighborhood, most of them cast in small clusters of three to four homes. From the scattered distribution of the dwellings in the neighborhood, however, it does not appear that the former owners of the factory followed any particular blueprint or master plan of design for construction and development, such as observed in other villas (Luis Tarquínio's for example). More than likely the dwellings were built at different times as the factory expanded and the need for more housing for employees arose. Apparently, at some particular point in time--possibly when Plataforma came to concentrate a pool of workers large enough to meet the long-term needs of the factory--the owners ceased to build new housing, renting the land instead for those that so wished to build their own dwellings. This policy seems to have been already in operation when Comendador Catharino came into ownership of Companhia Progresso & União Fabril da Bahia in 1932. Although it is known that the factory then had a pool of construction workers (*pedreiros*) whose functions

included making repairs in company housing, there are no records in the documentation available nor recollections of the people interviewed as to the building of new housing for workers during Comendador Catharino's era or beyond.

Whether by design or mere convenience, the pattern of occupation of Plataforma did not stray away from that observed in other communities of the Subúrbio and others alike situated along the Bay of All Saints. That is to say, it centered at first on the waterfront, at the gates of the factory, gradually expanding inwards.

Talking About the Past

Not too long ago, I paid a visit to Sr. Luiz at the little 'bread and coffee' stand he runs today which sits in front of the entrance to the factory, underneath the bridge where the railroad tracks pass. That particular spot is still a throughway for incoming boat and train passengers as well as a means of access for trucks and cars to the section of the neighborhood known as São João de Plataforma. As we talked several people passed by, some stopping to pick up a loaf of bread, others just waving to Sr. Luiz. When I commented that we were in a 'busy spot', Sr. Luiz leaned over the counter of the stand, looked around, and stretching his right arm up from side to side, he confided:

This is nothing, now, this is nothing. Do you see all of this, do you see where you are standing ? Well, this used to be the 'heart' of Plataforma, there was practically nothing passed the Church, it was all woods, all *mato* there by Suburbana, there was nothing there. Everything was here by the factory, everything.

Then, pointing to a two-storied home, a *sobrado*, sitting on the corner on his left, he added:

Do you see this two-storied house in the corner ? This used to be a dry-goods store where people here bought rice, beans, these things, before the Catharino opened the cooperative. But, even then, everything here came by canoe, everything. Even the cotton, the things for the factory came by boat, in the company's boat. Right here where we are, used to be the street market, the canoes would come early in the morning then, bringing everything in big baskets. All the business of Plataforma was here.

Sr. Luiz guaranteed that in 1962 when he opened his stand, precisely on that same spot, it was still the 'heart' of Plataforma, the center of the community's economic life. But, he added, it was no longer the same as when Fábrica São Braz was still in full operation:

Back then, this place was really crowded. You would stand here early in the morning and see the people coming down this avenue here, more than a thousand people coming down to work. They would come running down, not to miss the *xereta*, the third whistle, and this place would be like an ant hill. Same thing at lunch time, and then at the end of the day. This was really the 'heart' of Plataforma back then...

There are no secondary accounts of the history of Plataforma nor of how everyday life in the community unfolded while it still remained a workers' villa under the patronage of the Catharino's. To reconstruct it, then, it is necessary to weave together the testimonies of former factory workers and long-time residents such as Sr.Luiz. However, this task requires that of 'deconstruction' as well. Recollections of the past are usually filtered through the lenses of the present and in the present, life in Plataforma is far from being a 'bed of roses.' Nowadays unemployment runs high in the neighborhood, families face great difficulties in making ends meet, and crime is rising significantly. Thus, when talking about the past, long-time residents often refer to these problems to emphasize how much better things were back then. Faced with a 'disordered' present, the

past is then idealized as orderly and even idyllic--as a time of plenty, of tranquillity, and community.⁹⁴

This does not mean that everything is regarded as being better in the past. On the contrary, when asked about life in Plataforma in the 'old days', for instance, women from the '*grupo das idosas*' remembered that up until a couple of decades ago and despite being located at a mere seven miles away from the center of Salvador, Plataforma homes still did not enjoy those basic amenities of urban life such as electricity and running water. This meant "a lot of hard work" for women in particular, especially in getting around their domestic chores. As some have justly complained:

We had to go out for wood to cook and walk miles to the river to do the wash. There was no electricity, no paved streets, the roads were narrow and muddy, you were always tracking mud around. The houses did not have sanitary facilities and there were feces running in the streets... (D.Luciana).

Life then was difficult. There was no running water, no lights, no pavement in the streets. You had to walk a long ways to get water and carry it back home (D.Marita).

I was a laundress back then when there was no water to do the washing. I had to walk all the way to the river in Itacaranha carrying the bundles of clothes on my head. Then, there was no electricity to iron and starch the clothes. I had to use two of those big heavy irons that you put hot coals inside to starch the shirts. Sometimes the coals would fall out of the iron and dirt and burn the shirts, it was a big job, I tell you, I wouldn't want to do it again. It is so much easier now with the electric iron... (D.Ester).

Despite speaking of these difficulties there is a widespread agreement among all of those interviewed--women and men alike--that in the 'old days' the quality of life in the neighborhood was much superior

than now. For some it was better because it was much 'calmer' then, without crime and violence, as they put it:

Life then was calm, with no violence like now. There were no thieves, no pot-heads (*maconheiros*) at every corner (Sr. José).

It was beautiful here, calm even during Carnival, it was calm, there were no drugs like now (D. Luiza).

It was great then, calm, we went to bed early and got up early. Now the neighbors won't let you go to sleep early. They turn their stereos and TV's loud until late at night and nobody can get any sleep (D.Edina).

It was really good then, there was no violence, you could go out at night, leave your doors unlocked (D.Helenita).

There is, in fact, a shared notion among long-time residents that up to the 1960s, Plataforma was still a small, tightly knit community, made up almost entirely of families long established in the neighborhood and whose members worked at Fábrica São Braz. Statements such as 'everybody knew each other then', 'we all worked in the factory back then,' 'we were all children of Plataforma then,' are repeatedly voiced when the 'old-timers' refer to life in the neighborhood up to the mid-1960s, expressing their longing for the spirit of camaraderie and solidarity between neighbors which they claim predominated in the past. Reminiscing about those days, for instance, D.Lucia has emphasized that,

Back then, everybody was an old-timer here...It was like everybody was a relative. There was a lot of solidarity here, people were very united. When a woman gave birth, everybody would help, everybody would help each other at the fountain, everybody was poor, we all worked in the factory. But not now there is a lot of new people here, people who want to be better than the others. There is no solidarity now, your neighbors will steal from you.

⁹⁴ For a discussion of idealizations of the past, see for example Williams (1973) and Roseberry (1991).

Similar thoughts have also been voiced by D.Adelaide:

It is no longer like in those years, when people had consideration for one another. Back then, it was a lot better...There was that friendship that you could count on, you could count on your neighbors Almost everybody here worked in the factory, older people who worked there from the beginning to the end... I love Plataforma, I am a daughter of Plataforma, but it has changed a lot with the coming of new people... They are different people, a different generation, they are not like those that lived here before, people born and raised here, children of Plataforma.

When 'locals' speak of Plataforma, they are referring only to the neighborhood of Plataforma and not to the entire area included in the official limits of the subdistrict of Plataforma. The subdistrict is quite large comprising an area of approximately 473,83 hectares (the equivalent to approximately 1170,81 acres) which at present includes several different neighborhoods such as Itacaranha, Alto da Terezinha, Escada, Cabrito, Novo Alagados and Ilha de São João in addition to Plataforma properly said. Today, the entire subdistrict is densely populated but it was not so in the decades in consideration. It is estimated that in 1940, for instance, the total population for the entire subdistrict did not exceed four thousand people. And even if the neighborhood of Plataforma congregated the major nucleation of that population, it could not have been much greater than three thousand people.⁹⁵

Long-time residents are also not totally mistaken when they affirm that the neighborhood was essentially inhabited by oper rios and their families back then. It is well to recall that up to the 1940s the factory still

employed close to 1,200 workers and that over 83%, that is, approximately 1,000 of them were residents of Plataforma (see Chapter Five). According to these figures, then, factory workers represented nearly one-third of the local population at that time--a considerable proportion, by all means.

Family Origins

Unlike reports for other factories with workers' villas in the Northeast--such as that of Paulista in the State of Pernambuco studied by Leite Lopes (1988) and Alvim (1979, 1985)--there are neither records nor reports of any active recruitment of family labor in the interior of Bahia on the part of the owners of Fábrica São Braz. No doubt, the possibility that this type of recruitment may have been used in the nineteenth century when the factory was first established cannot be discarded. However, if in fact this policy was ever followed by the company, it was not longer in use during the period under consideration (1920s to 1960).

Among the group of twenty former factory workers who were interviewed at greater length, twelve were actually born and raised in the community, fitting D.Adelaide's definition of 'children of Plataforma'. Moreover, among the latter, nearly as many had one or both parents who were also 'children of Plataforma', which would place their families in the area since the beginning of this century.

⁹⁵ These are estimations based on statistical data from data from the census of 1950 1950) and 1960 (IBGE 1960).

Such is precisely the case of D.Adelaide whose parents, like herself, were born and raised in Plataforma. When she was last interviewed (in September of 1994), D.Adelaide had just turned seventy-six. Thus, if one considers a span of approximately twenty years between generations, her family already should have been settled in the neighborhood by the turn of the century, when the factory still belonged to the Almeida Brandão's. The same would apply in the case of D.Carlinda's family. When one adds her age--she was almost eighty years old at the time of the interview (October of 1994)--to the twenty years between one generation and another, the history of her family in the neighborhood spans for a whole century.

The history of D.Josefa's family in Plataforma is probably even longer. She was seventy-four years old in 1994, and claims that not only her parents but also her maternal grandparents were "children of Plataforma." This means that on the maternal side, at least, D.Josefa's family settled in the neighborhood in the 1880s, that is, around the time Fábrica São Braz was established (1875).⁹⁶

While these examples attest to the long roots of workers' families in the community, it is important to recall that nearly 60% (table 5.11) of the sample of workers drawn from the factory's Registry of Employees were in fact 'non-natives,' 25.6% of them coming from towns in the interior of the State of Bahia. Major transformations in Bahia's agricultural sector and the

⁹⁶It also means that they were there nearly a decade before the abolition of slavery a fact that is telling considering that D. Josefa is black.

subsequent intensification of rural-to-urban migration flows were only to begin taking hold in the 1940s (Souza 1980, Mello e Silva et al 1989). Nevertheless, the periodical droughts which hit the interior of the State had for long contributed to the dislocation of individuals and families from the countryside to the nearby towns as well as to Salvador. This is the case of D.Telma, for instance, who at eighty-five years old, was not only one of the oldest former factory workers interviewed but also the one who had worked the longest in Fábrica São Braz. As noted earlier, D.Telma was born in the countryside (in a *'roça'*) in the county of Alagoinhas, where she was given away by her mother to a family, who then gave her away to the one in which she was raised. Because of the drought in the area, her foster parents (*'pais de criação'*) left Alagoinhas when she was about eight years old (she is not sure), moving to Salvador and eventually settling in Plataforma in the mid to late 1910's. As she recalled:

My mother was pregnant with another child, and she had to give me away. She gave me away because she was poor, she couldn't raise me, there was a big drought then, and she gave me away. Then this family she had given me to, who was also poor, said they couldn't keep me any longer and they gave me away to another family in Alagoinhas. I stayed with them until they died. My foster father (*'pai de criação'*) was Tibúrcio and the mother Anita. They were my foster parents (*'pais de criação'*). I am old but I still remember well... But there was this drought and they ended up coming to Salvador, to live around here, first Periperi, then Praia Grande, then to Plataforma. I was growing up, I must already have been about eight by then... (D.Telma).

In part, D.Alice's story is similar to D.Telma's. Born in 1924 in the countryside (*'roça'*) in the district of Inhambupe, D.Alice was also given away by her mother when she was still a baby to be raised by another family. This family was also very poor, did not have enough to feed their

own children, and mistreated D.Alice. She was almost ten years old when mother, upon hearing about what was happening to her daughter, set out on foot walking miles to go fetch her. As D.Alice related:

This family I lived with put me to work all the time. One day, I went to get water in the fountain and I saw these two men with rifles. I was really scared and ran away. But these men knew my real mother and that she had given me away to this family. They went back and told my mother that they had seen me and that I was really skinny, and that I was like an animal from the woods (*'bicho do mato'*). They had asked around and learned that my life was sad. When they told that to my mother, she set out the very next day at dawn and walked for miles to get me. I was in the back of the house fetching wood when she arrived, and they called me in and said: 'It's your mother. She came to get you.' I used to dream about such a thing happening and it finally happened.

A few years later, around 1937 when D.Alice was thirteen, her mother gathered most of her children and moved to Salvador "because of the drought in the interior." Although the family settled in Plataforma, D.Alice went to work as a domestic servant in another neighborhood of Salvador, joining her family only a year later, after her mother had found a job for her and her sister at Fábrica São Braz.

In these instances, the families settled permanently in Plataforma but the ties with the interior were seldom broken. In the case of D.Heloisa, for instance, the family moved to Salvador from Santo Estevão, where she was born, but throughout her childhood her mother moved back to the interior with the children several times, until finally settling down in Plataforma in the late 1920s. In D.Heloisa's own words:

I was born in Santo Estevão but spent my childhood part here in Plataforma and part there, in the interior. My mother did not know what she really wanted, there were times when she wanted to stay there, others that she didn't. My uncles, her brothers, had canoes and did what she wanted. We were always sailing back and forth. We caught a lot of storms

on the way. Nowadays I am afraid to go in a boat, but I used to travel in those little canoes and now I am afraid. My childhood was like that, back and forth..." (D.Heloisa).

Even among those families who had been long-time residents of Plataforma but had similar rural origins, a temporary return to the countryside remained a possibility. Sr.José, a Plataforma native and whose mother was also from Plataforma, recalls that in 1924, when he was nine years old, his parents moved to the countryside, to a place near Alagoinhas, where his father had been born and still had relatives living there. As related by Sr.José:

I was born in São João de Plataforma, in the house number 7. Today it is 14, but in the old times, they had different numbers. It was a company house, it was. That was in 1915, when I was born but later, after Getulio, the Mayoralty ('*Prefeitura*') came here and then put signs, put names in the streets, and changed everything. Before it used to be one street with even numbers in the houses, and another with odd number. But then they changed, they made each street with one side even and the other odd. Thus the house number 7 became 14. The house is still there, the house I was born in. It was a company house because my father and my mother worked in the factory. Then, my father left the factory, it was in 1924. He left and decided to go back to the interior, to the countryside ('*roça*'), and we all went. We didn't stay there more than six months. Then we all came back here, and in 1925 my father died. We stayed here."

It is important to observe that in the case of former factory workers who, like Sr.José, were also natives of Plataforma, the families in addition to being long-established in the community also had a tradition of factory work carried over the generations. Ten of the twelve Plataforma natives interviewed were actually 'second generation' factory workers in that either one or both of their parents had worked in Fábrica São Braz. And let it be stressed that in most instances (in 7 out of 10), it was usually the mother

who had worked at the factory. Even in the two cases in which neither parent had been a factory worker, other relatives in the ascending generation--a father's brother and a father's sister, in the case of D.Delana and a father's brother in that of D.Alma--had done so. In contrast, among the non-natives only Sr.Luiz's mother and one of D.Dinah 's uncles (her father's brother) had worked in the factory.

If, on the one hand, these findings indicate the long roots of factory work in the community, on the other, they also indicate that the factory was certainly not the only option of employment or occupation available to Plataforma residents, including those families long established in the community and with a tradition of factory work through generations. This is apparent when the occupations of the fathers of the group of former factory workers in question are considered. It was actually fishing and/or canoeing which figured as the major occupation of these fathers. But this should not be surprising. During the first half of the century, like most communities located in the Bay of All Saints as well as throughout the coast of Bahia as a whole, so too in Plataforma fishing was an important activity in which men engaged.⁹⁷ Fishermen and their families resided primarily in the section of the neighborhood known as São João de Plataforma, where a sizable fishing community was found to be still active in the late 1960s (Santos et al 1970).

⁹⁷ On fishing in the Salvador Metropolitan and surrounding communities, see Braga (1973) and Kottak (1983).

However, it should be pointed out that in São João (as still true today in the surviving fishing communities of the coast of Bahia), fishing was pursued under harsh conditions and with the most rudimentary equipment. Commonly, fishermen worked as part of a crew, headed by a 'fishing master' (*mestre de pescaria*) who was also the owner of the boat and of the equipment used. In these cases, the catch was then divided in thirds, one-third going to the fishing master and the remaining two-thirds being divided among all other members of the boat crew (Santos et al 1970).⁹⁸ But even a good catch did not bring many financial returns. Lacking the proper means of storage and conservation, the fishermen were forced to sell their quotas fast and commonly very cheaply, often directly from the net spread out on the beach, to the intermediaries (the '*peixeiros*') who would then market the product with a good profit. Many fishermen were thus forced to double as canoers, making extra money transporting passengers and goods back and forth across the Bay to Ribeira and other communities nearby. Even then, they were still considered very poor--and seen as standing at the bottom of the local social ladder (Santos et al 1970:11)--as D.Edith, a member of the 'third age ladies' group who worked her entire life as a laundress, would declare: "I was always very poor. The daughter of a fisherman, married to a fisherman, I had a hard life."

Life conditions were probably not much better for construction workers (*pedreiros*), the occupation that congregated the second largest

⁹⁸ Up to 1970, there still a sizable fishing community in São João ; see, for example, Santos et al (1970).

proportion of fathers of the group of former workers under consideration. Indeed, unless they were hired as regulars in the crews of construction workers of a major company such as in the factory or for the railroad which only a few, in fact, did, they were bound to work mostly in odd jobs or with short-term contracts, earning, as such, an irregular income. Most, in fact, were not skilled construction workers but instead construction 'helpers' or 'attendants' (*serventes de pedreiro*), a designation that encompasses the array of people that unload and carry materials, push around the carts of bricks, fetch the water to mix the mortar base, or perform other similar chores in a construction site that require mostly physical force rather than skill. Precisely because of that, *servente de pedreiro* was and remains a low-paying occupation, and one in which rural men are most likely to find their first jobs upon migrating to the city. This was the case of D.Telma's foster father after they migrated from Alagoinhas, as well as that D.Alma's father, who had come with his family from the county of Pedrão, also in the interior of Bahia. However, unlike the former who spent the rest of his life working at odd jobs as a 'construction attendant', D.Alma's father was fortunate to find work as a construction worker with the railroad and, later, at Fábrica São Braz where he ended his days.

I have thus included D.Alma's father among those fathers who worked at the factory. It should be pointed out, nevertheless, that the other two fathers in this category did in fact work in the production line, Sr.José's father in the weaving sector, and Sr.Lauro's as an assistant

(*contramestre*), his son, in time, following his steps. Let it be noted that Sr. José's mother as well Sr. Lauro's, also worked at the factory. Indeed, Sr. José and Sr. Lauro were the two Plataforma natives whose both parents were factory workers.

In the roster of occupations here discussed, 'railroad workers' accounts for only two of the fathers. But according to Sr. Luiz whose own father moved all the way from Rio Grande do Sul--the southernmost state in Brazil--to work for Leste Brasileiro, the railroad that serves Plataforma, there were many railroad workers living in the neighborhood at the time. The construction of this railroad, which had begun in the late 1860s, continued (with interruptions) throughout the 1920s (Mello e Silva et al 1989), and its possible that many of the workers were based or otherwise resided in Plataforma. Evidence to that effect is found on the existence in the neighborhood of a street, facing the railroad tracks, which is still named "*Rua dos Ferroviários*," that is 'Railroaders Street' (or 'Railroad Workers Street').

It is important to point out that the high level of aggregation of census data for Salvador during the time period in question, particularly as it pertains to each specific neighborhood, precludes analyses of the actual occupational distribution of Plataforma residents during the decades here considered. Nevertheless, it can be safely assumed that the occupational categories of the fathers of the group of former factory workers here discussed do not reflect the entire range of occupations and/or income generating activities in which the male population of Plataforma actually

engaged. It is known that besides including different categories of craftsmen such as 'shoemakers' as D.Carlinda's father, there were also small shopkeepers, bakers, street vendors, low scale government functionaries as well as factory workers employed in the other textile establishments owned by the Catharino family. Moreover, up to the late 1940s, the Catharino's also owned a slaughterhouse and tannery in the nearby neighborhood of Cabrito (which is part of the subdistrict of Plataforma), where a few Plataforma men, such as D.Ester's first husband, were known to work. Besides, in the edges of Plataforma as in most suburbs of Salvador throughout the first half of the century, there were still small farmers (*sitiantes*) cultivating small patches of land on a sharecropping or landleasing system, growing produce, herbs, and spices to be marketed in the city.

Even if these assertions cannot be confirmed through census data, it is certain that Fábrica São Braz was neither the sole nor the major source of employment for the men of Plataforma. However, this was only partially true in the case of women. Indeed, although they could and often did engage in different income generating activities pursued mostly out of their own homes, it was Fábrica São Braz that stood as the major employer for the women of the neighborhood.

An inkling of the importance of factory work for the women of Plataforma as well as of some of the other activities in which they engaged is given when the occupations of the mothers of the group of workers here discussed are considered. Within this group, ten, that is, half of the

mothers (as opposed to only three of the fathers) were factory workers, all of them employed by Fábrica São Braz in the production line. Let it be noted that five of these women also had sisters working at the factory. Moreover, three of the fathers discussed earlier, two of whom were not factory workers, also had sisters employed in the production line at Fábrica São Braz.

Of course, this should not come as surprise since, as it may be recalled, according to company records women did outnumber men in the production lines. Besides, given that the great majority of the factory's employees actually resided in Plataforma, any random group of long-time residents in the neighborhood is bound to include a greater number of women rather than men as former factory workers. In point of fact, in Plataforma it is common to hear statements such as, "all of the women here used to work at the factory."

Nevertheless, even within a small sample of women such as the one here considered, occupations other than factory work were certainly involved. Among them that of laundress, which accounted for four of the mothers in the sample, was perhaps the most often pursued by the women of Plataforma who did not work at the factory. From the first national census, taken in 1872, through the most recent one, carried out in 1991, the 'rendering of domestic services,' which includes the services of laundresses, has consistently figured as the major occupational category for

the women of Salvador.⁹⁹ While domestic servants have always constituted the greatest percentage of the women included in this category, 'laundresses' have not trailed too far behind. In the decades under consideration, laundresses especially if doubling also as 'starchers' (*engomadeiras*), were in great demand. As Hildegardes Vianna (1994:151-152) has reported, dress standards for men of the elites or even for middle-level civil servants and the like, demanded that they wore starched white pants and vests, accompanied by white shirts with starched collars, cuffs, and stiff boutonnieres. Besides, in the 1930s, white linen jackets became a must, thus requiring the services of a good laundress who had the ability to get them properly starched without leaving shiny or yellowish spots. These imperfections could surely downgrade those that were unfortunate to wear them (Vianna apud Ferreira Filho 1994:55). Furthermore, without washing machines and other facilities to handle heavy loads of sheets, towels, and the like, homemakers in Salvador often depended on the services of laundresses to meet the needs of their households. After all, even tap water was a luxurious commodity in those days such that the presence of laundresses on the streets, carrying large bundles of clothing on their heads was a common sight. Likewise, the loud, ebullient gatherings of groups of laundresses at the public fountains in all areas of the city has been well documented since the 19th century (Ferreira Filho 1994:56-57).

⁹⁹ See, for example, Ferreira Filho (1994), Costa (1983), Guimarães & Castro (1987), Lavinás et al (1994).

Because of its close association with the slave condition, the rendering of domestic services has always been regarded as a downgrading situation for those involved (Graham 1986). Yet, even within this category of workers, there was a scale of prestige, laundresses enjoying the most 'prestigious' standing for escaping the slave-like life of live-in servants (Vianna 1994:28). But working as a laundress was often not a matter of choice. Women with families of their own, particularly with small children, could not easily hire themselves as live-in maids. Working as a laundress allowed them to combine their activities, inasmuch as the children could be put to help in picking up, washing, and delivering the bundles of clothes to their rightful owners.

Here, then, lies the reason why domestic servants were not better represented among the mothers of the factory workers under consideration. Indeed, even the two who were included in this study, left their jobs when their eldest children were old enough to begin working at the factory.

As noted in the case of the fathers here discussed, so too the occupational distribution of the mothers in question obviously does not mirror with precision that of the female population of Plataforma as a whole. Moreover, even if available, census data for the period in question often overlooked the various income generating activities that women performed out of the home to meet the needs of their families (Aguilar 1984). No doubt, in Plataforma, there were other seamstress like D.Telma's foster mother, as well as street vendors and the like.

In this respect, it is well to point out that while the owners of Fábrica São Braz stipulated that only factory workers should have access to factory housing, no such restrictions applied when it came to the leasing of land in their property for people to build their own homes. With a depressed economy, land speculation in Salvador had yet to take-off with greater force, pushing the poor to the outskirts of the city and to the suburbs in great numbers. Moreover, lacking the barest comfort of urban infrastructure, the Subúrbio as a whole held no great speculative value. União Fabril could afford to be lenient--even blind--to squatters on their land. Anybody who so wished, whether working in the factory or not, could move into the neighborhood. D.Ester, for instance, moved to Plataforma during the 1940s, leasing a plot in the neighborhood where she and her husband built their own house. During her life-time, D.Ester has had a number of occupations: domestic servant, laundress, operator of a street stand (*'barraqueira'*). But neither she nor her husband (or anybody else in their families) was ever employed at Fábrica São Braz.

At the Command of the Whistles

Like D.Ester and her husband others came under similar conditions. Nevertheless, all Plataforma residents--factory workers and non-workers, tenants or non-tenants alike--could not avoid the fact that they lived in the backyards of the factory. And note must be made that this is not just a metaphor. This condition was not merely a result of the strategic positioning of Fábrica São Braz on the waterfront, dominating almost the

entire entrance to the neighborhood. Nor was it primarily a consequence of the fact that, with a few exceptions here and there, all the land in the area then belonged to the company, to the Catharino family.¹⁰⁰

To put it simply, what it boiled down to was that life in Plataforma itself was inevitably tuned to that of Fábrica São Braz. From Monday through Saturday, Plataforma awoke to the sounds of the whistles at the factory piercing the air to announce that another workday was beginning. Soon after, workers would pour down the alleys into the main avenue, their huffing-and-puffing mixed with that of the trains and the splashing of the canoes bringing workers that lived elsewhere to the gates of the factory. They would be met there by an array of vendors of all sorts--the goods carried in baskets or large trays (the '*tabuleiros*')--vying for the attention of those that had rushed out of the house without cushioning the stomach for the long day ahead. And the vendors would be there at noon, at the sound of the whistles, lest they miss anybody who lingered around instead of running back home for their midday meal. For sure, they had a better chance with the men for the women, especially if they had a family--if they had children at home--ran up the hill as fast as the wind to have time to feed their lot.

Run they must since time flew by as it always does during lunch breaks. No sooner had the dust on the streets of Plataforma settled down

¹⁰⁰ Curiously, in fact, the major exception was the land on which the factory building itself was erected. By virtue of its location right on the waterfront, it occupied an area within the public domains of the '*Fazenda Nacional*.'

from the trampling of feet tracking home, there blew the whistles at the factory again calling all back to work. And another rushed procession would then take over the streets, once again down towards the waterfront.

For the next few hours, things would quiet down on the streets but not on the waterfront. There might be boats carrying bales of cotton and other supplies to the factory, sounding their horns as they approached the landing area so as to alert workers that they must come out to unload them. Besides, the creaking and cranking of the machines were loud enough to echo through the walls, well past the gates of the factory into the neighborhood, reminding those that stood outside that Plataforma was not just a place to live--it was a also the site of industry, a center of production.

At four o'clock, at the sounding of the last whistle, the machines were silenced. But the noisy crowds of workers coming out of the factory along with the buzzing of trains pulling in to fetch their passengers, filled the air one more time. This time to announce that the workday was finally over and done: it was time to go back home and recover energy for the following day.

On Sundays, the only day of the week that the factory would remain closed putting all the machines to rest, it was still the whistles--now by their deadly silence--that marked the activities of the day. Unfortunately, unlike the machines, the people of Plataforma did not rest. It was on Sunday that the women who worked at the factory gathered their bundles of soiled clothes and trailed on the road to Itacaranha to do the wash. It

was also on that day that men did home repairs or worked in the building of their houses. No doubt, a few could spare the time to play soccer on a nearby field, others setting a table on the corner for a game of dominoes.

But in Plataforma the moments of leisure were few and far between. Besides, the shadow of the factory (or one may say, that of the Catharinos) lingered over these moments, imprinting once more its mark (or their mark) on the community. The soccer club was sponsored by the factory; the Saturday night dances were usually held on company owned buildings; the occasional band playing on the gazebo at São Braz Square, the 'flicks' showed at the cinema in the 'Círculo Operário', the annual feasts for São Braz and the local festivities of Carnival, were certain to have the patronage of the company back then.

It is not surprising that long-time residents refer to Fábrica São Braz as the 'mother of Plataforma.' Indeed, while no one who worked at Fábrica São Braz can forget the harsh and stressing work conditions they experienced on the shopfloors, the factory was certainly a welcomed fixture of Plataforma. As D.Delana once affirmed "Plataforma had value back then." She speaks with pride of the presence of the factory--she is proud to have been a part of that past.

Resentment of work conditions and pride in being a 'child of Plataforma'--of the factory in fact--coexist-exist side by side in the social memory of Plataforma residents. They see no contradiction in asserting both sides of their condition: it was the essence of their social identity in the past. Even those who did not work at the factory, still think of

Plataforma as a community of factory workers back then. So, when D.Adelaide affirms, "everybody here worked at the factory," she is not talking about numbers but of 'community identity.' Plataforma found hers in Fábrica São Braz.

That all Plataforma residents regardless of their sex or occupation shared some common experiences in living on the backyards of the factory and recognized this common identity is not to suggest that differences were not relevant. To the contrary, as shall be seen in the following two chapters, gender played a fundamental role in the way different individuals and families experienced everyday life in their community.

CHAPTER NINE

Gender, Work, and the Family

Introduction

One of the fundamental aspects shared by workers' villas, mill villages, and company towns around the world lies on the fact that they were spaces of industrial production as well as of reproduction of the labor force. Indeed, they were not simply places for people to find employment but also settings in which "men and women fell in love, married, reared their children, and retired in old age" (Hall et al 1987:114). Moreover, for those living or seeking factory-owned housing in such settings, a family-labor system usually applied. Housing would be available so long as tenant families provided labor hands to the mill. But who and how many in these families should actually work in the mills to comply with these stipulations, or who would share in the fruits of their labor, taking care of the other needs of the household, has varied considerably. It has depended not only on the whims and vagaries of the world economies and how they reflect on local labor markets, but also on the composition of the households in question and the needs, capabilities, and the preferences of their members (Parr 1990:3).

Bourgeois family morality has sustained the basic principles of the patriarchal family model in propounding that the husband/father be the head of the household. He should assume the role of the provider while wife and children remained as the dependent lot, sharing in the fruits of

his labor. Accordingly, it has also upheld that the decision-making power and authority within the family-household should abide by the patriarchal hierarchical structure. Men should have authority over women, and elders over the younger members of the family; husbands should have authority over their wives, fathers over their daughters, brothers over their sisters (Borges 1992:47).

At Fábrica São Braz, these principles were observed insofar as the chain of command and the payment of lower wages to women and youngsters were concerned. However, by relying primarily on the employment of women and youngsters, the policies at work at Fábrica São Braz contradicted and undermined patriarchal authority in the domestic sphere. Because more women were likely to work at the mill than men, most company houses in the Plataforma were rented out to women, not to men. Likewise, it was usually the women of the house who provided the basic food staples acquired at the company store. In these households women assumed a de facto position as heads, particularly as men's jobs were more likely to bring irregular incomes. Yet, while employment at the factory guaranteed a more regular income to women, their wages were never high enough to meet the needs of the household. This required that children also seek employment. To borrow Karl Woortmann's (1984:35) words, workers' families then became "true working families." As shall be seen ahead, this contributed to the weakening of conjugal ties and to the formation of matrilineal extended households where women played a central role.

Nevertheless, in Plataforma, the 'traditional' gender divide with its ensuing distinct roles for men and women, though often transgressed and/or redefined, was (and still remains) the basic principle in the organization of the family-households, as well as for the socialization of children in the community.

To Be a Boy, To Be a Girl

Regardless of whether they worked in the factory, women were entrusted with the care of children and all domestic chores, a role for which they began to be trained at an early age by helping their mothers. This was especially so in those homes in which the mothers worked at the factory. As the oldest child in a crew of five close at age, for instance, D. Josefa recalls that she could barely carry her younger siblings when she became responsible for their care and for that of the house so that her mother could go to work at the factory. Similar responsibilities faced D. Elenita in her childhood. As the oldest daughter in the house, she assumed all the major tasks for her mother until she too began working at the factory. But even those whose mothers were not away from the house for most of the day had to perform several tasks in the house, having little time for play and fun:

I had a sad childhood. It was sad, it was work, work, work. I could never go out and play with the other children in my street (D.Telma).

My childhood was so bad, I didn't really have a childhood. My childhood was all work, I was never lazy. When I was little I worked even more than now. In São João, we lived on the top of the hillock, and I had to carry water, I went to the beach to shellfish, I would go fetch wood. I had to

go shellfishing so we would have something to eat at noon. And I had to go to the sides of the Pirajá to fetch wood. I had to cross a bridge, one time I almost fell off at high tide, I could see everything green down there. I had to do a lot to help out in the house (D. Alma).

Usually, however, girls assumed tasks in the house while young boys helped their mothers by running errands around the neighborhood. In this respect, in fact, the gender division of labor among children, so well described by Zahide Machado Netto (1983, 1984a, 1984b) on the basis of her studies of working-class families in Salvador in the early 1980s, seems to have been already well established among Plataforma families in the first decades of this century. As in her observations, girls in Plataforma were entrusted with the tasks and responsibilities which commonly would befall to the women/mother/housewife to perform in the house whereas boys, in preparation for their lives as eventual 'providers'--that is, as the members of the household who would have to 'go out into the world' to make a living--were soon entrusted with those tasks which tended to the needs of the households but which were performed away from it. Indeed, the performance of tasks in the house was not expected of boys. They were actually spared from such activities as they best befitted women, not men. The words of D. Linda reflect what was then the rule:

My mother always thought that the women were the ones who should work around the house. Men had to go to the streets while women should do all the things in the house.

The observation of these principles is also suggested in the testimony of the men I interviewed. Sr. José, Sr. Luiz, and Sr. Lauro, for example, all claim that they had helped their mothers. But the only thing

they actually recall doing was fetching wood for the stove. Moreover, as Sr. Luiz related, these excursions to the wooded areas that surrounded Plataforma were usually an occasion for fun and games. He and his friends would go in groups, climb trees and gorge themselves with the fruits that grew in the wild back then. As he remembered:

There we found *bobo*, a little fruit, kids liked bobo a lot; (there was) *murici*, another fruit, one that birds like; *cajá*, we got from the woods, *mangaba*, *ingá*, *caju*, all of them (fruits) we found there. They were there for the taking, we didn't have to pay for them.¹⁰¹

Differently than girls, boys not only had more time and opportunity for fun and play but also enjoyed greater freedom to roam about. As Sr. José's recollections of his childhood indicate:

When I was young, I played with everybody, I liked everybody. I was always on the streets playing, I played alot, all kinds of games, I played alot. There was this game called 'bacalhau', have you ever played it? it was like that, you put things on the ground, one group would jump them, on the spot that they fell upon, you put the 'bacalhau'. When there was moonlight, we would play 'roda', where you get in a circle and sing and also play some games. 'Bacalhau' boys and girls played separately, girls didn't play much. But in 'roda' we all played together, boys and girls together. It was very democratic. I also played ball a lot, all boys did back then like they do now.¹⁰²

Unlike the workers who grew up in the interior, those reared in Plataforma--men and women alike--went to school, most of them to D. Ursula Catharino's elementary school, owned by Fábrica São Braz. For boys and girls alike, going to school not only came late in childhood, usually never before the age of ten or eleven, but was also a short term

¹⁰¹ With the exception of 'caju'(cashew), all the other fruit mentioned by Sr.Luiz have no equivalent term in English.

¹⁰² Until a few decades ago, 'roda' (circle) was played by children all over Brazil. 'Roda' is a generic term for a series of different games which vary by region. In these games, children join hands in a circle, jumping or walking around while singing different songs. See, for example, Fernandes (1970).

activity commonly interrupted after a couple of years, three at the most, when youngsters would find employment at the factory. In the case of girls, in particular, school was often delayed because of their responsibilities at home, as related by D. Alma:

I only went to school late and for a very short time, only briefly. I didn't have the time, because I either helped at home or went to school, I couldn't do both. My oldest brother started to work at the factory very young, as soon as he could, so I had to stay home to take care of the others and of the house. My mother had eleven children, you know.

But the pressure to quit school in order to seek employment in the factory seems to have been greater on boys rather than girls, particularly when fathers were absent. In the case of Sr. José's family, for instance, both he and his oldest brother had to leave school after the death of their father to help in the support of the family:

I didn't start school until after we came back from the interior. But I only stayed in school for a short time, I think it was less than a year. I went to first grade and learned my math tables (*taboada*) and went through the first reading book. I passed to the second, the book by Carvalho, and when I was going to begin the third book, I had to leave school to go to work. My father had died and I couldn't stay in school. With my brother was even worse. He was the oldest and didn't even get through the first book, didn't even learn his math tables. He didn't have the time to study, he was the oldest (Sr. José).

These accounts of former factory workers regarding the division of labor in their homes, suggest that in the period under consideration, patterns similar to the ones observed by Aracky Martins Rodrigues (1984) among industrial workers families in São Paulo, were fully at work in Plataforma. As in the families studied by Rodrigues, those of factory workers in Plataforma also followed a set of principles--which were not

consciously recognized nor clearly spelled out as such--for the enactment and fulfillment of traditional gender roles in the family-household, when those who should legitimately fulfill them were either absent or otherwise unable to do so. In the absence of the mother (or when she worked full-time), the oldest daughter stepped in as the 'nurturer,' while the role of the 'provider,' in the absence of the husband /father, fell upon the oldest son, as observed in the case of Sr. José's brother. To be the oldest son or daughter in a working-class household, then, was to be socialized, from an early age, to assume these roles in the family of origin should the need arise. In the event that the designated ones succeeded in evading this role, their 'responsibility of primogeniture' would then be passed on to the next siblings in line. In any event, those that assumed these prescribed roles, would also have the legitimate authority over the younger siblings, the brothers always exercising their authority over sisters. In this manner, though redefined according to the existing circumstances, the ideal model of gender roles in the family remained upheld.

Nevertheless, regardless of their standing in the age pyramid existing at home, it was understood that boys should seek employment (or some form of income generation) as soon as they could, so as to contribute to the family budget. Although such pressures were not usually placed upon the girls, they also commonly sought employment in the factory as soon as they were old enough to do so. By working in the factory, girls could escape from some of the drudgery of their domestic chores (though never being free from them), while at the same time enjoy a little more freedom

to roam about the neighborhood as well as to be in the company of their friends. As D. Telma candidly revealed:

Let me tell you, I was really tired of all that work at home. Fetching water and then face that big bundle of clothes to wash all day long so that at night I could iron them with that charcoal iron, two of those irons, to take care of all the clothes. And I had to step on a box to reach the table. I had to help at home, right ?(...). I was thirteen years old by then, and all the girls on the street were working in the factory. So I decided to go find me a job as well. I figured nothing could be worse than all the work I did at home. And I also wanted to be with my friends, to get out of the house.

As in the case of D. Telma, ten of the other former factory workers among the group of twenty interviewed at greater length also began working at the factory before they had reached the legal minimum age of 14. As to the remaining nine in the group, six started precisely at that age (14), two at 15, and only one at 18.

As noted earlier, despite the existing legislation setting 14 as the legal minimum age for the employment of minors, Fábrica São Braz, as a rule, did not require documentation that could establish the age of the prospective workers; few people then would have such documents anyway. But the following account by D. Telma as to how she got her job at the factory, reveals that 'looking old enough' was a major concern of the screening physicians in selecting workers. Although one such physician accused her of having tuberculosis, what he seemed to be concerned about is whether she could 'pass' for the minimum age should inspectors appear at the factory:

So I went to the factory. I was thirteen but told the doctor at the factory that I was fourteen. But I was so skinny then, you know, I worked a lot at home and didn't have enough to eat, I was so small then, I looked like a little tick (*carrapato*). I asked the doctor for the '*atestado*' (a health release

paper) to get a job, but when he took a good at me he said: "*Atestado* to work? Are you crazy? We don't hire people skinny like you, looking like they have tuberculosis, the workers here don't have tuberculosis." And I asked: "Why do you think I have tuberculosis?", and then he said: "you say you are 14, so as skinny and little as you look, you must have tuberculosis, you are going to contaminate the whole factory." So I left crying, crying. Fifteen days later I went back there, there was another doctor working. He didn't even look at me, gave me the papers I needed, and I started working at the factory on the following week.

In seeking a job at the factory, even at a relatively young age, boys and girls alike usually encountered the support--often an instrumental support--on the part of their immediate families and other relatives. In relating how they got their jobs at Fábrica São Braz, for instance, the men and women interviewed commonly speak of the intermediating of their mothers, uncles, aunts, or other relatives who also worked at the factory (or had friends that did). As the following testimonies indicate:

I had an uncle that worked at the factory. When my father fell ill, I decided to start working, and my father asked my uncle to help me find a job. I was only 12 then, so I had to say I was older to get the job (D. Alma).

My mother worked at the factory and she asked around if they would take me. I was only 10 years old then, but I told them I was older. But I was still little, they had to give me a stool to reach the machine (D. Carlinda).

I got my job at the factory through my mother. She worked there in the weaving sector so I didn't have any problems. I was only 12 but they hired me anyway (D.Elenita).

I started to work at the factory when I was only 10. I was so small, I had to use a step stool, actually, a little box, to work the machine. The job I got through Compadre Batista. He was not my *compadre* (co-parent), I mean, he was my father's *compadre*, and he worked at the factory as a watchman (D.Delana).

This support was not without reason. Families had a vested interest in directing their youngsters toward finding employment at the factory, particularly those families who lived in company-housing. By providing

labor hands to the mill they would continue to abide by the stipulated housing policies, thus guaranteeing possession of their homes, of the roof over their heads. However, for boys as well as girls, being hired at the factory had greater meaning than simply 'getting a job,' or ensuring the family's claims to the homes. Indeed, for most of the 'children of Plataforma' the job in the factory was usually their first job, thus marking the end of their childhood and the beginning of a new phase in their lives. However, this 'new' phase was to be different for boys and girls.

Whereas boys had previously enjoyed the freedom of roaming around the neighborhood, playing in the woods or playing ball with their friends, a job in the factory meant 'confinement' for the greatest part of the day. And their freedom of movement would then be curtailed not only by the fact that they were now confined into four walls and to a machine, but also because of the close supervision under which they would find themselves now working. It is no wonder boys were much more unruly and harder to be 'domesticated' to the routine of the factory than girls. They had not been used to that level of confinement and supervision imposed at the factory. Nevertheless, once the workday was over, boys would still be free to stay out on the streets with their friends as they had before.

But working girls did not enjoy the same freedom. Firstly, girls were not supposed to stay out on the streets, and secondly, most had to go back home to help their mothers since working at the factory did not free them from domestic chores. However, the fact that they now worked out of the house (or as they so express, '*trabalhavam na rua*,' that is, worked in the

'street'), provided them with a greater degree of freedom, including to be with their friends, than what they had experienced before. As D.Alma so confided:

I loved when I started to work in the factory. It felt so good to be out of the house all day, to be out with my colleagues. I had a lot of friends at the factory.

Indeed, in their recollections of this period of their lives--of their youth (*juventude*)--there is very little room for sadness or complaints. Even those who noted that the young men they knew enjoyed much greater freedom than the women remember this period as 'the best of their lives.' They recalled the feasts, the dances, the 'carefree' life (or so it seems to them, in retrospective) of Plataforma youngsters in those days:

I remember my youth to be beautiful. There were a lot of feasts, a lot of dances (*bailes*) here in Plataforma. We had much fun. It was fun then, we worked hard all week, but in those years I was young. On Saturdays, we would come home from work and still have energy to go out dancing (D.Luciana).

I loved to dance when I was young. We had many feasts here. We, my sisters and I, used to go to the dances with our friends. My grandmother let us. There were dances on Saturday, on Sunday, on the feast of São Joao, Carnival. It was during Carnival that we played and danced from Saturday until Ash Wednesday (D.Lucia).

You know, it used to be beautiful here when I was young. Every weekend they had something going on, a dance, a festival (*quermesse*). And I would also go to Ribeira for their feast, go to Bonfim, my friends would go and I would tag along. It was really good back then (Sr.José).

On one such festival--a *quermesse* in São João--Sr. Luiz finally met the girl he had been eyeing in Plataforma for quite sometime to no avail. He had tried to get her attention every time she passed him on the street but she was seldom alone and would usually do something to try to avoid him. Sr. Luiz was sure she was not interested in him until a friend

approached him at the festival and whispered: "There is a girl here that is crazy about you. See, there she is!" As he recounted:

When I looked, it was her. So I went and asked her to dance with me and I liked it. Her father was a barber and I was afraid of barbers, but then she told me we could see each other. She said: "you could come over when my father is out serenading. My mother likes you." I knew her mother from the factory, she worked with me there, so I started seeing the daughter. When her father was out serenading I would go to her house. He used to walk back home singing the songs of Vicente Celestino, so we would know when he was coming back and I would leave. You know what happened, a lot of freedom, this, and that and there: they had me married.

What Sr. Luiz means is that the girl (now his wife for over fifty years) eventually got in a family way and her father saw that he repaired the damage to the 'honor of the family' by marrying her.

Mating Patterns

Sr. Luiz' account of his romance with his wife is revealing as to the sexual-affective life of young people in Plataforma in those days. First, it explains why everybody was so fond of the festivals and dances; they offered the opportunity for greater socializing between young men and women and for the amorous encounters. Second, it denotes how sweethearts then, as today, not only found ways of circumventing possible parental opposition to their romance, but also reached a high degree of sexual intimacy in their encounters even if, as in the case of Sr. Luiz, the courtship ('*namoro*') was supposed to take place under the watchful eyes of the girl's mother. Finally, it points at one of the different courses of action taken by the families when men overstepped the accepted limits of the

prevalent 'moral' standards for courtship by seducing and/or deflowering their girlfriends: force them to assume responsibility for their amorous actions by marrying the girls.

Indeed, whereas the elites have commonly seen the 'populace' as being devoid of moral standards--even of families in the local 'proper' sense of the word (Borges 1992:79)--rules of conduct for courtship among the working classes could be and often were just as strict as those followed by the upper classes. As described by Thales de Azevedo (1986), in order to pay court to a girl in her house the suitors would have to get permission from her father or whomever stood as the head of her household. If the proposed courtship was accepted by the family in question, the encounters between the loving pair would take place in their living room where a set place was reserved for a *namoradeira*, a 'loveseat' and, not too far from it, a chair for the chaperone. The chaperone was a must since such encounters should be always supervised to preserve the honor and reputation of the girl and as such, of her family:

The control exercised over the heterosexual dyad during courtship has as immediate reference the preservation of the honor, reputation, and chastity of the girl, represented, in the last analysis, by her virginity as the supreme commodity to be exchange for marriage in the bourgeois family (Azevedo 1986:43, my translation).

Plataforma homes did not have living rooms with love-seats set aside for courting. Sweethearts talked at the door. But the general rules of the courting process were nevertheless observed, often in a strict way. Talking about this process in their youth, for instance, the women interviewed had this to say:

Back then, we had a lot of respect, there was no kissing in front of everybody, no kissing in public as there is today. Back then, we had to respect and obey our elders. You actually had to get permission to be able to talk at the door, right? You would have to ask for permission. In my case, it was worse because my grandmother went by the old ways. And you couldn't hide things easily from others because everybody here knew each other (D.Lucia).

Courtship in those days was nothing like it is today. I lived with my sister back then, and my sister was very strict, she would never leave me alone with anybody. She would sit there next to us from the moment he arrived to the moment he left. She wouldn't even let me talk to him at the door, she was always there. She used to make nets for the fishermen here, and she would sit there with us, working on the nets while we talked (D.Adelaide).

Courtship back then ? There wasn't much, it was one here, the other one over there. My mother was always watching us, if not her, she would have my sister tag along (D.Alice).

Despite all this chaperoning, lovers always found a way of robbing kisses, running caressing hands where such caressing was not permitted, or even having sexual intercourse while supposedly under close supervision.

As per the confidences of D.Josefa and D.Telma:

There was a lot of respect back then. But we did just as youngsters do today, only we did it in hiding, not in public. Back then, nobody was a 'saint'. It wasn't exactly like today, though, but I myself lost my virginity ('*sai de casa*') long before I was married. My husband was not dumb (D.Josefa).

My foster father was very strict, you know. My mother would be watching over us, but when my boyfriend was getting ready to leave, I would go to the door with him. You know, it was dark back then, there were no lights in the streets, and one night when we were outside saying goodbye, he locked his legs around me ('*me deu uma pernada*'), and there, he had me. And we went on like that for a while (D.Telma).

But the degree of licentiousness to which these relationships scaled was not uncommon among other segments of the working classes of Salvador. This is revealed in the legal processes of 'deflowerment' studied by Ferreira Filho (1994). In the recorded testimonies, the women and men

involved often spoke with ease about the scaling of their relationship to the level of sexual intercourse in spite of the chaperoning of their encounters. According to Ferreira Filho (1994:125), in fact, of a total of 89 such processes--12.35% involving factory workers--only two pertained to cases of forceful rape. In most of the cases examined, the women seemed to have consented (sometimes quite willingly) to the liberties taken, but not before they were successfully convinced by their suitors of their 'good intentions.' Thus, in many instances, legal action was only taken months after the fact or time of the deflowering, either when the seducers failed to fulfill their promises in face of a pregnancy, or when the level of intimacy the couples had reached was otherwise discovered the families of the women involved. That matters were brought to court is a sure indication that unlike Sr.Luiz, many young men were not so willing to assume responsibility for their actions. Part of their refusal in so doing probably lay on the fact that the women they seduced, unlike Sr. Luiz's wife, did not have the presence of a father in the house and thus of the 'legitimate' authority to force the young men to fulfill their duty. As Ferreira Filho indicates:

Among the 89 processes analyzed, 52.81% of the complaints were made by the mothers of the victims. Among them, few are the ones who so acted for being widows (11.24%). On the other hand, the legislation at the time was categorical in delegating the authorship in the complaints to the head of the family (the father), in the case of families springing from legally constituted homes. What we see then is a legion of single mothers-fruit of furtive relationships or terminated consensuous unions-not wanting their daughters to repeat their story (1994:124).

Insofar as among the working classes, consensual unions were socially accepted, what these mothers might hope for their daughters would not necessarily involve 'marriage,' nor the mere legal recognition of paternity. What seems to have been more important was the 'social' recognition of the liaison through the setting up of a household (*'botar casa'*) for the woman.

Nevertheless, it was not uncommon for a man to skip town--or as in the case of Plataforma, to disappear from the neighborhood--upon learning that their pairs were pregnant. Indeed, of the 17 (seventeen) women in the group of former workers studied, 7(seven) had their first child out of wedlock, never setting up a household with the biological fathers of their children. D.Alice, for example, whose first child was hired by an assistant in the factory, has never heard again from him since she broke the news to him that she was 'with child.' The same occurred in the case of D.Carlinda; her seducer jumped on a boat to Ribeira one day after work (he also worked at Fábrica São Braz) and disappeared in the sun over the Bay of All Saints. As to D.Adelaide, the pastor from a nearby Protestant church who charmed her and fathered her child, moved away the moment he heard of her condition and has yet to be found. For all she knows, he might still be preaching high moral standards from the pulpit without ever recognizing the daughter he fathered in Plataforma more than sixty years ago.

Years earlier, in 1916, the sad story of Izabel Maria de Jesus, a 17-yr old operária at Fábrica São Braz who had found herself in a similar plight made news in Salvador. Seduced and abandoned by one of her colleagues at

the factory when the news of her pregnancy was known, Izabel sought the services of a local curer (*'curandeira'*) for an abortion. Suffering in silence from the serious consequences of that intervention, Izabel was hopelessly debilitated when she finally had the courage to tell her mother what was happening and then seek the help of the attending physician at the factory. She died shortly after and her mother, lacking the needed financial resources to foot her burial, was forced to appeal to local government agencies for help (**A Tarde**, in Ferreira Filho 1994:175).

Izabel's story alerts to the practice of abortion as one of the possible courses of action followed by women in Plataforma. But the extent to which they actually resorted to this course of action will probably never be known. Then as still today, abortions were not only illegal but actually a crime in Brazil--few women would be willing to be open about this matter. To the extent that I could ascertain, the women interviewed who conceived their first child out of wedlock found other means of coping with their condition as single mothers.

D.Luciana's story sheds light on one of the ways this was done. Like Sr.Luiz, D.Luciana met the object of her attention (for a long time she says) during a local festival. She was only fifteen at the time, and was easily taken by the sweet-talking of a young man, a few years older than her, a Plataforma resident who also worked at Fábrica São Braz. He was a 'good dancer and a charmer,' so she tells, and after dancing with him during the festival, she confesses to have fallen for him. Afterwards, they would see each other everyday at the factory during lunch time. As she narrates:

It was like that, during the break, he would come to my loom, I worked in the weaving sector and he worked in the spinning, but he would come over to see me, and we would talk. I would find excuses to tell my mother to explain why I was late coming home for lunch. My sister helped me because she also had a boyfriend in the factory and did the same. At night, I would sneak out of the backdoor to meet him. So you know what happened next: *peguei barriga* ('I caught the tummy', i.e., got pregnant). I didn't know I was pregnant for a long time, though. I didn't know 'cause I had just started having my periods when I met him, and in those days you didn't talk about these things with anybody. But I started to gain weight and the women at the factory started to tease me. So I talked to my sister, and she figured I must be pregnant. That same day I told him what I thought it was happening. The next day, and the next, and the next, he didn't show up for work. Then I found out that he had gone to the office in the factory and told them he was leaving. When I saw him again, my oldest son was already ten years old (D.Luciana).

Differently than Sr.Luiz's wife, D.Luciana did not have a resident father to force her seducer in 'repairing the damage' through marriage. Her father had left her mother when D.Luciana was little, indeed, her mother and her maternal grandmother before her had also experienced a similar plight. D.Luciana and her son continued to be part of her mother's household but the child, though not legally recognized by the father, was socially recognized and accepted by the paternal relatives, his grandmother in particular. Interestingly enough, life repeated itself for D.Luciana's seducer had also been the fruit of a brief romance, his father also leaving his mother when she 'got in a family way.' Years later, he had constituted a family in the neighboring suburb of Periperi, and it was to his father's house that D.Luciana's seducer had in fact fled when news of his pending fatherhood reached him. However, as his mother's oldest son, he continued to contribute to her household budget and, indirectly, he was also to contribute to the care of his son by D.Luciana. As it happened, the grandmothers of this child knew each other quite well. They worked in the

same sector at Fábrica São Braz, so that the paternal grandmother (D.Marieta) not only was aware of what was happening, but also took a liking to D.Luciana's son "from the moment he was born." As D.Luciana related:

When my time came, my mother sent word to D.Marieta, and she was there to help when my son came out. She was one of the first to pick him up, he was her first grandchild. And she could tell it was her grandchild too because she said my son looked just like his daddy. She always helped me with my son. I have nothing bad to say about her, she would never let my son to go without his milk or anything.

D.Elenita's story was not much different. Although her seducer or, as she puts it, the man who took her 'out of the house' (*'me tirou de casa'*) meaning 'took her virginity' did not run away, they never lived together in the same household. Because they were both very young (she was 15, he was 17) when she got pregnant with her first child, and not able to set up a house of their own, each continued to live with their mothers. In this situation, they had two children in the space of two and a half years, the children being fully recognized by the father's family. Indeed, the two households involved--women headed households, both of them--shared in the responsibility for their care. D.Elenita and her mate eventually broke up their relationship but the children continued to float between the two households while growing up.

In the case of D.Delana, the arrangements made were slightly different. She was only 12 years old at the time she became pregnant by a young colleague in the factory whom she had known all her life. Due to the ill-health of her paternal grandmother who had raised her since her

mother's death, as well as her father's disapproval of the situation, D.Delana ran away from home and went to live with her suitor's family. But that arrangement did not last much more than a year. Although she claims to have been treated 'like a daughter' by his mother, the young couples relationship had already deteriorated significantly to the point in which she had become a 'battered wife.' Although she finally returned home, her good relations with her child's paternal grandmother were not severed, her child often being sent to the care of that grandmother when the need arose.

The examples discussed thus far do not differ from certain general tendencies observed among the working class of Bahia. Illegitimate births resulting from consensual unions and casual encounters predominated among the working-classes of Salvador. What the stories here related suggest, nevertheless, is that the children born of these unions or even from casual sexual encounters, were valued by their kinsmen. Although they might not be legally recognized by their fathers, they were nevertheless socially recognized and accepted by the families involved, especially by the paternal grandmothers. In the case of D.Luciana and D.Elenita, cases in which both in the maternal and paternal sides of the children the households were headed by women, factory workers, they shared in the caring for the children. In these instances, in fact, the limits

between the households became 'fluid' as children and goods circulated back-and-forth between them.¹⁰³

Family-Household Organization

It is well to note that a few of the women interviewed did in fact establish long-term consensual unions with the men who seduced them, some of these unions eventually being legalized. However, in the cases of D.Heloisa, D. Zenaide and D.Josefa, for instance, the unions were not established on the basis of neolocal residence. Instead, their mates came to live with them--who lived with their mothers in company housing rented out in the mothers' names--thus becoming part of matrilocal extended households. Similar arrangements were also to be made when D.Luciana and D.Elenita eventually found other mates and constituted consensual unions.

Several factors seem to have been at play in the formation of these households. The basic one, of course, was the financial inability of the men involved to secure housing so as to set up a household of their own ('botar casa') for their mates. Rental facilities were not easy to find at the time. The company had ceased to build new housing for workers and the existing ones were usually occupied. Land was available for the building of houses, but this was often a project to be accomplished over a period of many

¹⁰³ This circulation of children and goods among households was similar to the patterns observed by Carol Stack (1975) among poor Afro-American families in Central Illinois. For similar patterns in Brazil, see Fonseca (1989).

years, sometimes over a lifetime, and difficult to be started by young couples. It was easier to build an addition--a room for instance--to an existing house, even a company house, a task that was often undertaken when the homes were too small to accommodate the extra family in bloom.

This course of action was not only more attainable financially, but also figured as a strategy for abiding by company rental policies and thus guaranteeing occupation of the company house by the given family. Moreover, these households had previously depended on the pooling of the financial contribution of all able members--sons and daughters--and could not afford to do without them. This was increasingly so as the mothers aged and no longer had the same amount of energy to produce in the factory as much as they had before, thus gradually drawing lower earnings. At the same time, daughters now had children of their own. If they were to continue working at the factory--as nearly all women here considered did--and guarantee the company house and the wages to maintain it, the help of their mothers in caring for the house and the children would be fundamental. A transgenerational cycle of mutual help between mothers and daughters would then be completed. While daughters had often assumed their mothers tasks so that these mothers could work at the factory, now it was the mothers that would fill in for the daughters. As D. Josefa has observed, she could never have worked at Fábrica São Braz for twenty-four years while raising eleven children without the help of her mother. Nor would it have been feasible for D. Zenaide to do without her

mother while raising ten children and still dedicate twenty-three years of her life to Fábrica São Braz.

If this mutual dependence of mothers and daughters contributed to the formation of matrilineal extended households, it was not uncommon or similar arrangements to be found for sons. In Sr.José's and Sr.Lauro's cases, for instance, it was the wives that moved in with the husbands' mothers. For Sr.Lauro's wife, the arrangement had come as a matter of convenience; her family lived in the Suburbio of Periperi and she worked at Fábrica São Braz. Moreover, as the oldest son, Sr.Lauro was expected to assume the role of male provider in his mother's household. As to Sr.José, it was a question of need for lack of choices. He could not afford to set up an independent household while his mate, an orphan who had roamed from home to home since her parents' death, had no other place to go.

While all these arrangements tended to the needs of the households and individuals involved, they were certainly not immune to conflicts. Actually, conflicts would brew among the mates and between them and the other members of the household on gender and generation lines as the related roles became muddled.

In this regard, it is important to consider more closely the underpinnings of the then prevalent roles of the husband/father and the wife/mother in the ideal model of the family, and how the enactment of these roles were made difficult in the matrilineal extended households here discussed. Ideally, family-households should be constituted by a legally established couple--husband and wife--and their children, who together

would form a distinct domestic unit. Within it, the role of the husband/father would be that of the 'provider', the member of the household responsible for the financial support of all the others, and who in turn would be accorded a place of authority. The husband/father would then be the *pai-de-família*, that is, the 'father of a family,' which would be distinguishable from simply being a 'father. As per Karl Woortmann's considerations:

Pai de família means more than 'genitor;' it means 'pater' according to the classic anthropological distinction. It means responsibility, respectability, to be a 'sober man.' In sum, it means to be a man in the full sense of the word as a cultural category. In the peasant groups (from where a good part of the urban working classes originate), an individual becomes a 'man' when he marries, because this is when he frees himself from paternal authority and domination. But this same cultural concept requires a nuclear family and a neolocal residency, that is, an independent household; consequently it demands a separate home (1983:121, his emphasis, my translation).

Within this model, therefore, the very role of *pai de família* (or 'pater'), would be tied to the model of nuclear family-household. The same would apply to that of the mother/wife as *dona de casa* (the 'mistress of the house'), who would be the home 'administrator', that is the person responsible for presiding over consumption, subordinating individual needs to the collective needs of the family. According to Woortmann:

The activities of the *dona de casa* are a function of the nuclear family; the organization of the domestic unit attributes to the wife-mother the control over the production of values of use essential to the reproduction of its members, and it is this control which defines locus, which is given by independent residence. If the category *pai de família* presupposes a nuclear family and neolocal residency, the same occurs with the category *mãe de família* (mother of the family), because this cannot be realized in one home with more than one family - in each household there can be only one *dona de casa* (1983:122, his emphasis, my translation).

The roles of *pai de familia* and of *dona de casa* would figure then as complementary roles, realized through the nuclear family household. In a situation of matrilocal extended households, however, there would be not only one individual to fulfill each of these roles, but actually two --or possibly more--individuals to assume them, a problem which was certain to cause conflicts as the individuals disputed over them. But the sort of conflicts and the way that they were to be solved would be different in the two types of the matrilocal households here considered. As shall be seen, in those in which the wives had been the addition, the dispute would come over the role of the *dona de casa*, whereas in the cases that husbands moved in the problem would revolve over the role of head of the household.

Of the seven households considered, Sr. Lauro's was the one to experience the least degree of dispute and conflict. As the oldest son, he rightfully assumed (*de jure*) the role of *pai de familia*, and head of the household. According to him he was a 'hard worker', and climbed fast to the position of assistant in the factory, thus having a steady job and drawing earnings that made it possible for him to assume also a *de facto* role of head of household as its major provider. When he did get married, his mother was no longer working in the factory and, apparently, the company house in which they lived was already under his name. At least, it was from his wages the rent payments were being discounted. During the first years of his marriage, his wife continued to work, depending for that on the assistance of his mother. As far as I was able to ascertain (I was not able to talk to the wife personally), as long as the mother was alive, she

assumed the role of a 'daughter' in the household. When Sr. Lauro's mother passed away, his wife apparently left the factory (they already had two children by then), and rightfully assumed the role of *dona de casa* (mistress of the house). Sr. Lauro's household then reverted to a nuclear household type thus fulfilling the idea model. This lasted until relatively recently when his own children grew up and two of his daughters continued to live in the house with their children.

Sr. José's household also evolved from matrilineal extended to nuclear and finally to patrilineal extended household--but not without much conflict in between. His consensual mate was so to speak a 'difficult person' and did not get along with his mother. In her disputes with his mother, she had the last say. As Sr. José now regretfully confides: "because of her, I sent my mother away." Note should be made that, eventually, despite having ten children with Sr. José, she left him for a much younger man. Until a few years ago, Sr. José still lived with his oldest daughter and her children. But he has found a new mate now and is living with her while still supporting his daughter and grandchildren.

As to the five matrilineal extended households in the group studied, no disputes ever arose between mothers and daughters over the role of 'mistress of the house.' That role remained the prerogative of the mothers. As D. Zenaide commented: "I had a wonderful mother. She did everything for me. She wouldn't let me do anything. I only learned to make fish stew (*muqueca de peixe*) and beans after she died." While she remained alive, D. Zenaide's earnings were all turned to her mother who administrated the

household budget. The problem, however, lay in the fact that these mothers remained as heads of their households and the central figure of authority in the family. This strained the relations between the conjugal pairs living under their authority and household administration. Their daughters' mates could not fulfill the role of *pai de familia*, expected of them, especially as their unstable jobs and meager earnings did not enable them to become the sole providers.

In the cases of D. Heloisa, D. Luciana, and D. Elenita, the strains were such that they eventually brought the relationships to a breaking point. And the blame was put on the men not only for failing to provide for the families, but also for not acting as 'sober' *pais de família* should:

We didn't get married we just lived together. We lived in my house, he did not rent a place to put me up. We lived with my mother, I still live in the same house. He was not a great thing. He drank, and he had a lot of women on the street. That is why I only have two children, my two daughters. And we lived together many years, more than ten I think. He didn't have a fixed job. I usually paid for everything in this house. Then, he finally found somebody else on the street. He was the one who left, I stayed in my house. I wouldn't leave because the house was mine, not his. He came back later, but I didn't want him anymore. God forbid, I didn't want any more men in my life. I wanted to get rid of the man, I didn't want him and he came back with the cleanest face in the world! (D. Heloísa).

The women in my family were not fortunate. None got married, not I, not my mother, nor my daughters. But then we all just ran into a bunch of no-good lazy bums, and ended up having to fetch for ourselves. And I don't see what good could have done me to marry any of them. When I finally got rid of the last one, the father of my youngest, I thanked God. He was always getting drunk, always out of work, he didn't buy one bag of flour for this house. What did I need him in my house for? (D. Luciana).

Surprisingly, D. Zenaide's and D. Josefa's unions lasted a lone time - 18 years in the case of D. Zenaide, and 'until his death' in that of D.

Josefa. As to the former (D. Zenaide), the relationship apparently survived because the husband, a construction worker, worked out of town a lot being gone 'two, three nights in a row,' and coming home for a couple of days before leaving again. His absences from the house were a welcome to D. Zenaide's mother: "she didn't like him at all, and it was better that he was gone." One day, he did not come back. "He has been gone for more than nineteen years now, he found somebody else in the streets and set up a house for her" (D. Zenaide).

The secret of D. Josefa's successful marital life in a matrilineal extended household setting lies, according to her, on the 'goodness' of her husband: "We had a very good relationship. He was a very good husband, and a very good father as well. He wouldn't let us go without anything." Yet, although D. Josefa affirms that he got along well with her mother (and she with his), it is quite possible that conflicts did arise. After all, the young couple moved out of the house for a time, rented a house of their own for a short period then moved in with his mother before moving back to her mother's house. They returned shortly before her mother died. The household thus evolved into a nuclear family type.

Despite the differences in marital/mating stories, there are some common threads that run through the lives of the women who lived with their mothers in the cases here described. First, they continued to work at Fábrica São Braz through childbirth, unions, marriages and separations, most in fact, working at the factory until it closed down or shortly before that. Second, with the death of their mothers, the tenancy of the company

houses they occupied was transferred to their names, the rental payments being discounted directly from their weekly wages. Third and last, in these households, all the goods that were purchased for the family at the factory-run Cooperative, would also be footed by these women, in that their cost would be automatically paid with their wages. In these instances, therefore, women's contribution to the domestic budget became fundamental, laying the basis for more symmetrical conjugal relationships.

This would also be true of those women who, though constituting neolocal, nuclear family households, continued to work in the factory during their conjugal lives. In certain cases, such as those of D. Telma and D. Delana-- whose consensual mates had sporadic jobs and did not provide for the families--the women often contested the authority of their partners. Such a situation, however, was much more prevalent when the women lived with other relatives, as observed in the case of D. Luciana and D. Elenita. In these instances, they had the support of other women in their families in questioning male authority if the husband was not a good provider. The unions they formed were commonly fragile since the interference of others in the couples' affairs strained even further their relationships. As a result, these women had a series of different temporary mates, practicing what Susan Brown (1975) has referred to as 'serial monogamy.'

But it should be emphasized that this situation was not specific to women factory workers. D.Rosa, a long-time resident of Plataforma and active participant of AMPLA's 'senior women's group,' never worked a single day at Fábrica São Braz; she has always been a laundress. Yet her

mating history (and possibly that of her mother before her) reads very much like those of D.Luciana, D.Elenita, and D.Telma's--she has also been practicing 'serial monogamy.' And note should be made that similar patterns have also been described for contemporary women living in other neighborhoods of Salvador, who have thus constituted 'matricentric' families (Machado Netto 1984; Woortmann 1987).

It cannot be denied that the relative economic independence of these women, the factory workers here discussed in particular, has played a central role in the seeming ease with which some have acquired and discarded mates. The reverse, however, could be equally valid. That is to say, in a context in which men's jobs are unstable and men untrustworthy in standing for their children; when unions often do not last; when one's life experiences and those of the women one knows have proven many times over that the lasting bonds are those between a mother and her children, would it not be much more logical and safe for a woman to remain 'economicly independent' ? (Woortmann 1986:143).

Before answering this question, it pays to emphasize that a few of the women in the group of former workers here discussed have managed to work for years at the factory and still raise their families in stable, long-lasting marital relationships, and nuclear family-household settings. Such is the case of D.Lucia and D. Alma, who both lived with the same mates for some decades. In common with the other here discussed, these three women have kept their jobs through childbirth and child-raising, rented houses in their names, and often footed at least part of the food items

their families consumed with their earnings. But unlike some of the other women, D. Lucia and D. Alma found mates who held stable jobs throughout their marital life (or until retirement, that is). Though their mates' earnings were never sufficient to allow the men to assume the role of sole providers of the household, they have nevertheless provided them with a dependable income. In turn, this somewhat balanced contribution of husbands and wives to the household budget has engendered symmetry in their relations. In D. Lucia's case, in fact, this balance and symmetry run through all aspects of their financial responsibilities and decision-making instances. As she stated: "Here, the two of us pay for everything. One pays for one thing, the other pays for another. Everything was divided, all divided." Even then, however, D. Lucia was still responsible for all domestic chores. But she adds: "He helped me, he still helps me, because both of us worked, both in the same factory."

For D. Alma, who raised eleven children, working was strictly a necessity; the children also had to work:

My husband always thought that I should stay at home, but he knew that we could not afford it. I only left the factory because it closed. I would rather have stayed at home, but we didn't have the conditions. We only pulled it through because the children also work, they made little money but it helped.

D. Alma was the 'administrator' of the pooled resources of all working members of her family, managing the household's budget as the 'mistress of the house:'

He would keep a part of his salary, the rest he would give to me. He would say, "Here, it is for the expenses," he would give my part. But I did a lot of economizing, and when the money was gone I would say: "Look,

the money is all gone." And he would say: "Look, there is more here." What he would give was all set up before (*combinado*). My salary, he knew what it was for, it was for buying clothes for the kids. I would go there to the Cooperative, I would buy the clothes to pay by the week, we got paid by the week, right? I had a set place to buy my spices, the things we needed, all set up (D.Alma).

Like D. Lucia, D. Alma was also an equal partner in making decisions concerning her family while counting with the help of her husband in taking care of the children: "He used to make the porridge to give to the kids, he would even wash diapers for me. When I didn't leave food ready, he would prepare it, he was like that." As in D. Lucia's case, however, D. Alma was still the person responsible for the domestic chores. But as she had done as a child, so too her daughters were entrusted with their execution, freeing the mother for work in the factory.

Of all the cases under analysis, Sr. Luiz stands out not only as the one who has been married the longest, but also for being the one who has come the closest to fulfilling bourgeois ideals of family-household organization. He was legally married to his mate, established neolocal residence from the beginning, held a stable job (at least while the factory was still open), and has attempted to be a good *'pai de familia'* in the full sense of the term. His wife never had to find employment, she never had to *'trabalhar na rua'* (work out in the street), she was always a *'dona de casa'* and *'mãe de familia'*. But they had 18 children and to support them, she worked as a home-based seamstress, pedaling away in her sewing machine for most of her life. And the children, the oldest ones in particular, could not be spared from work in the factory, such that Sr. Luiz's family became

also a 'working family.' Moreover, Sr. Luiz is far from emulating the despotic 'patriarch.' As he so tells:

I wake up every morning at six, and go to the kitchen to make coffee. My wife is now bedridden, my daughter is now the mistress of the house. But I don't want to wake her up so I prepare the coffee, and then wash everything, clean everything, straighten up the kitchen before I leave.

Gender Divisions and Household Organization

It is well to stress, nevertheless, that significant differences can be observed among the different family-households here discussed in terms of the gender divide. To better delineate and analyze these differences I have prepared a synoptic table (Table 9.1) comparing these households as to the responses given by the informants regarding the gender division of labor in their homes. For this comparison, I have selected four households, each with specific characteristics as follows:

Household #1 - D. Luciana
type: matrilineal extended household
head: wife's mother
wife's occupation: factory worker
husband's occupation: construction work attendant (*servente de pedreiro*)
status of relationship: consensual union
number of children: 4 (two of the couple, two from wife's previous unions)

House #2 - D. Lucia
type: nuclear family household
head: husband
wife's occupation: factory worker
status of relationship: legal marriage
number of children: 1

Household #3 - Sr. Luiz
type: nuclear family household
head: husband
wife's occupation: housewife and home-based seamstress

husband's occupation: assistant in factory
status of relationship: legal marriage
number of children: 18

Household #4 - D. Rosa
type: matrilocal extended household
head: wife's mother
wife's occupation: home-based laundress
husband's occupation: construction work attendant (*servente*), no fixed job
status of relationship: consensual union
number of children: 3 (two of the couple, one from wife's previous consensual union)

In selecting the households for this sample, I did not include those in which the wives moved in with the husbands' mother because the two discussed earlier evolved into the nuclear type. Nevertheless, even though D. Rosa was not a factory worker, I have included her in this sample in order to assess the weight of factory work for women in the arrangements observed.

In comparing these households the following factors were considered:

1. Household Tasks:
 - a. childcare
 - b. care of the elderly
 - c. cooking
 - d. washing clothes
2. Allocation of Financial Responsibilities:
 - e. rent
 - f. utilities
 - g. school expenses
 - h. food
 - i. clothing
 - j. health expenses
3. Decision-making:
 - k. who in the family should work
 - l. how husband's salary should be spent
 - m. how wife's salary should be spent

- n. number of children to have
- o. sexual initiative
- p. where to reside

As may be seen on Table 9.1, a few aspects of the gender divide remained constant regardless of the type of household considered. As a whole, for instance, husbands were never entrusted with domestic chores, they were always the responsibility of women. Yet, while childcare and the washing of clothes was invariably allocated to the wives, in the matrilineal households considered there was greater sharing in the performance of domestic tasks, the mothers, heads of the households, being entrusted with cooking and caring for elders.

Despite variations in the allocation of financial responsibilities among the households, those in which there was a factory worker (#1, #2, and #3), rental payments were their responsibility. In D. Lucia's case, although the husband also worked at the factory, the rent was discounted from her salary. She has not clarified why this was so, but it is possible that it derived from the fact that the husband worked for a period for the Factory Workers' Union, being away from his job at the factory. All other expenses in her household, however, were equally divided among the two, the same happening in the instances of decision-making.

TABLE 9.1
Gender Divide in Selected Households

TASKS/	HOUSEHOLDS			
	1	2	3	4

RESP.	H	W	B	O	H	W	B	O	H	W	B	O	H	W	B	O
1. Tasks																
a. childcare		X				X				X				X		
b. care of elderly				X		ñ				X				X		
c. cooking				X		X				X						X
d. washing		X				X				X				X		
2. Financial Responsibilities																
e. rent		X				X			X							X
f. utilities		X					X	X						X		
g. school		X					X		X						X	
h. food	X				X				X					X		
i. clothing		X					X		X					X		
j. health		X					X	X						X		
3. Decision Making																
k.employment			X				X		X							X
l. husband's wages	X				X				X					X		
m.wife's wages		X				X			X					X		
n. number of children		X					X					X				X
o. sexual initiative	X				X				X				X			
p. place of residence		X					X	X						X		X

Key: H = husband
W = wife
B = both
O = others
ñ = no information

In the other three households (#s, 1,3 and 4), the responsibility for expenses with food items was entrusted to the husbands. In the case of the matrilocal households, in fact, this was the only expense that fell under the responsibility of the husbands and, even at that, so noted their wives, they not always tended to it. In Sr. Luiz's household all expenses except for those regarding clothing and school related items for the children, were his responsibility. Nevertheless, this did not necessarily reflect on the decision-making sphere. The fact that his wife and children also contributed to the household budget, probably ensured a more 'democratic' decision-making atmosphere in his home. It is well to point

out that though no necessarily authoritarian, S. Luis was the unquestionable authority figure in his family.

Likewise, although D. Lucia and her husband (Sr. Fernando) enjoy a very symmetrical relationship, she still defers to him, at least in the presence of anthropologists. As it happened, Sr. Fernando was present during one of the interviews conducted with D. Lucia; he not only voiced his opinions and comments, but would sometimes rephrase hers with her entire consent.

Although I have met neither the husbands nor the mothers of D. Luciana and D. Rose, both speak of their mothers as the figure of authority in their households. This is suggested in the distribution of the decision-making power within them; it tended to be almost equally divided between husbands, wives, and mothers.

"Ideal" and Alternative Models

Given the information available, it is impossible to determine which type of family-household organization was predominant in Plataforma at that time. Nevertheless, throughout this discussion, I have often called attention to the fact that the arrangements and tendencies outlined here were not unique to Plataforma. Indeed, despite the absence of systematic studies of working class facilities in Bahia for the period here considered, there is much to indicate that as observed elsewhere in the country, so too in Salvador home life among the 'populace' departed in many important ways from the 'model' of the family upheld by the local elites. Contrary to

the general principles of this model, for instance, illegitimate births resulting from consensual unions predominated among the working classes of Salvador. Consensual unions were the rule, not the exception among the working classes (Borges 1992). However, the precariousness of men's jobs made it difficult for them to establish their own households and/or to assume the role of sole providers. Women's contribution to the domestic budget thus became fundamental, granting them greater economic independence which laid the basis for a more symmetrical relationship (Chalhoub 1986:137-144). Studies of working-class families in Rio, for instance, have shown that as observed in Plataforma, women there also contested the authority of the husband/father (Besse 1989, Soihet 1989), often counting with the support of other women in their families in staging their insubordination (Chalhoub 1986:150). And similarly to the cases here discussed, this situation was more common in those instances in which the young couples, due to economic need, were forced to live with relatives. As such, observed Claudia Fonseca, "... the nuclear units were diluted in these consanguineous groups where the strong, long-lasting loyalties contrasted sharply with the precariousness of conjugal ties" (1989:105, my translation).

Families thus tended to be organized primarily around a mother and her children. "The mother was the center of this family, though the father might visit, or even live with them in the household" (Borges 1992:48).¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ This was illustrated in a report prepared by a famous local pediatrician for the governor of the State of Bahia in 1924. The report indicated that among 3091 youngsters registered with the agencies assisting

Matricentrality and matrilocal residence were mutually reinforcing, granting women greater relative autonomy and independence than women of the elites.¹⁰⁵ The relative high frequency at which they seemed to occur among the urban working-classes all over Brazil, has engendered speculations concerning the sociocultural dimensions of the observed patterns. In other words, even if on the one hand, they can be seen as adaptations to socioeconomic conditions (or as "strategies for survival"), on the other, the regularity in which they seemed to occur suggests that some principles for organization were in usage. Dain Borges (1992:48), for example, suggested that these arrangements constituted a distinct model of the family which "had a long tradition in Brazil."¹⁰⁶ But he is not clear as to what kind of 'model' would it be: a simply 'statistical model' or a 'normative model,' that is, a recognized, conscientiously upheld set of principles for family-household organization?

poor children ran by the Bureau of Child Hygiene of the City of Salvador, 54.28% were illegitimate. In addition, 31.28% had fathers who were either absent or unemployed while the overwhelming majority—94.17%-- had working mothers (*in* Ferreira Filho 1994:23-34).

¹⁰⁵ This is apparent in the findings of Mario Augusto da Silva Santos (1993); in surveying and analyzing the situation of tenants in Salvador during the first decades of the century, Santos found a considerably high incidence of women tenants. His observations regarding these findings are well worth reproducing at length: "The observation of the presence of women among the tenants [surveyed] lead us into some interesting verifications. That they had their names listed as the tenants already reveals that they were the ones responsible for the rent; it also suggests that they might be those providing for their families or sharing this responsibility.(...) This indicates that economy and society have attributed to women much more than the traditional gender roles have. This is in harmony with finding regarding the female labor force in Salvador, and lends support to the affirmation that the importance of their economic roles is not as recent as supposed. Apparently, the full-time housewife existed only among the elite and the upper middle-classes. In the other segments, the role of 'angel of the house' was more a value to be conquered or a commodity to preserve, a model or object of aspiration. In practice, life conditions forced women into income generating activities, perhaps with a greater frequency than the number of women assuming tenancies under their names reveal" (1993:108, my translation).

In this respect, the observations of Claudia Fonseca are in order. As she proposes: "Where (one finds) certain practices which are regular, renewable, and frequently pre-visited by the members of a group, there is (always) a logic guiding these practices and granting them specific meanings" (1989:96, my translation). In this case, therefore, Fonseca continues, one would be dealing with a "symbolic universe reasonably coherent, resulting from experiences accumulated through (different) generations" (1989:97, my translation).

One could say, then, that among the urban working classes, an 'alternative model' of family-household organization was at play. Yet, this model needed not be 'normative' but instead an 'unconscious scheme' of practice, that is, a *modus operandi* --or "habitus" (Bourdieu 1977:72) --of urban working class families in Brazil. In this case, this 'alternative model' would not imply a rejection on the part of the working classes of family ideals (and the ensuing gender roles) espoused by the elites. As Maria Clementina P. Cunha suggests:

It is more likely (...) that the same claustrophobic role of the bourgeois woman operated as a parameter of aspiration and of vindication for the popular classes, earmarking an horizon of rights to be conquered (1989:144, my translation)

Indeed, evidence to that effect is to be found in the discourse and struggles of organized labor. From the late 19th century onward, for instance, labor unions in Brazil and other spokesmen for the working

¹⁰⁶ It should be pointed out that in Bahia, matrilineal extended households remain especially pronounced among black families members of Afro-Brazilian cult houses (*candomblés*). See, for example, Landes (1947), and Costa Lima (1972).

classes--whether actually espousing these ideals or instead putting them to work on their service--have consistently fought for a 'family-wage', thus claiming the right to constitute stable, conjugal families organized around the gender divide instilled by the bourgeois model. Likewise, the numerous legal processes pertaining to the 'seduction' of women of the working classes brought to court by their families against the 'seducers' in cities such as Rio de Janeiro (Chalhoub 1986, Soihet 1989, Esteves 1989) as well as Salvador (Ferreira Filho 1994) during the first half of the century, are suggestive of the willingness of the offended to abide by the dominant moral codes and family ideals. In their claims, at least, the offended parties demonstrated that they were clearly aware of these codes and ideals, asserting them at least in their discourses (Chalhoub 1986).

Of course, the thesis that the 'alternative' model of the family put to work among the working classes in Brazil has represented a conscious rejection of bourgeois ideals is certainly enticing to socialist-feminists (such as myself). Nevertheless, as Eunice Durham poignantly indicates, all available studies and records suggest that, to the frustration of Brazilian radical intellectuals, workers in Brazil have been not only "extremely attached to the family," but worse still,

...(they) express a generalized preference for a sexual division of labor on traditional modes, that is, that which subordinates women to men and tends to restrict female activities to the domestic sphere. At the same time, they also tend to appreciate the traditional virtues of respect and obedience of children towards their parents (Durham 1980:201-202, my translation).

From the perspective of women workers, the non-fulfillment of the bourgeois gender role ideals has often been translated into the burden of a 'double-day.' For these women, in particular, the constitution of matrifocal families, without a stable male provider, has represented "...a result of poverty, an overload of misery, the impossibility to achieve a minimally decent life instead of a sign of better and freer forms of relations between the sexes" (Durham 1980:203, my translation).

This is precisely the case of the women of Plataforma. In Plataforma, in fact, even women such as D. Luciana, D. Elenita, and D. Adelaide--who were raised in and constituted their own matrilineal extended households and assumed the roles of 'heads' as major providers, enjoying a certain independence--still betray in their discourse, unfulfilled aspirations for the realization of those ideals. Yet, they are not unaware of the contradictions between these ideals and their own life experiences. Indeed, when women like D. Luciana ask, "Why do I need a man that can't even bring me a bag of flour?," they are justifying the 'alternative' paths their lives have taken, precisely in terms of the gender roles intrinsic to bourgeois family ideals.

CHAPTER TEN

House, Street, and Community

Introduction

In her chronicles of everyday life in Bahia during the first half of this century, Hildegardes Vianna (1973) provides a light-hearted yet insightful account of the socio-architecture of family dwellings in Salvador in that period. Starting with the mansions of the famous 'Corredor da Vitória' where only families of "high regard (whether with money or impoverished), people full of principles, domestic education and social projection" then lived, Vianna (1973:1) travels down the ladder of social prestige, describing the houses of three windows and several rooms, each with their specific purpose and denomination (guest's hall, hall room, middle room, dining room, etc), in which middle class families made their homes; the non-prestigious standing of those who lived on the top floor of buildings or above commercial establishments (they were rarely invited to the parties and other social functions of the neighborhood); and the even sadder situation of those forced to live in little houses of 'door and window,' or worse, "door and window with an open room (*'sala aberta'*), that is, without the hallway that kept the room from indiscreet eyes, lowering even more the social condition of its dwellers" (Vianna 1973:4, my translation).

Vianna does not elaborate much further on the wider sociocultural dimensions of the layout of these homes. But in noting that houses with an

"open room" (*sala aberta*) were a "martyrdom for the mistress of the house" who, though poor or just getting by, was nevertheless "rich of zeal for her domestic patrimony, for the retreat of family life" (1973:10), she makes it clear that bourgeois values as to the privacy of the family were strongly at play in Salvador even among the not-so well to do. Indeed, then as still today, the key to the escalating of the local ladder of social prestige rested solidly on the degree of 'privacy' the homes accorded the families that resided in them. The less protection from 'indiscreet eyes,' the less distance from neighboring houses, or from the dangers of the 'public' spaces of the streets the houses offered the families, the lower they stood in the social scale of prestige.

It is no wonder that 'alley people' (*gente de beco*) stood at the very bottom of this scale. In Vianna's own words:

The promiscuity of the rows of small houses, nearly always of door and window, without backyards, without running water, and with collective dumping areas, defined the personality of a caste classified as one, in which individual values did not count. All its members were united in one infamous designation as *gente de beco*. Even those families with certain principles, rightfully established (*direitinhas*), were disgracefully absorbed into the bad reputation. But then, no one told to go live in an alley!... (1973:4-5, my translation).

Unfortunately, no mention is made in Vianna's accounts as to where in her classification do the families living in vilas operárias fit. But it is easy to imagine that they could not be much better off than the 'alley people.' Not only did the houses in Plataforma accord very little in the way of 'privacy to the family' but worse still, much of family life in the 'backyards of the factory' took place on the streets, not in the 'safety' of

the houses. One's life, in fact, was lived under the surveying eyes of the community; indeed, contradicting an old Brazilian adage, not even one's dirty clothes could be washed at home.¹⁰⁷

Privacy, Community and Gendered Domains

It is well to point out that up to 1950s, the bulk of Plataforma's homes were still concentrated within a one to two-mile range of the factory premises so that most residents were likely to know each other directly or at least to know 'of' each other. As D.Luciana, who was born and raised in the neighborhood recalls:

We knew everybody here back then, we knew when somebody moved in, when children were born, when people died, who people were flirting with. Yeah, you really had to behave back then because otherwise you would be in the 'mouth of the people' (*boca do povo*), the '*comadres*' here would see to that, that's for sure.¹⁰⁸

Indeed, there can be little privacy when homes are clustered together in narrow streets such as they were set in Plataforma then and even now. And, certainly, it was even harder to keep secrets from neighbors among those who lived in company housing. As pointed out earlier, these houses were built one next to the other, sharing walls, roofs, backyards and the

¹⁰⁷ In Portuguese, the adage reads: "*roupa suja se lava em casa*," that is, dirty clothes should be washed at home, meaning that family matters should be discussed and solved within the family.

¹⁰⁸ '*Comadre*' or 'co-mother' is the reference term for a woman with whom a relationship of '*compadrio*' (co-parenthood) has been established through the baptism of a child. Here, however, D.Luciana uses the term in the sense of a group of women who like to gossip.

echoes of each others' voices.¹⁰⁹ It is well to note that to this day, with the exception of the main throughways such as Avenida D. Ursula Catharino and perhaps a couple of other side roads, most streets in Plataforma do not have sidewalks: few, in fact, are actually paved. Moreover, a considerable portion of the dwellings, including the rows of company-owned ones, do not have front yards, nor porches. Front-doors and front windows usually open directly into the street and remain open for ventilation, particularly during the morning hours. Nowadays, many of the homes have iron grates on the windows (and sometimes on the doors) for protection against prowlers. Yet, walking through the streets of the neighborhood, one can easily see what goes on inside these houses and, likewise, those indoors have a good view of the streets while tending to their chores.

Surely, there is very little that goes on out in the street that escapes the sight, hearing or otherwise the knowledge of the residents. And they are particularly aware of strangers in the area as I was able to ascertain when visiting former factory workers in their homes for the first time.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ This still holds true today. I, for one, can personally vouch to that effect for while sitting within these homes interviewing former factory workers for the purposes of this work, neither I nor my tape recorder could avoid registering what when on in the houses next door or even in those across the street.

¹¹⁰ If news travel fast now and the streets (and strangers) are always under surveilling eyes, there is certainly no reason to think that it was any different in the past, inasmuch as back then, window watching (*janelar*) was a well established custom of the land. As Vianna (1973) has noted, though there were some--the flirty girls--that 'window watched' for hours at no particular time of the day, the 'proper' time to do so was usually between three and four in the afternoon, as she relates: "Preferably, the flirty girl would window watch after three-thirty in the afternoon, after bathing and changing...At this usual time, between three and four, even the not-flirty ones would sit at the window to chat with their neighbors who, from the windows of their own houses across the street or next door, would talk about clothes, parties, plans and eventual frustrations. As the evening drew near, most would retire to the interior of their residences. This was the time that the head of the household would return home from work, and the brothers from school.

On one occasion, in fact, while walking over to one informant's home, I was surprised on the way by one of my informants' neighbors, whom I had never met before, but who seemed to know what I was doing in the neighborhood. As I was approaching her window, she came out of the house and asked me flatly: "Don't you want to talk to me? I used to work in the factory as well!" ¹¹¹

D.Elenita and some of her other companions from the senior women's group have confided to me that one of the major diversions of their youth was to window-watch. And often, to do so, D.Elenita, whose home is on a side street without much attractions, would go either to a friends' house on São Braz Square, or better yet, to her cousins' who lived at a more privileged spot: close to the factory and to the market on the waterfront. It was from there, in particular, that she and her cousin would seat at the window to flirt and talk with their admirers.

But in Plataforma, conversations with passers by from one's window or even with neighbors from window to window or front door to front door, are not necessarily a thing of the past, as I have often been able

There was a tacit agreement to show respect to or act like the male elements of the family were respected or deserved respect" (1973:41, my translation).

¹¹¹ Few Plataforma residents have cars and as I drove mine through the streets, I could see faces popping up on windows and front doors to check me out. On parking the car, I was sure to have a swarm of little boys from the neighborhood-approach me, or surround the car after I walked away from it: there is always a group of them in any street, usually playing soccer or flying kites. But even when simply walking through the streets (many are of difficult access and cannot be reached by car), I found myself to be the object of a rather uncomfortable attention, as people would stare at me as I passed, looking away only after I smiled and said hello. At times, not satisfied with simply looking me over in the street, neighbors would show up at the house of the person I was interviewing that day, giving no apparent excuse to find out who I was. Obviously, the information they gathered was passed through the neighbors for, in my follow up visits to their street, I was no longer the object of so many attentive eyes.

witness. In the case of D.Carlinda--who is now an invalid (apparently, due to osteoporosis) and committed to a bed day in and day out--the front door is always open and everybody that passes by stops to say hello. The bed sits right in the front room, facing the door, which remains open so that her neighbor from across the street can watch over her when D.Carlinda's son is away and come over should the need arise. For D.Carlinda, however, the open door is a means of keeping abreast of what is going on around so as not to feel lonely and isolated. It serves her as a diversion to pass the time when she tires of watching her little black-and-white television set.

Even on a side street such as in the one D.Carlinda resides, there is always quite a lot of movement, many people walking back and forth, always something or somebody to watch. On one occasion, sitting in my car at the end of her street I jotted down the following observations:

I am always amazed at how lively are the streets here in Plataforma. So different from the middle class neighborhoods, certainly a lot different from Graça (where I live), and where one is always afraid to walk around because there is usually nobody in sight, everybody hides away behind high walls and gates. Not so here in Plataforma (and for that matter, in other working-class neighborhoods of Salvador), not here in Rua da Areia, Baixa do Areal, where I am parked right now. Four o'clock in the afternoon and the street is full of people. Those who do not know any better may even think there is a '*festa*' (a feast) going on. Right now, for instance, I can count about ten people moving about, and that is not counting the group of kids, all boys, playing soccer at the other end of the street (I wonder if these kids actually go to school; somehow, they are always here, playing soccer on the same spot when I drive by!). I see Gilberto, D.Alice's son (the one that made a big fuss to give me an explanation of the rip in the plastic sofa I was sitting on in his house). He is talking to three other young men by his door, possibly unemployed like him and the sons of many of the women I have talked to here (they always ask me to help them find a job). Two middle-aged women just turned into the street, coming from the Square. They carry bags from 'Paes Mendonça', probably went shopping there, by Suburbana (people say it is cheaper there than at the little markets up here). A teen-aged girl comes out of one house after a little girl that just wandered to street. She

picks her up and comes walking down the street but somebody yells something to her from another house and she goes in. A young boy (about eight ? ten years old ?) comes out of a third house pushing a cart with some bags in it, and walks to a dumping place near the car. He throws the bags in but checks the garbage and retrieves an empty bottle of Coke. A pick up truck turns into the street, stops at the corner. The driver and another men get out, walk into a house there; they come out with a pink chair, all decorated, heavens knows for what! Gilberto and his friends walk over to help. The kids playing soccer stop to look. A woman comes out of the house and yells at the men: "*Cuidado !*" ('careful'). Seems like she is the one who decorated it...

The street becomes a major space of sociability, particularly when the weather so permits. Children play on the streets, old people put chairs outside the door in the evenings to catch a breeze, groups of men put a table on a sidewalk and play dominoes on a Sunday afternoon. According to D.Carlinda, this was common practice in the 'old days' for, as she wisely pointed out: "We didn't have television back then, you know, we had no electrical energy, no radios, we played outdoors all the time."

It would not be out of order to infer that, for all practical purposes, then as today the streets have always been extensions of the houses. But this does not mean that there was no separation between 'private' and 'public' spaces. When the women interviewed spoke of the loss of their virginity, for instance, they used expressions such as "*ele me tirou de casa*" (he took me out of the house) or "*eu saí de casa*" (I left the house). They did not necessarily move out of the house but left instead the mores of the house, house in this case taking the connotation of 'family.'

Indeed, much has been written about the centrality of the opposition between the notions of 'house' (*casa*) and 'street' (*rua*) in embedding conceptualizations of 'private' and 'public' as well as in defining gender

relations in Brazil.¹¹² Basically, they define the 'house' and everything which is associated with it (e.g., private life, the family, domesticity) as the domain of women, whereas the domain of men is identified with whatever relates to the 'street' (the public sphere, relations outside of the family, worldliness). At the bottom line, however, this opposition is not unique to Brazil, but certainly widespread in the Western world as an integral part of bourgeois family ideology particularly as they refer to the 'domesticity' of women.

Hildegardes Vianna, who has collected a number of local variations of the maxim "a woman's place is in the house," has observed that well into the late 1940s it was also considered out of decorum for women of social standing '*trabalhar na rua*' or '*trabalhar fora*', that is, to work 'out' of the house. In her own words:

It was inappropriate (for women) to work out (of the house), even if out of necessity to support herself. It was just as inappropriate as go to the store, to the butcher, or to the market, or to wander alone through the city like any lost soul. To work in a factory or to have any similar job, no matter how dignifying it might have seemed, was considered degrading (1973:37, my translation).

Needless to say, poor women--and that is to say, the bulk of the female population of Salvador--did not have much of a choice, especially those without a partner and burdened with the responsibility of rearing children on their own. In Plataforma, not only women in these circumstances, but all kinds of women--single, or married, with or without

¹¹² Roberto da Matta (1987), in particular, has elaborated extensively on the symbolic dimensions of this pair of opposites and how it is closely related to notions in gender ideology. Sandra Lauderdale Graham (1986) has explored the social aspects of these notions, describing and analyzing how they applied in the social construction of relations between masters and domestic servants in 19th century Rio de Janeiro.

children, young and not so young--worked in the factory. But if 'working out' of the house meant violating the rules of propriety and decorum, it does not immediately follow that the values that sustained these rules were not deeply held within the community, families, or even by the women in question themselves. On the contrary, these were not only upheld but, more importantly, the corresponding rules of behavior were observed as close as possible within the given situation. In repeated accounts, for instance, the women have referred to the fact that they never walked to the factory alone. As D.Telma recalls:

My father, my foster father, was very strict, you know. He didn't like the idea that I had taken a job at the factory, he didn't want me to wonder around on the street by myself. But in my street there were a bunch of other girls that worked at the factory as well and we would always walk to work together. One of them lived right next door and when we heard the whistle, the second whistle, we would yell to each other:"Hey, let's go, it's time to go." She would say:"Telma, I am leaving," and out we would go to catch up with the bunch already walking down the street. There would be this big pack of people walking, sometimes running, not to miss the xereta, the third whistle. It was so beautiful then, I loved to see those crowds walking down to the factory. I really miss that.

Even among those who did not have a 'strict father' around such as in the case of D.Luciana, it was still considered improper for women, teen-aged girls in particular, to walk to work alone. Despite living less than a block from the factory, D.Luciana remembers that she and her sister, who was a couple of years older and also worked as a weaver, always had to go to work together, this being the source of much fighting between two, since her sister was a 'slow poke', and took much time and getting ready for work:

My sister, Mariinha, the one I told you died last year, also worked at the factory. We were very close, but when we were young we used to fight a lot. The old timers (os antigos) had this thing, this idea that girls should not be in the streets alone, so I had to wait for her to get ready so we could leave for work together. She was a real 'slow poke' that Mariinha back then, and we nearly always left the house late and had to run not to be late for work. I hated that, sometimes I would take off running really fast and leave her behind, and she yelling: "Hey, Luciana, wait for me, wait for me or I will tell mom that you left me alone in the street!"

On reflecting upon the accounts of the women, former factory workers, one may also infer that there was an unwritten rule that if 'working out' of the house was a necessity, something unavoidable in order to guarantee one's own survival and that of one's family, at the very least women should come straight home after work and there remain for the remainder of the day. No doubt, women with a house and children to care for had no choice but run home after work to tend to them and their domestic chores--indeed, they had a 'double-day'. Nevertheless, the emphasis with which the women interviewed have vouched for their prompt and direct heading home after the factory whistles sounded in the afternoon, suggests that this was the 'proper' thing for women to do. Evidence to that effect is found in the words of D. Marlize. Although she never married, never had a companion, never had children, she has staunchly proclaimed: "I always came straight home from work. I only left the house to go to work and always headed home afterwards."

In any event, women should avoid wandering through the streets after work 'like any lost soul', as Hildegardes Vianna so noted. And home was the proper place to go and stay. It is not considered proper to drop in

uninvited into neighbors' homes. When asked how they got along (or get along) with their neighbors, for example, those to whom I had the opportunity to talk provided telling answers such as the following:

I always got along well with my neighbors, I know most of the people that live around here. But I've never been one to go around visiting anybody. They know that if they need me, I am here to help, but I don't go much into anybody's house (D.Luciana).

My neighbors are nice people, but I don't go into neighbor's houses, not even when I could walk. I don't know what there is or there isn't in my neighbors' homes. Even when I didn't have a TV, I wouldn't go bother those neighbors that might have one (D.Carlinda).

I get along real well with my neighbors. There are lots of old timers here but even the new ones are nice. But then, I don't go into anybody's house, never did, I just sit by my door to talk to them (D.Heloisa).

It is not like it was before... But since I don't like (to go to) neighbors' houses, I turn my TV on, and sit here watching it. I don't like to go to neighbors' houses, I would feel awkward because that's how I was raised. Besides, I didn't have time to go visiting neighbors. But they were good people, I still get along with everybody (D.Adelaide).

It is well to note, nevertheless, that 'to stay out of neighbors' houses' was and still is first and foremost a means of showing respect for neighbors' right to privacy. Indeed, even if windows and doors are often opened into the street and nearly always exposed to neighbors' eyes--or better said, precisely because the physical boundaries between house and street are almost nonexistent or at best muddled, observation of the distinction between the two becomes even more necessary if one wishes to preserve good relations of vicinity. That such a right to privacy is deemed important and should be recognized is evident by the trouble that residents go through to define and separate the more private areas within the privacy of their homes. As small as a dwelling might be, for instance,

sleeping quarters are invariably partitioned from the more 'public areas' even if such a partition consists of a flimsy curtain. If invited in, neighbors should make their stay short and kept to the public areas of the house. And they should not go out telling others what they see, or what is worse, what they did not see at their neighbors' homes. Good relations of vicinity are always in order, as D. Josefa observes: "For me, my neighbors are like family. Because when the stomach hurts (of hunger) it is to the neighbors that one ends up going to."

Men, in particular, should avoid 'butting in' into a neighbors' home. As the domain of women, a neighbor's house is 'off limits' to men lest others think that they might be 'coveting their neighbors mates or daughters.' Men had to show respect by not invading the privacy of the neighbor's home. It was in the streets, over 'public' places and spaces, that they preferably met a male companion to share a beer or sugarcane whisky (*cachaça*) and/or play dominoes. It was in the street market on the waterfront where many gathered after work before heading home. On Sundays, they met at the local soccer club that was sponsored by the factory for the entertainment of their workers.

Women, instead, came together daily at the water fountain. They would place their containers in line and sit on a shadowy spot to rest and talk while they waited for their turn. This was a good time as any to learn about who had given birth or passed away, who had moved in or out of the neighborhood, and exchange bits of information with other women about what else was going on in the life of the neighborhood. While the

mothers talked, the children played around. Yet, mindful of their duties as mother's helpers, they would keep an eye on the line to make sure nobody bumped their containers out of place or tried to break through ahead of them. Although everybody usually respected the 'first come, first served' ethics at the fountain, it paid to be alert to the movements on the line. And should someone take advantage of the distraction of others to move ahead, arguments were sure to break out. Indeed, altercations between women in the fountains around the city were not uncommon, often making the local newspapers; they delighted in reporting such events never failing to censor the bad behavior of these women for the use of foul language, particularly in a public place (Ferreira Filho 1994:56).

Women who made their living as laundresses and those who did not have steady jobs usually did the wash during the week. For factory workers, who worked from Monday through Saturday, the laundry could be tended to only on Sundays. In any event, however, doing the wash was nearly a whole day affair. The weather so permitting, the women would trek to the river or fountain carrying the loads on their heads, their small children usually following along. Daughters in particular would often accompany their mothers to help with the work. First, the clothes had to be soaked, soaped and rubbed, then washed and wrung out. And if they happened to be white, they were placed in a nice spot to bleach (*'quarar'*) under the sun, or soaked in water boiled in improvised burners, which were also used to

cook a hurried lunch.¹¹³ To keep the body warm while their own clothes got soaking wet from the work in the water, the women would drink *cachaça*, a Brazilian sugarcane rum. D.Ester who worked many years as a laundress herself, later began to sell *cachaça* to the women by the river, as she reports: "I used to sell *cachaça* all night long to the men that butchered the cattle. When morning broke through came the laundresses. I would sell *cachaça* to them in the mornings."

Despite all the hard work involved, like fetching water at the fountain so too doing the wash also became a social activity for the women and their children. Indeed, they would often walk in groups to the river and remain close together, carrying on conversations or singing along while accomplishing the different tasks it took to get the wash done. Not rarely, they shared the burners to boil the clothes or cook the meal, and helped each other along in getting the work finished so that they may walk back home together. In these informal gatherings grew friendships and relations of *compadrio* were started. Not by chance then D.Luciana refers to the gossiping that went on in such gatherings as '*conversa de comadres*,' that is, conversations among women related by means of *compadrio*.

These relations often criss-crossed throughout the neighborhood bringing together women who had different occupations. For instance, D.Rosa (a laundress) and D.Lucia (a factory worker) became 'comadres' after starting a friendship when the latter, upon giving birth to her

¹¹³ See Vianna (1973:151-161) for an account of the life of laundresses in Bahia during the first half of the century.

daughter hired the laundress services of the other while observing the lying-in rest period (*'resguardo'*). When D.Rosa had her third child, she asked D.Lucia to be the godmother.

D.Adelaide probably holds one of the highest records as to the number of godchildren in the neighborhood; she has forty-five. It all began when after losing her job at the factory for not producing enough ("they let go those that didn't produce the set quotas") and working as a laundress for a while, she decided instead to take care of the children of working mothers. As she stated:

"I used to take care of the children so instead of giving to someone else to baptize them, they would give to me because they knew I would care for the child with affection. My house was always full of children, and people knew I liked to care for them so they brought them to me. That is how I came to have forty-five godchildren, they would stay under my care."

What I am trying to show with these examples could be summarized as follows. Whereas the gender divide observed in Plataforma reserved the performance of domestic tasks and the care of children to women, the carrying out of these responsibilities led women into the 'streets' and helped them to spin informal networks of mutual help. These networks bridged across women of different households and occupations, being often sealed through relations of *compadrio*.

Up into the 1940s women usually had their babies at home with the assistance of local midwives. When her time came, comadres and neighboring women--these often alerted by the screaming of the mother-

to-be or by the people going in-and-out of her house--would flock to her door to offer their services should the need for help arise. Once word got around about the birth of the child, friends and co-workers would come to visit. As D.Alma recalls: "when somebody had a baby, we would all get-together and go drink a '*meladinha*' [another name for *cachaça*] at her house."

Normally, a woman should observe a lying-in period of forty days following the birth of a child. As noted earlier, during this period--the 'resguardo'--comadres and neighbors would pitch in to help, particularly if the woman in question could not count with the help of a family member. Good relations of vicinity and compadrio sedimented through mutual help were fundamental in these cases. As D.Joseildes who had moved to Plataforma from the neighboring state of Sergipe and had no family around so attested:

I don't know what I would have done without the help of my neighbors here. When I first moved here, I lived in the area of the Old Hill ['Velho Monte']. And it was a lot better for me because I could leave my daughter with my neighbors. They were very good, they took care of her really well for me... The neighbors from the Old Hill were very good people, they took good care of my daughter for me.

As in the moments of birth, a family could count on the assistance of neighbors and *comadres* at time of a death. They helped in preparing the corpse for the burial, brought food and *cachaça* to be served during the wake, and often pitched in to help cover funeral expenses. When the deceased was an adult, a 'child of Plataforma' or a long-time resident, the funeral could draw the entire neighborhood to pay their last respects. Neighbors, friends, and co-workers would then follow the funerary

procession, always on foot, from São Braz Church or, what was more common then, from the deceased's home all the way to the local cemetery located up the hill, on the way to Avenida Suburbana. After the interment, the crowds would not disperse but instead return to the home of the grieving family to renew sympathies and condolences. This served as an excuse to return the spirit of the deceased to where it rightfully belonged, that is, with his or her family. As Vianna so noted: "If by any chance the soul [of the deceased] should follow someone, it would prefer to stay with his kinsmen,..., instead of with the poor guest who simply fulfilled a Christian's duty taking a sinner to his last home" (1973:66, my translation).

The death of an infant or child did not incur in elaborate funerals nor in the drawing of crowds. After being cleaned and dressed, the child was placed in a simple blue or white casket and buried without a wake, drinking or much waiting. The youngest a child was the closest it was to being an 'angel' devoid of sins and so long as she had been baptized--even if through a last minute, improvised baptism--not much was needed to commend her soul. Only next door neighbors and the closest friends and relatives took part in the procession to the cemetery. And when the interment was over, there was no need to come back to the deceased child's home to return her soul to the kinsmen. As the popular saying went, 'the soul of an angel goes straight to heaven,' it does not wonder about as that of an adult might.

These beliefs helped parents in facing what was a hard reality in Bahia those days, especially among the poor population: high infant

mortality rates. Indeed, despite attempts on the part of public authorities to curtail these rates in the State (Alves de Souza 1992), they were still considerably elevated in 1950, reaching 181.08 for children under one year of age (IBGE 1950). Although no data is available as to how these rates fared in Plataforma for the period in question, it is not unwarranted to believe that they probably equated the average for the state. In point of fact, only three of the former factory workers interviewed raised all the children they had into adulthood, most actually responding to the question "how many children do you have?," by stating: "I raised X-number of children." Such was the case of D.Alma, for instance, who declared having raised six children out of eleven born alive (and two stillbirths) she had. Or as Sr.Luiz so stated:

I raised eight children, I had eighteen but ten died. They were born and then died of that disease, gastroenteritis, a disease that hits the intestines of the child, and she could only drink that milk, Eledon.

The death of an infant child was not taken light-heartedly. But it was seen as a fatality, something one had to learn to live with. As D. Elenita so stated: "God gave them to me, God took them away, called them back." Much sadder--nearly unbearable--was the death of a grown child. D. Esther, who lost four infant children out of a lot of nine, still grieves the loss of a twenty-year-old son due to heart problems. "I won't even eat a chicken's heart; it still hurts me so," she sorrowfully confided.

As it still happens today, the death of a young adult was always seen as a great loss, especially if it happened to be the mother of young

children. In the absence of a father or, more importantly, of grandmother still able to care for them, the children would be often farmed around. Not rarely, they would be taken over by their godmothers--their 'second mothers.' Indeed, raising one's godchild or contributing to his or her welfare when a comadre passed away, was an integral part of godparenthood. This responsibility was not overlooked. Sr. Luiz, for instance, went to live with his godmother (*'madrinha'*) after the death of his mother; and D.Marlize, who never had any children of her own, ended up raising her godson. To this day, he still lives with her, helping in the support of the household.

Let it be noted that men also spun networks of comraderie and reciprocity that also nourished them through relations of compadrio. These networks sometimes started during childhood as groups of boys from the same street that played soccer or in the woods as Sr.Luiz so related. Later, they might become co-workers at the factory, join the local soccer club and play together as team members, go out together to feasts or simply meet regularly at São Braz square or wherever a vending stand was to be found to drink a round of *cachaça* together. Long-term friendships would be born among these groups sometimes being formalized through a relation of compadrio that might bring together men of different occupations. And no doubt, *compadres* could be counted upon to come of assistance in moments of crises or when help was needed building a home, putting an addition to it, fixing a roof. More often, however, *compadres* were instrumental in helping to get a job or a promotion. One day, for instance, while talking to

Sr.José at his vending stand, a man approached and started yelling insults at him, to which Sr.José immediately replied with equal insults. As the man walked away and Sr.José caught the puzzled look in my face he explained: "It's my *compadre*. We argue like that but we don't hate each other, we just joke around." Then, proceeding with our conversation about his work in the factory he told me of his compadre's attempts to get him a better job:

In the factory I spun. I worked in the spinning sector. Then he, my compadre, the one who was here, asked me to go work in the office with him. There was one of the bosses that liked him there and when this guy left, he asked my compadre to stay in his place. Then my compadre asked me to work in his old place, in the office. There, I would be able to study, at least accounting I was going to learn (...). So I asked him: "how much do you make there ?," and he said, "I make 32 *mil reis* per week, working extra time." And then I told him: "Well compadre, that is not for me, I have a lot of kids. I make 48, should I leave [my job] to make 32 ?" So he goes: "But compadre, the job here has status!" And I say: "Tell him to pay me 60 to wash latrines, it will have more status. Don't I need the money ? I make 48, get me 60 to wash latrines and I will go." I didn't learn much, but I know what is best for me.

But acts of reciprocity among men in helping get ahead at the factory, needed not necessarily involve compadres. As Sr.Luiz related:

A comrade of mine who died a couple of months ago was once the President of the Weavers' Union of the City of Salvador. I was the one who taught him to weave, I was the assistant, but he also put in his efforts, he went to the plaid sector, then to the office, and from there built his career to become president of the Union. As President of the Union, he placed me in the syndication committee of the union to examine balance sheets. See how it goes, I was promoted and gave him a hand, then when he went up he gave me a hand.

In Plataforma, as in the mill villages in the Southern United States studied by Jacquelyn Hall et al (1987), the gender divide operated such as to render similar distinct roles to the networks of men as opposed to women. Because men's primary role was that of providers (whether able to fulfill it or not), men's interests and identities were more likely to center

on work and the workplace. Therefore, it was in that direction that mutual help between compadres and friends were more readily counted, taking a more individual character. Women's roles, instead, generally transversed "the divisions separating the workplace, the family, and the neighborhood" (Hall et al 1987:153). As such, it was the "acts of sharing and of mutual help" among women--be they related to crises situations such as births and deaths or simply to the everyday business of survival--that built links between families and households and between 'house' and 'street' giving greater substance to the notion of community life. Not by chance, then, when people remember with nostalgia the feeling of 'solidarity among neighbors' that existed in Plataforma back then, it is usually the 'acts of mutual aid' related to women's activities that come more readily into mind.

That it was the networks of women that held together the community may also explain why residents apparently did not take greater part in the activities of the unions and the strikes carried out by workers in the factory. As noted in Chapter Seven, the women were excluded from these actions. These were matters for men--it was the domain of men-- not something which women and families should get involved. However, this would not be the case when matters relating to the well-being of their families and neighborhood as whole became an issue.

Before concluding this section, it is important to note that women and men did cooperate together in organizing the popular feasts and religious events that marked the calendar of feasts in the community such as the feast of São Braz, the patron saint of Plataforma. Nevertheless, this

cooperation involved a hierarchical gender divide. While men usually commanded the committees for the feasts, most of the work involved in the preparation of the events was generally done by the women. Yet, this not only strengthened the existing networks among women, but also paved the way for the formation of women's groups in the neighborhood.

PART IV

CONCLUSION:

FROM 'VILA OPERÁRIA' TO 'PERIFERIA'

(1950-1994)

INTRODUCTION

The 1950s demarcate a point of no return in the economic history of Bahia as the temporal setting in which two distinct yet interrelated developments came face-to-face. On the one hand, the 1950s witnessed the consolidation of a national market and the ensuing intensification of inter-regional competition which in Bahia resulted in the closure of many textile factories, among them, Fábrica São Braz. On the other hand, however, this was the decade in which the exploration of petroleum resources opened the way for the transference of industrial capital to the area, reverting the process of "industrial involution" in the state and setting the stage for the transformations that have taken place in Salvador in the last four decades.

The interplay of both of these developments has resulted in profound changes in Plataforma as well. Since the closing of Fábrica São Braz in the late 1950s, Plataforma has evolved from vila operária relatively isolated from city life to a densely populated neighborhood of the *periferia* (periphery) of Salvador, caught up in the webs of urbanity and its ensuing problems.

Part IV of this dissertation is about these changes and their impact on individuals, families, and the community as a whole. Based on a discussion of work-histories, Chapter Eleven analyzes the impact of the closing of Fábrica São Braz and the overall changes in the local labor market on the workers and their families. It identifies the changes that occurred in the neighborhood, looking at continuities and discontinuities

along gender and generation lines, and their overall impact on the de-characterization of Plataforma as a vila operária.

Chapter Twelve, the concluding chapter, summarizes the major findings of this study, re-dimensioning them in a comparative perspective. It also explores their theoretical implications, pointing at the relevance of the incorporation of a gender perspective in Brazilian labor history.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Changing Times, Changing Markets:

Gendered Histories

Introduction

Many workers still remember 1954 as the year in which Getulio Vargas "left this life to enter history."¹¹⁴ For D.Anita, however, 1954 and Getulio's death also represent a turning point in her life. Soon after his funeral, she was called to the office at Fábrica Conceição and told that despite being a good weaver with nearly nine years of experience in that factory, she was no longer needed. For the next four years D.Anita roamed around from "job to job" until finding work at Fábrica São Braz in 1958, only to be dismissed a year later when the factory closed down: "After Getulio died I went from job to job. The *operários* suffered a lot without him, they suffer still today."

In the course of this chapter, as the developments surrounding the closing of Fábrica São Braz and its impact on the work histories of men and women from Plataforma are discussed, it will be seen that D.Anita was not alone in her roaming around in search for employment in that period. Nor is she entirely wrong in timing the onset of her troubles to the period following the death of Getulio Vargas or even to his figure. But the

¹¹⁴ The quote which in Portuguese reads "*saio da vida para entrar na história*," comes from the letter dated 08/25/94 left by Getulio Vargas before committing suicide.

existing links are much less direct and flow in a different direction than the way she understands them.

In a wider perspective, they have to do with the 'crisis' of the textile industry in the Northeast which, as delineated earlier in this dissertation (Chapter Three), began to brew in the late 1930s during Vargas' Estado Novo. It was at that time that the first steps towards the creation of a national market were taken through the centralization of power and of revenues in the federal government. This made it impossible for the different states to legislate over their internal and external commerce. As a consequence, the regional barriers previously created by protective tariffs were brought down, promoting the flow of commodities throughout the national territory and thus increased competition for regional/local markets (Oliveira 1987).

Nevertheless, the full impact of these measures on the textile industry of Bahia would be delayed for nearly two decades; indeed, they would not be felt until around the time of Getulio's death. Until then, the lack of more effective means of communication and transport linking the Northeast to the South where superior and more competitive products were fashioned, had acted as a deterrent to their wider distribution. In addition, World War II market demands not only diverted the flow of products towards international exports but also gave a boost to textile production in all regions (Stein 1957).

With the end of the war, however, interests were to be directed to the national market once again.¹¹⁵ This time it would prove to be disastrous to the traditional textile industries in Bahia. Southern entrepreneurs dominated CETEX, the Executive Textile Commission (*Comissão Executiva Textil*) which had been created by Vargas in 1944 as part of the 'industrial mobilization' war efforts (Stein 1957, Dean 1965). This ensured them not only greater advantage in the allocation of production quotas during the war but also in post-war incentives to the modernization of factories.¹¹⁶ They would be further aided by the construction of the Rio-Bahia highway which, started in 1949, facilitated access to the northeast and thus the circulation of commodities from the south into the region (Oliveira 1987, Faria 1981). Finally but certainly not less important, southern entrepreneurs would find in the rising textile workers of the northeast, unexpected allies in penetrating local markets. With the rise of labor movements in the region, northeastern entrepreneurs could no longer depend on a 'docile' workforce to fight competition by keeping production costs low as they had before. Pressured on all sides, northeastern entrepreneurs had either to 'modernize' or silently perish.

¹¹⁵ In 1946, following the fall of Vargas' dictatorial regime, textile exports were suspended to force a lowering of the prices of textiles in the national market which had risen significantly during the war (Stein 1957, Dean 1969). Although this suspension lasted for only part of that year, currency policies regarding the official exchange rate of the dollar maintaining it artificially lower than the parallel market did not encourage exports. At the same time, these policies provided the incentive for the importation of new machinery (Versiani 1972).

¹¹⁶ It is well to note that only Lundgren Inco., located in Paulista, Pernambuco, was among the top industries allocated large quotas by Cetex, all the other companies being located in states of the Center-South (Leite Lopes 1988:322).

It is important to emphasize, nevertheless, that this 'need' to modernize would come amidst a nation-wide drive towards industrialization and 'development,' fully supported by the national and regional/local government. Important strides in that direction would be taken during Juscelino Kubitschek presidential term (1956-1960). In his inaugural speech, Kubitschek pledged to lead the country into the 'modern era,' making it advance "fifty years in five" with his program, the *Plano de Metas*. As a symbol of this 'new' era, Kubitschek built Brasília, a pharaonic project to transfer the seat of government from Rio to the heart of the Brazilian hinterlands. However, the major efforts of his administration were to be directed to the development of the national automobile industry which, though centered in São Paulo, would have in time a ripple effect throughout the country.

Of special interest to the matters here treated was that "the project of industrialization in the Center-South," as observed Francisco de Oliveira, "had a fundamental fallacy in its supporting base: Brazil's energetic matrix lacked petroleum" (1987:41-42, my translation). Systematic surveys to find it were thus started by the newly created PETROBRAS (Brazilian Petroleum). The first one, carried out precisely in the Bahian Reconcavo, revealed the existence of rich fuel reserves in the area. By the mid-50s, the Landulpho Alves Refinery installed in Mataripe was in full production. For the next three decades, the reserves at the

Reconcavo would sustain Bahia as the only national fuel producer, supplying nearly one-fourth of the national demand (Oliveira 1987:43).¹¹⁷

The maximization of these reserves in the form of the development of the petrochemical industry in the area were not be materialized until nearly two decades later, under the military regime. However, the installation of PETROBRAS in the Reconcavo had immediate effects. The large direct capital investments coupled with those in related construction work and along with them, the input of the mass of salaries flowing in the local economy, began to revitalize it (Azevedo 1975).¹¹⁸ But it was not until the 1960s, with the creation of the Superintendence for the Development of the Northeast, better known by the acronym SUDENE, that the economic 'revolution' of Bahia took hold.

Aiming to redress the regional disparities engendered by the process of 'uneven' development of the country, SUDENE opened the way for capital investments in the Northeast.¹¹⁹ This came by means of federal incentives matched by equally enticing incentives on the part of the State of Bahia towards the creation of industries in the area as well as the modernization of pre-existing ones. They included not only large tax exemptions and the financing of the importation of the necessary

¹¹⁷ The discovery of fuel reserves in Bahia dates to 1939 but the Landulpho Alves Refinery was installed only in 1949 (Vianna Filho 1984:11).

¹¹⁸ Between 1955 and 1959, for instance, the investments on PETROBRAS local projects grew from 8.1% to 66.9% of the total internal industrial income of Bahia. Likewise, the percentage of wages paid to PETROBRAS personnel in industrial income would grow from 7.64% in 1958, to 38.7% in 1969. See Azevedo 1975.

¹¹⁹ The steps leading to the creation of SUDENE and its results are discussed by its creator, Celso Furtado (1979, 1981).

equipment, but also the construction of the Industrial Center of Aratu (C.I.A.) located just north of Salvador in the Reconcavo Area and with a port of its own (Porto de Aratu) where sizable lots equipped of all the necessary infrastructure were sold to the investors at a nominal price. The results of this project are outlined by Luiz Viana Filho, governor of the State of Bahia at the time and one of the major local figures pushing for the 'development' of the region:

In 1967, there were 39 industries set to be installed at CIA, representing investments in the order of approximately 300 million *cruzeiros*. In 1970 there were already 129 with planned investments of 2.1 billion *cruzeiros*, ensuring 21.000 direct and 105.000 indirect jobs. They were fruit of the spending action of the government of the state which, until 1970, invested in that Industrial Center 108 million *cruzeiros*. In synthesis, we had, in 1970, 25 companies in full production; 37 in phase of being implanted; and 125 with optional letters. There was no more eloquent proof that the efforts of the Bureau of Industry and Commerce were fully compensated (Vianna Filho 1984:30, my translation).

To the industries settled in C.I.A. were added those of the Petrochemical Complex of Camaçari (*Polo Petroquímico de Camaçari*). Created in the early 1970s to function in the county of Camaçari, adjacent to Salvador, the Polo Petroquímico would count with 17 major industries in its initial project. Linked to PETROBRAS' efforts in the area and also benefiting from federal and state incentives, the development of the Polo Petroquímico responded for more than four billion dollars of capital investments in the region (Suarez 1987), completing the process of inversion of Bahia's role in the regional division of labor. To paraphrase Francisco de Oliveira (1987:45), from a 'capital exporter', Bahia became an

'importer', attracting not only Center-South investors but also international, multinational companies.

The effects of this 'revolution' on the labor market of the Metropolitan Area of Salvador (AMS) were considerable:

Between 1940 and 1970 the structure of employment in the AMS changes radically. The Metropolitan Area is completely 'de-ruralized': it goes from 23.6% of the PEA (Economically Active Population) in agriculture to only 5.7% in 1970; industrial employment goes up from 16.5% to 26.1% in the same period, while in the wide tertiary sectors growth is also accentuated: from 59.9% in 1940 to 68.2% in 1970.(...) In absolute terms, there was the creation of 76,000 new industrial jobs, 180,000 new jobs in the tertiary (sector), and a total of 256,000 new urban jobs (Oliveira 1987:51-52, my translation).

During the next two decades following the implantation of the Polo Petroquimico, these tendencies continued to be accentuated. However, despite this remarkable expansion of the industrial labor market, employment in the more traditional industries such as textiles did not grow at the same rate. Whereas, in 1959, for instance, these industries responded for 70% of the Aggregated Industrial Value (AIV) and 77.6% of industrial jobs in the Metropolitan Area of Salvador, in the period 1960-1970 these percentages had already fallen to 30% of the AIV and 46% of the jobs. This drop was particularly marked in the textiles sector: from representing 24% of the AIV and 28.2% of industrial jobs in 1959, by 1970 this sector only accounted for 13.5% of the inversions and 12.8% of the labor force occupied in industry (Oliveira 1987:47; see also Oliveira & Reichstul 1977).

Although in part these declining percentages reflect the expansion of the more 'dynamic' industries in the period, they express more closely

changes occurring in the textile industry on a national level which have resulted in reductions in the workforce employed in this industrial sector. These changes are apparent when considering the size of the workforce in Brazil employed in textile production in the decades between 1940 and 1970. As displayed in Table 11.1, between 1940 and 1950 the boost to textile production related to war efforts resulted in an increase on the numbers of workers employed in the textile sector. However, during the 1950s, the modernization of the production process through greater automation of looms and spindles contributed to a reduction of the workforce needed to operate them.¹²⁰ This tendency towards increased automation continued in the following decade with the introduction of synthetic fibers in textile production.¹²¹ More resistant to breakage than natural fibers, synthetic ones allowed not only for the simplification of the production process but also for the use of greater speed in the functioning of the machinery, leading to a continuous reduction in the workforce employed directly in production (Versiani 1972; Saffioti 1981; Franco 1983).

¹²⁰ Despite the long existence of automatic looms in the United States and Europe, they would only be used in Brazil in a larger scale after World War II. It is estimated that in 1950, for instance, 80% of the looms in operation in the country were still of the mechanical type (Pereira 1979:54).

¹²¹ This tendency can be apprehended by the decrease in the number of spindles and looms in operation between 1960 and 1970. While a study conducted by CEPAL (1962) revealed that in 1960 there were of 3,610 thousand

TABLE 11.1
Evolution of Employment in Textile
Industry in Brazil by Sex
1940-1970

Year	Total	Men	Women	% of Women
1940	290.298	101.218	189.080	65.1
1950	368.960	161.023	207.937	56.4
1960	319.983	162.777	157.206	49.1
1970	313.317	163.507	149.810	47.8

Source: IBGE in Saffioti 1981:29

Let it be noted, however, that these reductions occurred solely in relation to women, not to men. To the contrary, as Table 11.1 reveals the actual number of men textile workers increased throughout the period here considered. As to women, although there was an increment in their absolute numbers during the period 1940-1950, the proportion they represented in relation to men suffered a decrease. This process of inversion of the textile workforce on gender lines was maintained in the following decades: indeed, from representing 65.1% of these workers in 1940, women would account for only 47.8% in 1970.

In part, this inversion was underscored by the sophistication of the production process which created greater demands for a more skilled work force.¹²² However, in the Northeast in particular, the closing of many of the old mills such as Fábrica São Braz which traditionally employed

spindles and 95 thousand looms operating, researchers from UNIDO (1972) accounted for only 2,930 thousand spindles and 80,500 looms in 1970.

¹²² In addition, with the elevation of the organic composition of capital, there has been also a raise in the weight of the personnel not directly employed in production in relation those who are. See Guimarães & Castro 1987.

primarily women in production was an equally important factor (Singer 1981).

TABLE 11.2
Composition of Occupied Population by
Sex and Sector of Activity*
Bahia 1960/1980

Sex & Sectors	1960		1970		1980	
	Abs.	%	Abs.	%	Abs.	%
WOMEN	191,555	100.0	259,727	100.0	445,369	100.0
Production	88,524	46.2	73,668	28.4	73,967	16.6
Commercial	14,314	7.5	25,378	9.8	91,279	20.5
Services	88,717	46.3	160,683	61.8	280,123	62.9
MEN	354,446	100.0	559,693	100.0	953,927	100.0
Production	146,992	41.5	264,258	47.3	488,923	51.3
Commercial	144,598	40.8	196,137	35.0	313,019	32.8
Services	62,856	17.7	99,298	17.7	151,985	15.9
TOTAL	546,001	-	819,422	-	1,399,296	-

*Excludes activities in the agricultural sector

Source: Guimarães & Castro 1987:8.

In the case of Bahia, the effects of these developments are apparent when considering the distribution of the workforce by sex and sector of activity in different years. Actually, since the 1960s--in spite of the expansion of the industrial labor market in the region--the proportion of women in urban areas engaged in production activities has diminished increasingly.¹²³ As displayed on Table 11.2, for instance, in 1960 these activities absorbed 46.2% of the women economically active in the cities; by 1970 this proportion had already fallen to 28.4%, coming to a mere

¹²³ The 'alienation' of women from industrial production in Brazil has been treated in several works. See, for example, Blay 1978, Madeira & Singer 1975, Pena 1981, Saffioti 1981, 1984. Recent studies have shown that a reversal of this trend has occurred in particular sectors of industry; see Bruschini 1991; see also Sarti 1985.

16.6% in 1980. This sharp drop was underscored by a negative growth in absolute terms; in 1980, the number of women involved in production was actually smaller than that registered two decades earlier. Men, in contrast, moved in the opposite direction; the proportion of those engaged in production in 1980, was 10% higher than the corresponding figures in 1960.

It is well to note that although these trends are not restricted to Bahia, finding expression also on a national level, they have been particularly marked in that state.¹²⁴ What seems to explain the situation is that in Bahia, it is the development of the petrochemical sector--which relies primarily on a male workforce--that responds to a larger extent for the expansion of the industrial labor market in the last few decades.

Of particular interest to the discussion that follows is the observable dislocation of women from production activities to those related to the circulation of commodities and, even more sharply, to the services sector. Although in statistical terms this dislocation is but a trend, no matter how

¹²⁴ In this work, I follow the conceptualizations of economic activities outlined by Guimarães & Castro, as follows: "Production, in the strict sense, referring to material production involving the spheres of extraction, production and transformation of raw-materials. That is, processes that involve the creation of commodities whose use values are material and perfectly separable from the direct producer and/or the act of creating them. (...) The spheres of circulation and consumption constitute what has been conventionally denominated 'tertiary sector' of social-economic life. (...) The sphere of circulation involves the range of activities that complement the sphere of production in a distinct manner. In it are referred the movements of four sub-spheres, as follows: the circulation of capital which includes the activities of financial intermediation strictly linked to the processes of capitalization of the Bahian economy; the circulation of commodities originating from the sphere of production (excluding real estate circulation), distribution (in its strict sense) of the commodities in general, communication (which permeates the spheres of production, circulation and consumption), and the services to the producer, denomination given to the auxiliary services to production in their wider sense. In the sphere of consumption are comprehended two major level: collective consumption and individual (or personal) consumption. This encompasses both services produced predominantly for large scale consumption, to collective consumption which is realized in a simultaneous fashion as well as those activities related to the reproduction of the labor force in a physical-biological level, through services produced in great part through familial and/or domestic labor" (1987:4, my translation).

marked, in the case of the former operarias of Fábrica São Braz it is a change which they have experienced in their own lifetime. This will become apparent as their work-histories following the deactivation of the factory are disclosed.

Retracing Work-Histories

Let it be recalled that in 1932 when União Fabril and Progresso Industrial merged, the newly formed company incorporated eight mills, six of which were still in full operation. By 1959, however, União Fabril only had two mills operating, Fábrica São Braz being the only original one. The other mill was the Fábrica de Gazes Industriais--FAGIP which was created in 1956 to produce gauze, functioning in the same building where Fábrica Paraguassu, closed a few years before, formerly had operated.

By the end of 1959, however, Fábrica São Braz too was closed. According to the current president of the company, this came as a result of "technological inefficiency." The problem, he confided, was that "the machines were too old, too antiquated, it would take a lot to change everything." His cousin and son of the president of the company at the time of the closing has raised other issues regarding this 'inefficiency':

My grandfather (Comendador Catharino) was mainly a merchant, not an industrialist. He did not reinvest much in the factories, he did not renovate the machinery. Then, after the war, the prices of cloth went down (...). Another problem was that the accounting was not that great then. They didn't calculate production costs and the like. Besides, workers got paid by the week and they got paid in cash. They received little envelopes with their pay and it was really difficult to get all the necessary change to pay all those workers, close to fifteen hundred of

them. So, you see, it was not just the machines that were old, the whole system was antiquated.

His observations do conform with the findings in a 1951 United Nations report on the cotton textile industry in Latin America. According to this report, the backwardness of this industry in the region had two fundamental causes: first, "stagnation of technical progress" in the machinery and, second, "lack of progress in management" (in Stein 1957:184).¹²⁵

Ten years later, an evaluation of textiles factories in the northeast conducted by SUDENE to account for the 'crisis' then experienced by the industry in the region, found it still backwards. The report attributed to "obsolete equipment," "excess of labor hands," and "lack of financing" great part of the blame along with economic factors. The solution encountered by SUDENE's planners was then modernization of the equipment and retraining of the workforce. However, this 'solution' involved the laying off of hundreds of workers since what was implied was the substitution of mechanical for automatic machinery which "could obtain the same level of production with one-fourth of the workforce previously employed" (Ação Católica Operária in Leite Lopes 1988:563, my translation).

Anticipating SUDENE's findings and recommendations, early in 1959 Fábrica São Braz had already begun to install automatic machinery in

¹²⁵ It is not surprising then that although attempts to introduce 'scientific management' were begun around the 1920s (Rago 1985), it was only around the 1950s that Taylorism and Fordism were to find their way in the organization of the work process in Brazilian industries. See, for example, Vargas 1985.

the shopfloor. However, the following notation registered on the records of the weaver Jovelina V.Santos on 6/10/59, suggests that this substitution was not easily accomplished:

Hired to work with 12 automatic looms, (she) worked only 6, giving a very poor production. Affirming that she could work looms for plaids, she was transferred to this type of machine. It was observed that she did not have any experience with this kind of loom; (she) was dismissed for lack of production.

In addition to a scarcity of trained workers to operate the new machines, the company also encountered resistance on the part of the older employees. As D.Luciana recalls:

Shortly before they closed, they got these huge machines, the size of a whole room and wanted people to work them all by themselves. Nobody wanted that, it was too hard, too much for one person.

Although no precise information is available, it all seems to indicate that problems of this order led União Fabril to opt for the same procedure followed in the case of FAGIP: instead of a gradual 'modernization' of the installations and retraining of the workforce, they would close Fábrica São Braz and start anew. The factory was closed at the end of 1959 but less than two years later, it was reactivated. However, operating now with new equipment, the factory would only employ the equivalent to one-fourth of the workforce that had originally staffed Fábrica São Braz.¹²⁶ Whereas in the 1940s, for instance, a weaver in the old factory had operated two looms, in the early 1960s they were expected to work from eight to twelve looms, this representing an 'economy' of three to six workers.

¹²⁶ Unfortunately, the payroll books and other documents materials related to the operations of the factory from 1960 onward were not made available for this study. All the information about factory operations during this period was obtained solely through interviews with the present directorate of the company as well as from former workers.

Furthermore, served with energy drawn from CHESF, the hydroelectric plant that had been installed in Bahia in the mid-fifties as part of the program of development of the Northeast, the factory did not need a large supporting staff to feed the boilers as it had before.¹²⁷

Despite this economy in personnel, however, the factory did not bring the desired profits. In 1967, it was leased to Fábrica de Tecidos Fátima and renamed FATBRAZ but it had a short life-span. In 1968, FATBRAZ was also deactivated such that by 1970, União Fabril had only one factory, FAGIP, in operation.

It is important to emphasize that in the accounts of the people of Plataforma, it is the closing of the 'old' factory in 1959--of Fábrica São Braz and not that of FATBRAZ in 1968--that draws the line between the 'before and after' in the life of the neighborhood as well as in the personal work histories of former factory workers. This is not difficult to understand: for many of these workers, the closing of Fábrica São Braz signified the end of their lives as factory workers.

Let it be noted, however, that not all of the former workers interviewed in the course of this study were dismissed in 1959 when the factory first closed down. Some, such as Sr.José, for example, left the factory on their own 'volition' in the mid fifties. Others, as in the case of D.Telma, were already retired by the time the factory closed down and

¹²⁷ CHESF is the acronym for 'Companhia Hidroeletrica do Sao Francisco,' which taps energy from dams in the Sao Francisco River area, in the interior of Bahia. This plant was built in the 1950s, and furnishes energy to several states of the northeast region.

mass dismissals occurred. Nevertheless, many of these 'voluntary' resignations (or retirements) came at a time when the company, already planning on a close out, was encouraging workers to resign by offering them indemnity settlements. Sr.José's narrative of his resignation illustrates how this was done:

I left the factory in 1957. I had 29 years on the job, not quite 30, and I heard they were calling in the older ones to give them one '*conto de reis*' for each year [on the job]. I says, hey, I am going to get thirty *contos*. I owe the cooperative, I owe the pharmacy, I have ten children. I owe the charcoal men, I owe the bakery, I owe the butcher, I can pay for everything and see what I do with the rest. So I went to the office to see the lawyer. He asked how long I had been there and was getting the papers ready for me to sign. The manager was there and he said: "Well, Sr.José, the company is not making any settlements, we are not calling people in for that. The company is just giving a little bonus [*'um agrado*'] to those who find it better to resign." Then they said that the company would give me 500 '*mil reis*' for each month. "You will get fifteen '*contos*'." But I didn't want that. So I went home. This was on a Wednesday, March 19, 1957... On the 22nd I had a fight with my wife at home and left without breakfast. I got to work and there was a kid selling bananas. Water bananas [*'banana d'água*'], real big ones, 200 '*reis*' for six. I ate the bananas and a little while later I had to go to the bathroom. I smoked a cigarette... Then I felt sick. I stayed in the bathroom and one of my colleagues came in and said: "José, your machine is all messed up [*embolada*]." I opened the door and said: "Hey, stop my machine, I will be out in a jiffy." But then he says: " Hey man, you are looking green." So I went to find the overseer and he gave me a pass to go home. I was sick. And I didn't come back. It was on March 22, 1957. The bananas made me sick. It was the *banana d'água*, I haven't eaten any since. The overseer had given me a pass. That was on a Friday, then came Saturday, the 23rd, Sunday, the 24th, on the 25th, a Monday, I went to the central office and sat there with the lawyer. Except that I thought everything was arranged for them to give me thirty *contos*, but then he told me to wait a moment, "let me check on the situation," he said, and was back in a jiffy. He said he got me an extra fiver. I was sure it was going to be thirty, but they 'ate ten.' After 29 years on the job, nearly 30, they only gave me twenty *contos*. That is, they had it all worked up, they talked me into it and all they gave me was twenty *contos*. This is the story. In 59, the factory closed. But had I not accepted that settlement, had I not resigned, I would have moved up (*'ai eu ia crescer*'). Because the manager here,

he really liked me, I would have moved up. Because people who did worse than I, moved. But I got too flustered, I didn't wait and so I didn't get anything good there. And I used to earn well; when they paid us everybody knew what I made, the whole factory knew it. I used to earn more than assistants, more than an office-clerk, I was good. We got paid on production and I produced a lot (...).¹²⁸

D.Telma's story was not too much different. Unlike Sr.José, D.Telma is not very precise with dates. But she does remember that a few years before the factory closed down, she 'got word' (*'ouvi dizer'*) that the company was making settlements with the older employees. Although she could not remember exactly how long she had been at the factory, she figured it must be close to forty years and that she could probably retire and get a good resignation settlement. As she narrated:

I worked there for more than forty years but not because I wanted. I didn't know better, I didn't know how much time I had. Then I heard about the settlements and went to see the men in the office. There was one there who was my compadre, so I went to him and asked: "Hi compadre, I brought here my work book for you to check how much time I have before I can retire." "Hey, my comadre, let me see. About three years." Then I say to myself, "Oh, my God, how can I go on for another three years. Oh, Jesus!" But time went on and then one day I cut my finger in the machine and they gave me fifteen days of vacation. I said OK, I will go to Baixa dos Sapateiros for an outing. I said I was going for an outing but I carried all my documents with me. I went to Comércio and then I saw this guy with bandages coming out of a building. So I asked him: "Hey, do you know where I can find the INPS office?" And he goes: "It's right here, you have to talk to D.Margarida. You go up and right at the door there is this guy, Severino. You ask him for a number. When she comes in you talk to her." So I went and got the ticket with number one. Less than ten minutes later Margarida arrived. "What do you want," she asked me. I said "I came here to find out about my retirement." She asked for my work-book and she looked at it for awhile and asked: "Are you working?," and I said 'yes.' "Working?". "Yeah. But I am on vacation, they gave me fifteen days because of the accident. I am on leave and vacation." She said: "Yeah. That is right." Then she looked again at my book and counted my time. "Do you know how many years

¹²⁸ During the past century, currency in Brazil has changed names several times. In 1957, the official currency was the *cruzeiro* but it was common for people to still speak in terms of *contos de reis*, the former currency. Although the value of the *cruzeiro* in relation to the dollar has varied considerably, it is estimated that Sr. José received approximately US\$1,200.00.

you have here ?." I said: "No. If I knew I would not be here." She said: "You're right. You have almost forty years." Now, can you imagine how many years I lost there ? How much time I lost ? But I also made it because today I have money to eat, right ? Anyway, she got all the papers ready. By the time I went back to work, my retirement had gone through. She had told me: "Look, you are going to get a good bonus from your boss. A good one. He will give you the difference, the years you worked extra, he has to give you that in cash." So, I was looking for the settlement. Did I get it ? No sir, to this day they have not given me anything. Then the wall in my house began to give in. So I went to the office and they asked me: "What do you want ?". I said: "I want to talk to Dr.Henrique." So I go in and tell him:" Doutor, I was wondering if you could get me a sack of cement. I just retired and have not received my monthly payment yet. The wall in my house cracked up and I don't have the money to fix it." Do you know what he said ? He goes: "If I give you a sack of cement the company will go bankrupt, the company doesn't have any cement." Well, you know, the company did go bankrupt, the factory closed. Do you think it was because of a sack of cement that I asked for ? Do you see God's hands, my dear ? Do you see ? They closed down, didn't they ? And I am still here, going strong !¹²⁹

At the time of her retirement, D.Telma was in her early fifties and as she puts it, still "going strong, and ready to work." She was still trying to build her own home and claims that it would have been impossible to do so on her retirement pension: "It was a little nothing, I had to find another job." Having worked almost her entire life as a spinner, she began to make the rounds in other textile factories hoping to find employment but with no success. Despite being an experienced worker, her age counted against her: "I was no longer a kid and the factories wanted young arms." Eventually, she found a job in a small twine factory:

Afterwards, I worked in the factory of Penedo. Do you know where is Penedo ? It is there, in Liberdade. It was a twine factory, twine for packaging. We worked with three rolls (*tabocas*) of cording this big to make the skein of twine. We made them and had to wait to get paid because they had to bring it to the market at Água de Meninos to sell the skeins before they could pay us. It was bad, I tell you girls. I used to get

¹²⁹ INPS stands for *Instituto Nacional de Previdência Social*, the equivalent to the Social Security Agency. Up to the 1960s, however, when INPS was created, industrial workers retired through IAPI, that is, the *Instituto de Aposentadoria e Penção dos Industriários* (Industrial Workers Retirement and Pension Institute).

home around mid-night... Sometimes they would say, there is '*quartinho*' [quarters]. Do you know what is '*quartinho*'? It is like that, you go at one o'clock, stop at three, re-start again at five, stop again at seven, then back at ten, and so it goes. It was crazy! I had to come home alone late at night, walk to Calçada by 'Hell's Way', it was awful.

D.Telma stayed at this factory only for a few months, four at the most. "The wages were not worth the trouble. It was too far from here and the ride back too dangerous." But she could not find work in any other factory, resorting instead to a job in the Aratu Naval Base as a laundress helper:

I worked then at the Base. But it was really beautiful there it was good. I was a laundress helper. They had big washing machines and we helped, I helped taking the things from the washers to the wringing machines, to wring out the clothes and put them to dry.

While working at the Base, she befriended the men who worked there and started to take in their wash to do on her spare time at home. In time, she had a clientele large enough to leave her job at the Base and work at home as a laundress. She cannot remember for how long she pursued this activity until she finally "decided that I was getting too old for that." A few years ago, D.Telma started to work as a street vendor, preparing and selling '*acarajé*', an Afro-Brazilian delicacy, at Itacaranha beach. Although she was 84-yrs old at the time of our last interview, she was still planning on getting the beans ready to make the *acarajé* to go to Itacaranha on the following Sunday. For that purpose, she was counting on two of her great grandsons who live with her, to help her carry the goods to her vending spot on the beach: "But they will only help me if I give them a little something (*'um agrado'*)."

Few of the other older women interviewed still enjoy the strength and stamina displayed by D.Telma. However, their work-histories also extended for many years after leaving or being laid off from the factory. And as it was the case of the D.Telma, so too those who were nearing or past forty at that time experienced difficulties in finding placement in a factory setting, resorting instead to so-called 'autonomous' occupations in the service sector to make a living. This was the case of D.Carlinda, D.Delana, and D.Elenita: after leaving Fábrica São Braz, these former spinners looked for jobs in other factories without success, working as home-based laundresses until the time for their retirement.

Differently than these women, men of their generation were more successful. After leaving Fábrica São Braz, for example, Sr.José had no trouble in finding work at another textile factory, the factory at Boa Viagem, where he resumed his activities as a spinner. However, he remained there for only a few years; due to his failing health, he was forced to go on a prolonged sick-leave and retire. "That cotton dust finally did me in," he observed and added: "The doctor said I could not work in a factory anymore." As in the case of D.Telma, his retirement benefits were never enough to make a living. Thus, since the early 1960s, Sr.José has run a one-man umbrella repair shop, first in his own home and more recently, out of a little stand under the railroad pass, not too far from the gates of the old

factory. His 'real' business, however, is the 'Animals' Game' (*jogo do bicho*): Sr.José is the local 'game bookie' (*bicheiro*).¹³⁰

In the same row of stands under the railroad pass where Sr.José has his shop is the stand run by Sr.Luiz where he sells bread and coffee. He bought the stand on 1962 but before doing so, Sr.Luiz also worked at the Boa Viagem factory. As he explained:

When I became an assistant, my situation got better. But in 1959 the factory closed and put everybody out on the streets...When I left, I was not old enough to retire. Back then [to retire] you had to be fifty-five with thirty-five years of work. I had worked [at the factory] for thirty-seven years but I was not fifty-five yet so I marched around...

As noted, at Fábrica São Braz Sr.Luiz had been an assistant but he was close to fifty years old when he was laid off and thus "too old" to find placement at another factory under the same position. Thus, at Boa Viagem, he worked in the repair shop but for only for a couple of years before buying the stand. "I figured I could do better working for myself," he so claimed. Despite all the years as he spent as a factory worker, Sr.Luiz eventually retired as a "stand keeper" (*barraqueiro*):

When my time came [to retire], I went to the company but they told me they had already burned all the documents [from the factory]. But a friend who used to play soccer with me said that he was going to give me a hand, that he was going to look for my papers. He found them and told me that my time to ask for retirement had already passed, that I should go to the union. There, they told me it would be better for me to join the barraqueiros union to retire.

Let it be pointed out that in the examples here cited, the men fared better than the women not only in finding employment in a factory setting (even if only for a few years) but also in managing to come up with income

¹³⁰ Jogo do Bicho, or Animals' Game is Brazil's version of the 'numbers game.' Although played by great part of the

generating activities for their retirement years which are more profitable and less demanding than that found by the women as laundresses. Were it not for the help of their children or other relatives, in fact, D.Telma, D.Carlinda, D.Delana and D.Elenita would face even greater hardships in trying to make ends meet on just their meager retirement benefits.¹³¹ Next to owning a home, running a business of their own even if just a street stand (*banquinha* or *barraquinha*) is actually one of the greatest aspirations of these women.¹³² As D.Delana declared: "I wish I could have started a *barraquinha*. I could make more money with that but you need money to get started and I never had money to spare."

Starting a 'business of one's own' in the neighborhood, might not necessarily require too much initial capital.¹³³ To complement her retirement pension, D.Alice began to sell beer and soft drinks out of her own home. She already had a refrigerator and only needed the money buy a few cases at the time, selling the items at a small profit. Few people in her immediate neighborhood have refrigerators; they are thus willing to pay the extra money to enjoy a cold beer, available at a few doors from their homes.

population in the cities, the game is still illegal.

¹³¹ They receive the minimum wage which today corresponds to approximately US\$112.00.

¹³² Similar findings regarding aspirations of setting up a *barraquinha* to complement income after retirement were also reported by Angela Vianna (1981) on the basis of a study conducted in Nova Brasília, a squatter settlement located near the airport on the other side of the city

¹³³ As Angela Vianna has outlined based on her observations in Nova Brasília: "To put up a stand of this type it is enough to put a counter on one of the windows of the house and have enough money to buy, all at once, the articles to be sold. Actually, there is no need for specialization as to these articles: they vary from buttons to liquor, from medicines to meals. The installation does not require any type of license or the payment of taxes, although the sale of certain commodities such as those that require the use of scales for resale is subjected to fiscalization" (1981:193).

D.Alice's work-history is worthy of attention for unlike the other women discussed thus far in this chapter, she was still in her late twenties at the time of dismissal from Fábrica São Braz and thus still young enough to find a job in the Boa Viagem factory as a weaver. Nevertheless, she did not stay there for very long. A few months after starting at the new job, the factory installed new looms more modern and sophisticated than the older ones. She was not fast enough in learning how to operate them and was eventually dismissed: "The new machines were too complicated, too difficult. I was too slow with them so they let me go." She tried to go back to Fábrica São Braz with no luck: "They were letting a lot of the older ones go by then, they wouldn't take me back." At the time, D.Alice had a small child and decided that "rather than march around" she would stay at home, helping her mother who worked as a laundress. Within a few years, she would meet an "older man", twice her age who came to live with her and fathered her other four children. While they were growing up she remained at home: "My companion was already retired when I met him; he had his pension and did some construction work, he didn't let us go without anything." However, as he grew older and ailing and thus unable to earn extra money as a construction worker, D.Alice was forced to re-enter the labor market. This happened in the early 1970s and by then, the Industrial Complex of Aratu (CIA) was already in operation. As a former weaver, D.Alice looked for a job in the textile factories in CIA. She did find placement at Nordisa but as a cleaning help, not as operária. As she

observed: "It was a very modern factory, it was a lot different, the machines were all different and I was too old to learn."

Indeed, the gap of nearly a decade between the demise of the more traditional textile industries and the creation of the post-SUDENE factories, worked against the 're-conversion' of the older workers into the new industries. By the time these industries began to operate, those workers were no longer at an age in which companies would deem it worthwhile to invest in re-training them. This would be reserved only for the younger ones with many years ahead for service to the factory. In particular, training would be reserved to men since their work careers were not likely to be interrupted due to pregnancies and/or childcare.

Still in his late twenties but already an assistant when Fábrica São Braz closed in 1959, Sr.Lauro was among the privileged. He even escaped being laid off for a few months before the closing, he was transferred to FAGIP, in the neighborhood of Ribeira. As noted in the previous chapter, FAGIP had been founded in 1956, functioning in the same building which had once held Fábrica Paraguassu, also owned by União Fabril. Although FAGIP produced gauze instead of textiles, it had been installed with modern machinery and Sr.Lauro received training in using and maintaining them. Thus when Uniao Fabril re-modeled and reactivated Fábrica Sao Braz in 1961, Sr.Lauro was among those who were called back to work. He became an overseer, working there throughout the taking over of the factory by Fábrica de Tecidos Fátima in 1967. And he was still there a year later when, already operating as FATBRAZ, the factory was finally closed.

For the next two years (1969 and 1970), Sr.Lauro worked first as a repairmen in small shops then back at FAGIP until he was called to go to Nordisa which began operating at CIA in 1971. He remained there working as an overseer until his retirement in 1982, a few years before Nordisa closed. Even after retiring, however, Sr.Lauro continued to work at factories, employed by a subcontracting firm which provided maintenance assistance to CIA industries.

Like Sr.Lauro, D.Joseildes was still in her twenties when Fábrica São Braz first closed down. In addition to being still young, D.Joseildes was an experienced drawer (*maçaroqueira*) and was also among those called back to her job when the factory re-opened in 1961. A few years before Fatbraz closed, however, D.Joseildes stepped on a snake on her way to work, had a nervous breakdown and resigned from the factory. As she related:

I used to work in the factory here, altogether I worked there for seven years. I used to come home running, run up the hill to check on the children, and then run down again after lunch. Then, one day, as I was passing by the door of the bathroom next to the nursery, I was running past there, I saw a big stick on the middle of the road. I thought it was a stick and stepped on it but when I stepped, the stick moved and threw me to the ground and when I looked it was moving, curling up. I couldn't even scream, I realized it was a snake. It ran into the woods and I guy that was coming by said that snake was always around. I was so shaken up, in such a bad shape that I could not bear going back to work.... I was too traumatized.

A few months after this incident, however, D.Joseildes did go back to work but not to Fábrica São Braz. She worked at Fábrica dos Fiaes, staying there for only three months: "It was too hard there, I couldn't put up with it." She then worked at another small textile factory in Liberdade, but only for a year:

On December 20, the factory closed and laid off everybody. That was in 1970. In 1971, a compadre of mine who was working at Nordisa called me to work there. Nordisa was just starting then and I was one of the first ones to work there. I was there to get Nordisa started, I worked as a drawer.

Although she claims the wages at Nordisa were good and she liked the job, "it was too far from home." D.Joseildes had four children by then, two still young, and she found it difficult to reconcile her job with her home duties: "When I worked here, I could come home for lunch and check on the children. I couldn't do that working at CIA, and 'my nerves' (*meus nervos*) gave way. It was too much for me."¹³⁴

D.Joseildes eventually left Nordisa and retired early because of her nervous condition. A few years ago, she bought a foodstuff tent (*quiosque*) at Ribeira Beach which she ran with the help of her daughters. Because she had to undergo surgery, she leased the tent and was waiting for the lease to be over to go back into business.

Difficulties in reconciling childcare with a job far away from home also weighed heavily in D.Linda's decision to leave Nordisa. The youngest in the group of former workers interviewed in the course of this study, D.Linda was only seventeen in 1959 when Fábrica São Braz first ceased operations. For a while, she was employed as a domestic servant until she found placement at FAGIP. After Fábrica São Braz was reactivated, she returned to her former job in the spinning sector where she claims to have performed several different activities:

¹³⁴ For a discussion of the problem of nervos (or nervous condition) among the Brazilian working classes, see Duarte 1986; see also Chapter 5 in Scheper-Hughes 1992.

At the factory I was a spinner. But I did everything, the only thing I didn't do was work in the weaving sector. I worked alone in the '*esbarro*', that is, when the spinner hits the thing wrong, it stops (*esbarra*), it breaks and I would fix it. I worked in the starching section ('*engomadeira*'), in the drawing room ('*banco grosso*'), as a twister ('*banco fino*'), I knew how to do everything....

During that period, the factory was working on shifts and D.Linda-- then separated from her husband and raising four youngsters on her own-- took advantage of this by taking another job to complement the family's income. At the time, her brother was working for the City ('*Prefeitura*') and able to secure her a position as attendant in a public grade school in Plataforma. She worked in the school during the morning and then took the second shift in the factory. In 1971, she was called along with D.Joseildes to work at Nordisa in the spinning sector. By then, however, she was already living with her second husband who eventually suggested that she should leave that job to care for the children:

My husband had nothing against me working but when the children were small and I worked two shifts (...) he said that it was wrong for me to leave the children alone. One of them became sick with dehydration and malnutrition and then he said that I should quit and stay home taking care of the house. He would be responsible for everything until the children got older.

D. Linda left the factory but kept her job with the city. After her retirement, she run a small liquor store in the neighborhood. At present, she helps in managing the community bakery at AMPLA: "I like to work out of the house, I don't like the idea of staying at home, I don't like children screaming in my ears..."

Gender and Generation

In discussing the formation of the urban proletariat in the Brazilian Northeast, José Sérgio Leite Lopes & Luís Antonio Machado da Silva (1979:23-25) have proposed that the 'factory-worker's villa' system and as such, the condition of bourgeois serfdom represented the first moment of the process. The disintegration of this system, either through the closing of the factories or modernization of the production process which they see as representing the next moment, resulted in the laying-off of increasing numbers of workers. Three different paths--which may also be seen as different phases--would then characterize the third moment. First, 'de-professionalization' or 'de-skilling': former factory workers who would not be reabsorbed into the new industry (i.e., the post-SUDENE factories) but to other sectors of the economy, often into the so-called 'informal labor market'. A second possible path (or phase) would be that in which although not absorbed into the new industry, workers would still maintain their professional status working in small repair shops or as autonomous skilled workers. Finally, the third and last path or phase would be absorption into the new industries and re-conversion into the 'classic' factory worker, 'free' in the double sense referred to by Marx (1967, I:714).

Leite Lopes & Machado da Silva emphasize, nevertheless, that this process has been neither linear nor homogeneous. It has not necessarily affected the same social group; that is, it is not the same group of workers that will go through the phases outlined above. In their own words:

It is possible that a determined number of former workers in factories with workers' villages may have suffered all these transformations or, inversely, [...] that a worker in a new, post-SUDENE factory may have

been the protagonist of such changes before arriving at his new situation. However, these transformations will generally come through affecting different social groups or at least different groups of workers. Thus, the 're-conversion' of a worker in the traditional factory-village system into one employed by the new post-SUDENE factories is an exceptional fact: between one job and the other, there is a hiatus which is occupied by a social group which has suffered the deterioration of the quality of life for being deprived of their former work conditions (1979:27, my translation).

The same authors further observe that the occupation that workers previously had in the factories would play a determinant role in the paths their work-histories would follow. Those formerly engaged in maintenance and other skilled occupations which could be pursued individually and/or were not directly tied down to the production process, would have a better chance in starting a business of their own or in finding placement in small shops and, eventually, in the new industries. In contrast, those whose former activities were in the production lines such as in the case of spinners and weavers, would tend to experience the process of '*desobrerização*' (de-proletarianization) to its fullest. More dependent on the machines and on cooperation, they could only exercise their occupations within a factory setting. However, lacking the necessary skills and training to find placement in the new industries, their chances of reintegration into factory work would be minimized.

Doubtless, the work-histories delineated in the previous section are far too few to be representative of the range of 'personal destinies' of the workforce at Fábrica São Braz following the closing of the factory. Nevertheless, these histories do suggest that along with 'previous occupation', gender and generation articulated so as to further restrict the

range of job opportunities open to the workers here considered. In this respect it is important to recall that the gender divide in the factory was such that all women worked in the production lines whereas the more skilled occupations were reserved to men. Thus, it should not be surprising that the women would be more likely to experience greater difficulties in being reintegrated into the industrial sector. As in the case of D.Anita discussed in the introduction of this chapter, women more than men would find themselves roaming around in search of a job.

To be sure, younger women such as D.Linda and D.Joseildes not only were reintegrated into Fábrica São Braz after it reopened, but were also called to work in Nordisa, the post-SUDENE textile factory installed at CIA. However, precisely because they were younger and still in their reproductive years with young children at home, they would be more subjected to the constraints of the gender divide in the domestic sphere. While a factory functioned in Plataforma, the proximity between workplace and place of residence minimized the existing conflicts between factory work and domestic work so that women could perform both.¹³⁵ With a job away from the neighborhood and thus with the increasing distance between workplace and home--that is to say, the increased separation between the space of production and that of 'reproduction'--and the corresponding added time to cover the distance between the two, exacerbated these

¹³⁵ See Machado da Silva 1979 for a discussion of the conflicts between factory work and domestic work and how this has underscored the growth of industrial homework in the Northeast. On the expansion of industrial homework in the south and southeast, see Abreu 1986 and Abreu & Sorj 1992. See also Beneria & Roldan 1987 for similar findings in Mexico City.

conflicts (experienced by D.Joseildes as a 'nervous condition'), eventually forcing them to abandon the job at Nordisa for a work situation closer to home.

In this respect, the considerations made by Zahide Machado Netto (1989) regarding findings from a study conducted in two different neighborhoods of Salvador where women also 'trade off' better paying jobs for those closer to home are certainly pertinent:

Along with the difficulties of access to jobs (...), there are also problems in coordinating work away and far from home with domestic work. By their turn, the difficulties and cost of transportation and the growing distance between places of residence and those where they can sell their labor power, all of this compels women towards seeking to solve within their own neighborhoods the allocation of their labor (1989:10, my translation).

Machado Netto observed that a job in the neighborhood, even if sporadic and without any fringe benefits was usually preferred over those involving traveling away, given that proximity to home allowed women to be closer to their children, "be home at lunch time and, at the end of the workday, to dispose of more time for domestic chores."¹³⁶

In the case of the women here discussed, such an option would have implications of wider significance as well. Indeed, for D.Linda and D. Joseildes (as experienced by the 'older' women factory workers), this also meant a break in their work-histories in that they would shift from engagement in industrial production to involvement in commercial and/or activities identified with the services sector.

¹³⁶ See also Bruschini 1990, Sarti 1990, and Caldeira 1984 for similar findings in working class neighborhoods of São Paulo.

The succeeding generations of women of the neighborhood have thus seen their opportunities for industrial employment diminish both in function of the reorganization of the spaces of industrial production in the city as well of the restructuring of the local labor market along gender lines. On the one hand, the contraction of the traditional industrial sector--particularly that of textiles which has historically relied on the employment of women--and, on the other, the expansion of the so-called 'dynamic' industries most notably the petrochemical industry, noted for its preference for a male labor force, have equally contributed to the alienation of women from involvement in production activities.

TABLE 11.3

Occupational Status of Sons and Daughters of Former Factory Workers

Occupation Status	Daughters		Sons	
	N	%	N	%
TOTAL	49	100.0	33	100.0
Inactive				
Housework	16	32.6	-	0.0
Student	1	2.0	1	3.0
Unemployed	8	16.3	8	24.3
Occupied	24	49.1	24	72.7

The effects of the new patterns of the gender divide in the labor market are apparent when considering the present occupation of the children--daughters in contrast to sons--of the former factory workers here considered. From a total of 49 daughters for whom information is available, for example, none is presently a factory worker nor involved in any other sort of production activity. Actually, as shown on Table 11.3, the

proportion of these daughters who are active in the labor market (24/49 or 49.1%) is not necessarily low; it is equivalent to the rates of activity for women found in a national and local level.¹³⁷

However, in consonance with the trend discussed earlier in relation to the shift of the female labor force in Bahia from the production to the services sector, of the 24 daughters who are engaged in gainful economic activities, more than half (15 or 62.5%) work in the services sector (Table 11.4). Moreover, these daughters exercise some of the same occupations which embrace nearly 80% of the Brazilian female labor force today. They are nurse's aides (4), domestic servants (2), school attendants (2), seamstress (2) hairdressers (2), elementary school teachers (2), and manicurist (1). Likewise, among those involved in commercial (circulation) activities, five (5) are store clerks while four (4) work as office clerks, occupations which are also among those presently engaging great part of women workers in Brazil.¹³⁸

TABLE 11.4

**Sector of Occupation of Sons and Daughters
of Former Factory Workers**

¹³⁷ The rates of activity for women in Brazil have climbed considerably in the last decade, particularly in urban areas: in 1981 this rate was equivalent to 33.7, while in 1990 it reached 40.1. In the Northeast region, these rates were lower than the national average: 30.2 in 1981, and 37.7 in 1990 (IBGE in Bruschini 1994:6).

¹³⁸— In 1980, reports Cristina Bruschini, "70% of women workers were concentrated in a small number of female occupations: domestic workers, agricultural workers, and industrial workers for those with less instruction; secretaries and store clerks for those with middle level education, teachers and nurses for those who had achieved a higher education level or had just middle level education. At that time, of each 100 Brazilian women workers, 20 were domestic servants, 12 were secretaries, 12 worked in the field (rural workers), 8 were (elementary) school teachers, a little over 6 were store clerks" (1994:16).

Sector	Daughters		Sons	
	N	%	N	%
TOTAL	24	100.0	24	100.0
Production	-	0.0	12	50.0
Commercial/Circ	9	37.5	7	29.2
Services	15	62.5	5	20.8

In contrast to the daughters, half of the sons who are presently gainfully employed (12/24) are involved in production activities as construction workers (6), skilled machinists (4), and as mechanics involved in maintenance and repair activities(2). Of the remaining twelve, seven (i.e.,29.2%) are involved in jobs included in commercial and or circulation activities whereas, as opposed to the daughters, only five (20.8%) are active in the services sector.

The Transformation of Plataforma

Long before the closing of the factory, however, significant changes were already under way towards the de-characterization of Plataforma as a vila operária. It is well to remember that even during Comendador Catharino's era no new houses were built for factory workers. It was after his death that the major changes would be instilled. One such change was the transference of the responsibility for the upkeep of the houses to the workers/tenants as the company ceased to provide any type of maintenance services. D.Heloísa recalls, for instance, that she was told: "we are not taking the house, but any repairs will be up to you."

Around the same time, the Cooperative was also deactivated, leaving the workers without a place where they could buy on credit if needed. "It was sad to see the Cooperative go," lamented D.Luciana, "you could get

things there and paying by the week was easier, you didn't even notice. Then they closed it; (it was) said they were losing money."

Along with the discontinuation of these services, the 'dramatization' of paternalistic dominance which had surrounded the figure of the 'benevolent patron' of Plataforma disappeared with him. There was no more *café da companhia* in celebration of Comendador Catharino's birthday, no more visits of the director-president to the shopfloors greeting workers by their names, no more of the personalistic touch imprinted on contacts between 'top' management and those living in Plataforma. In this manner, relations between factory and community began to assume a new character: they were gradually being stripped of their patron/clientelistic overtones, as Uniao Fabril took steps to disencumber itself from responsibilities tied to the reproduction of the workers and their families.

It is well to note that during the 1950s, the stipulation that company housing was available only to factory workers was no longer in effect. Those who were dismissed or left the factory after a settlement, could remain in the houses. The same policy was put in effect when the factory was closed in 1959: workers who occupied company housing were allowed to remain as tenants. Some, as Sr.Luiz for example, were even able to include the acquisition of their homes as part of their indemnity settlement. When the factory was reactivated a year and a half later, operating then on a more 'modern' basis, housing no longer was offered to the new workforce. Even those operarios who had previously worked at the factory and still lived in company housing, noted a separation at work

between the roles of 'employer' and 'landlord' by União Fabril. Their rental payments no longer were automatically deducted from the wages. Now they had to sign a special consent form for that to happen. Furthermore, these workers were told that rental matters should be dealt directly with the company's home office, not with the factory. As D.Heloisa observed: "After we left the factory, we had to go to União Fabril's office to pay the rent."

Notice should be taken to the fact that by then, that is to say, by the mid-1960s, União Fabril's interests in real estate had already outrun those in industrial production. In the past, all of the mills had offered housing for workers; and these houses continued to be rented even after six of the mills closed. Besides, much of the landed property owned by the company was occupied by leaseholders who paid annual rental fees (*taxas de arrendamento*). No doubt, since the houses were modest and the areas occupied by leaseholders lacked basic infrastructure (such as access to electrical energy, piped water, sewage system and the like), rent was still also modest. Nevertheless, when tenants and leaseholders were added together their numbers came to the thousands, making of União Fabril not only one of the major land proprietors in the city but also largest real estate business in operation.

In Plataforma, the occupation of the areas surrounding the initial nucleation around the factory had proceeded by means of 'consented' appropriation. As noted in previous chapters, people either gained permission from the factory or simply took possession of the land and

erected a shack on it. Subsequently, the company began to exact the annual fee from those occupying the lots owned by Fábrica São Braz. There were vast extensions of land between the major installations of Plataforma, Periperi, and Paripe. This land was initially sparsely occupied and was owned by the city and other large proprietors such as União Fabril (PMS/SEPLAN 1988). Indeed, much of these areas was still in the hands of leaseholders dedicated to the cultivation of produce and the production of dairy goods to be marketed in the major nucleations of the Suburbio itself and/or in Salvador (PMS/SEPLAN 1988).

Beginning in the 1940s, however, particularly after World War II, Salvador experienced an upsurge in population numbers which would set in motion the expansion of its periferia. Whereas between 1930 and 1940, for example, Salvador grew from 283,422 inhabitants to only 290,443, in the following decade it grew to 417,235 inhabitants.¹³⁹

Since the 1940s, in fact, as observable for the Metropolitan Area of Salvador as a whole (Table 11.5), the population of the subdistrict of Plataforma also began to show a gradual but steady climb. Although information regarding the population of the neighborhood of Plataforma itself alone is not available, it can be assumed that the stream of newcomers to this location throughout this period was continuous.

TABLE 11.5

**Population Growth in the Metropolitan
Area of Salvador**

¹³⁹ A comparative table of population growth in Salvador and selected cities in Brazil is included in the addenda.

1940-1980

Cities	Years				
	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980
Salvador	290,443	417,235	629,722	1,017,591	1,491,642
Plataforma**	4,162	6,968	10,826	21,328	42,416
Camaçari*	1,419	2,715	5,342	13,586	49,426
Candeias*	-	-	12,500	26,235	42,232
Itaparica	2,125	2,603	4,308	5,207	10,360
L. Freitas*	-	-	3,634	3,973	23,388
S.Francisco do Conde	1,682	1,925	3,005	5,013	5,554
Simões Filho*	-	-	1,925	5,992	25,592
Vera Cruz	684	1,172	1,565	2,368	4,450

Source: IBGE in Mello e Silva et al 1989:207

*Towns situated near industrial complexes

**Included in the Salvador population.¹⁴⁰

It is interesting to note, for instance, that of a total of twenty-one members of AMPLA's group of senior women who were interviewed at the beginning of this study, twelve had moved to Plataforma from the late 1940s onward, half of them during the 1950s. Seven of the cited twelve women came from cities in the interior of Bahia as well as from the neighboring state of Sergipe. Three of them worked initially as live-in domestic servants in the city, moving to Plataforma after getting married. The others such as D.Julinha, for example, already had families when they moved to the area. As she explained:

We lived at first in the Alto do Cruzeiro, but it was bad there, too much garbage around and I already had two boys. Then my husband one day came out here, liked it and found a place for us. I didn't know anybody here back then, that was 28 years ago (D.Julinha).

¹⁴⁰ The figures for 1940, 1950, 1960 were estimated on the basis of the rates of growth for the population of Salvador during these decades.

It was on the 1950s as well that the first land developments--the *loteamentos de periferia*--began to emerge in the Suburbio. They consisted of small lots sold on long-term credit basis to the popular classes.¹⁴¹ The first of these land developments in the Suburbio were concentrated in Paripe but in 1954 was created the Loteamento Jardim Itacaranha and, in 1958 the Loteamento Chácara Itacaranha, both of them within the subdistrict of Plataforma. However, it would take another decade--and the construction of Avenida Suburbana--for newer land developments to appear in that specific subdistrict: Fazenda Coqueiro in 1972, Ilha Amarela in 1981, and Planalto Real, an 'illegal' development without building license and thus with no official date for its creation (CONDER in PMS/SEPLAN 1988:308).

During the 1970s, in addition to these privately-run land developments, it also appeared in the Subúrbio a number of housing projects--the *Conjuntos Habitacionais*. They were built by local governmental agencies with funds from the National Housing Bank (*Banco Nacional da Habitação or BNH*), and consisted of apartments and single-family houses for lower income families.¹⁴² In Plataforma, the first such project, the *Conjunto Senhor do Bonfim*, was built in 1975 and consisted of 184 small adjoining house. It was followed by the *Conjunto Baía de Todos os Santos*,

¹⁴¹ The legislation authorizing and regulating the creation of land developments and the sale of the lots on credit to the popular classes dates from 1938 when the Law-decree 58 (*Decreto-lei*) was signed by Getulio Vargas (Bonduki 1988:103). There are no systematic studies of these *loteamentos de periferia* in Salvador. For a discussion of their emergence in Rio de Janeiro, see Chinelli 1981; see also Beozzo de Lima 1981.

¹⁴² BNH was created in 1964, shortly after the military regime came into power. Theoretically, BNH was supposed to bring a solution to housing problems among the working classes. However, as Kowarick & Bonduki (1988:153) have

built in 1978, with 200 such houses, both of them catering to families whose monthly income ranged from approximately US\$400 to US\$640 (PMS/SEPLAN 1988:311).¹⁴³

These planned forms of occupation were accompanied by a number of *invasões* in the Subúrbio, a process which accelerated particularly since the 1970s. The major *invasões* sprang up primarily in Paripe and Coutos but Plataforma also received its share. Indeed, at the foot of the promontory where the neighborhood stands there are today three relatively large such settlements: Araças, located at Cabrito Cove between Avenida Suburbana and the railroad tracks; Boiadeiro which sits on the other side of the promontory, stretching from Avenida Suburbana to the Rua dos Ferroviários; and Novos Alagados which consists of *palafitas*--homes built on sticks in the water within Cabrito Cove.¹⁴⁴

The clearest end-result of these developments in the area has been the swelling up of the local resident population. Between 1960 and 1980, for instance, it grew nearly four times over, jumping from a total of 10,826 people in 1960 to 42,416 in 1980 (see Table 11.5). By 1988, according to a study conducted by the city government in the area, the resident population of the subdistrict had already reached 52,745 people and a

noted, "only 16% of the total investment were directed to families whose monthly income were within 5 minimum wages." For a critique of state sponsored housing programs see also chapter VI in Leeds & Leeds 1978.

¹⁴³ It catered to families within the 5 to 8 minimum wage bracket, which would be equivalent to a monthly income of approximately US\$400 to US\$640.

¹⁴⁴ For discussions of the growth of *invasões* in Salvador see Mattedi 1979, Pendrell 1968.

demographic density of 111.32 persons per hectare (PMS/SEPLAN 1988:323).

In the following chapter we will see how this situation has given rise to neighborhood-based movements, and how, finally, the women of Plataforma have assumed in them a forefront position.

CHAPTER TWELVE

In the Name of the Family: Women's Neighborly Militancy

Introduction

It was March 8, 1988, International Women's Day. As I approached the auditorium of the former *Círculo Operário* on São Braz Square in Plataforma, where women were gathered for the annual *Encontro da Mulher Suburbana* (Suburban Women's Meeting), I could hear them singing the well known tune, *Mulher Rendeira* ('Lace-making Woman'). This is an old Brazilian country tune portraying the life of a submissive woman who stays at home, making lace. But as I walked in and listened more closely, I realized that a new twist had been added to the song. Instead of the old lyrics of passivity and submission, the new version convoked women to get out of the house and join in the struggles "for justice and freedom":

Hello lace-making woman, hello woman of lace,
If women stay at home, they'll never conquer freedom
My mother had three daughters, all of them named Maria
The three would stay at home, only my father could go out
Hello lace-making woman, hello woman of lace,
If women stay at home, they'll never conquer freedom
Women from the Subúrbio, earned the fame of being brave,
Even those who are illiterate, in their work are very competent,
For justice and for freedom, they will fight even the president¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁵ In Portuguese, the new version reads as follows:
"Olê mulher rendeira, olê mulher renda,
Se a mulher ficar em casa, nunca vai se libertar
Minha mãe teve três filhas, pelo nome de Maria
Todas as três ficavam em casa, só meu pai é quem saía
Olê mulher rendeira, olê mulher renda,

Later on in the day, after meeting in small groups to discuss the problems faced by the women of the Subúrbio and how they should go about in solving them, the women gathered once again in the auditorium. And as the coordinators of each group took their turn reporting on the results of the discussion, they made it clear why and how the women should be ready to fight:

We all know that the Subúrbio is a very beautiful and very large area of the city. Here live human beings but all of us who live here in the Subúrbio know that we do not live as humans should, right?. Yeah, we live practically in sub-human conditions. What is lacking here? We lack means of transportation, daycare centers, police stations, hospitals, health care centers, junior high and high schools, sewage, basic sanitation in general, and so on... What should we do to solve our problems? [we should] promote more meetings in our [resident] associations to raise the consciousness of the residents as to our problems; promote large meetings to raise the consciousness of our people [as to the need] to unite so that together we can pressure the public authorities into respecting our rights by answering our demands... We have a big responsibility and we should commit ourselves to sensitize our communities so that others will meet with us to discuss the needs of our neighborhoods and march together, in large numbers, as a strong group, to the *prefeitura* [the Mayoralty], to the [heads of] the different departments, to the governor and whomever we find it necessary to demand better living conditions for the people of the Subúrbio...

But when her turn came, one of the members of the Women's Commission responsible for the organization of the *Encontro*, shifted the tone of the discourse. Indeed, contradicting the view that women from the popular sectors only mobilize for 'economic needs' and have no defined 'strategic gender interests' (Molyneux 1985), she reminded those present

Se a mulher ficar em casa, nunca vai se libertar
As mulheres do Subúrbio criaram fama de valentes,
Mesmo as semi-analfabetas, no trabalho é competente,
Por justiça e liberdade, briga até com o presidente.."

that women's 'specific struggles' (*lutas específicas*) were just as important as the so-called 'general struggles' (*lutas gerais*). She concluded with these words:

I am very happy to see that all of you, *companheiras* [comrades], came to our *Encontro* to demand your rights despite the rain. And we want equality because women are discriminated and we don't accept this. We women are fighters so we deserve equality because we work just as hard as the men if not more. But our work, our struggles are not recognized!

The speeches that followed, reaffirmed this concern: "we have to fight for our rights," said one. "We have been discriminated against long enough," added another. "We don't want to be queens of the oven and stove (*rainhas do forno e fogão*). We want to deliberate about the life of this country," exclaimed a third one. By the end of the day, the women were ready to make their demands go public. They marched out of the auditorium taking over the streets of the neighborhood, carrying protest signs and banners. Unlike their performance in the *Bloco do Bacalhau* a few decades before, there was no longer ambivalence nor ambiguity in their protest. The women openly demanded equality and respect.

This chapter is about changing attitudes regarding the proper spheres of action for women of Plataforma and the actions they have carried out in this process, including their current fight against União Fabril. More specifically, this chapter centers on the Residents' Association of Plataforma (AMPLA) and the role played by women in its inception and projection as a leading force in neighborhood-based movements in Salvador. In retracing the history of this association in what follows, it will

be seen that originally, women became involved in these struggles due to economic needs and as homemakers and mothers entrusted with the welfare of their families. However, I contend that women's involvement in these struggles has fostered female empowerment and the emergence of a feminist consciousness among them. No doubt, it is a gendered consciousness that bears its specific class markers. But it is precisely this class marker which constitutes a new facet of feminism in the tropics.

On Neighborhood Movements

In Brazil, as true for most of Latin America, neighborhood movements stand out today as one of the most prevalent and widespread forms of mobilization of the so-called 'popular sectors'.¹⁴⁶ In most large cities in the region, in fact, it has become increasingly common to witness groups of people identified as residents of given neighborhoods, staging public demonstrations in order to demand from local authorities solutions to problems affecting their places of residence. Of course, the specific demands and the actions taken to demand them vary locally. However, in nearly all instances, they involve residents of poor neighborhoods, many of which emerged precisely as a result of 'collective action'--through the collective 'invasion' of available land (Escobar & Alvarez 1992, Eckstein 1985, Evers et al 1982, Jelin 1990).

¹⁴⁶ For a discussion of the conceptualization of the expressions 'popular sectors' (*setores populares*) and 'popular classes' (*classes populares*), see for example Sader & Paoli 1986, and Paoli 1989.

Contemporary social movements in Latin America have been the object of heated debates but there is little dispute as to the structural factors underlying the widespread occurrence of neighborhood movements.¹⁴⁷ Scholars and activists alike agree that they are underscored by the deeply-set 'exclusion' mechanisms that have characterized the process of economic development in the region, giving rise to the "enormous growth of the poor neighborhoods (barriadas, favelas, colonias, callampas, poblaciones... according to the country), both in the empty spaces of the large cities as well as in their periferia" (Evers et al 1982:117, my emphasis and translation).¹⁴⁸

For Paul Singer (1980), neighborhood-based movements consist of both "forms of solidarity and communal cohesion" as well as a "struggle for better living conditions," that is to say, "they are based on forms of social cohesion that make feasible expressions to the 'outer world' in terms of demanding from public authorities solutions to problems emerging from the actual exigencies of urban life as they are presently constituted" (1981:83, my translation).

As Singer points out, the first industrial cities did not dispose of public services such as garbage pick-up, piped water, sewage systems, street lights, health centers, public schools and the like. Most people fetched water at the fountains and disposed of their garbage threw their

¹⁴⁷ For critical reviews of the debates on contemporary social movements in Brazil see, among others, Machado da Silva & Ribeiro 1985, Doimo et al 1986, and Nunes 1986. On issues regarding Latin America as a whole, see Foweraker 1995, Escobar & Alvarez 1992, Eckstein 1985.

dejects on the streets being thus exposed to all sorts of infectious diseases. Not surprisingly, these precarious living conditions, well described by Engels in *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, led to high mortality rates especially among children. It was not until they began to reach calamitous proportions that it became clear to the authorities that the provision of basic public services to the population was not a luxury but a real necessity of modern urban life.

In Western Europe and the United States, these services began to be introduced around the mid-1800s but it was not until the turn of the century that major efforts in this direction were to be witnessed in Latin America. Thus it is noteworthy that Salvador, along with Rio de Janeiro, was among the first cities in Brazil to dispose of services such as public transportation and street lighting.¹⁴⁹ Yet, as true for other cities in Latin America, these services were concentrated for the most in the center of town and adjacent areas, having only recently begun to be extended to the suburbs. In point of fact, it is only through the mobilization of residents of these areas to pressure local authorities that public services are finally making their way into poor areas of cities such as Salvador.

Of course, it is not too difficult to understand why this has been the case. Most of these services are either dispensed directly by the State (in its different levels) or through its mediation. Yet, they have not expanded as fast as the population has, particularly in those cities (Salvador among

¹⁴⁸ The statistics confirm this tendency: 30% of the population of Bogota, 35% in Lima, 60% to 70% in Caracas live in favelas (Evers et al 1982:117). See also Leeds & Leeds 198).

them) that have undergone rapid growth. The problem is not necessarily one of lack of public funds but rather that:

The use of funds from the public treasure is subject to priorities defined by political criteria, such that the satisfaction of the basic needs of the population competes with other demands coming from social sectors that have the economic means to have access to all urban services, regardless of how scarce these services may be in terms of the needs of all city dwellers (Singer 1980:84, my translation).

To be sure, the services themselves are either 'free' or obtainable at costs which can be met by most sectors of the population. But it so happens that they are only available in certain areas of the city which, precisely for enjoying the availability of these services, are highly valued in the real estate market and thus only available to those who can actually pay for the high costs of such privileges. Indeed, this responds for the displacement of the poorer sectors of the population to those areas which are lacking in basic infra-structural services.

Neighborhood-based movements in Brazil and the formation of local residents' associations are not necessarily recent developments. Actually, they date back at least to the 1940s when in the midst of the mobilizations that characterized the post-war years, residents of poor areas began to organize around neighborhood needs and present their demands to municipal authorities (Singer 1980, Kowarick & Bonduki 1988). However, as proper of the populist practices then on rise, many of these associations came under the patronage and control of local politicians, becoming caught up into a system of patronage (Singer 1980, Kowarick & Bonduki 1988,

¹⁴⁹ See, for example, Azevedo & Lins 1969, Pinho 1956.

Pendrell 1968). It was usually through the mediation of these 'patrons' in exchange for votes, that petitions for local services found their way to the competent authorities (Gohn 1981). In this manner, neighborhood associations often became instrumental in the creation of 'electoral corrals' (*currais eleitorais*), that is, controlled pockets of the electorate, not rarely doubling as political headquarters in election times. Moreover, given this overt 'political' character and party-politicking activities when politics were still highly considered outside of women's domains, they seldom played a directive role or found themselves more closely involved in these associations.

With the coup of 1964 and subsequent installation of the military dictatorial regime in the country, not only did populist practices suffer a severe blow but, more importantly, neighborhood movements as most other expressions of social unrest and popular demand would be severely repressed.¹⁵⁰ Indeed, under the military, the economy experienced a much publicized 'boom'--the so-called Brazilian miracle--but it is no longer a secret that sustaining it was the severe crush imposed on workers' wages and the repressive measures that shortcut their bargaining power and formal channels for exercising it. It was not until the late 1970s, in fact--when the 'miracle' came to an end and the regime began to lose its legitimacy even among some of its most staunch supporters--that popular mobilization was to rise again.

¹⁵⁰ On the coup of 1964 see Dreifuss 1987, Silva 1990, Toledo 1982.

Since then, however, neighborhood movements not only have multiplied but also expanded considerably through coalitions that operate locally as well as at the national level. Furthermore, different from what was common in the past, contemporary neighborhood movements wage today--along with a battle for needed services--a ideological struggle for autonomy, shunning the paternalistic, authoritarian, and patronage practices that had traditionally characterized relations between popular organizations, political parties and the state. No doubt, this results from what is probably the most outstanding feature of these movements today: the overwhelming presence of women in their ranks. Indeed, women not only make up the great majority of those taking part in the actions but are also in positions of leadership in the numerous residents' associations and coalitions that have sprung up in this process (Corcoran-Nantes 1990, Caldeira 1990, Espineira Gonzalez 1991, Pacheco et al 1992).

Women's Neighborly Militancy

Far from representing a peculiar or isolated phenomenon, in fact, the emergence of a women's movement in Plataforma has unfolded as part of the struggles they have waged for access to infra-structural services for their neighborhoods. Likewise, as true for other popular women's movements in contemporary Latin America, so too were they originally mobilized during the period of the military regime, most notably in the mid-1970s, through *Clubes de Mães*. Moreover, they also counted in their first 'organizational' moments with the support, assistance and, not rarely,

with the 'interference' both of different organizations linked to the so-called 'revolutionary left' as well as with the more progressive sectors of the Catholic Church.

In Bahia, members of these organizations and of the Church had for long joined efforts in what was then known as *trabalho conjunto* [combined work].¹⁵¹ Indeed, since the 1960s, as part of these combined efforts, different attempts were made to organize groups of laundresses, street vendors, and fishermen in Plataforma (cf. Santos et al 1970). However, in consonance with the notions then prevailing as to the 'historical mission' of the industrial working class, the focus of interest of the actions of the 'left' in the neighborhoods of the Subúrbio centered primarily on organizing industrial workers. It was with this purpose in mind that in 1977, for instance, the *Escola Profissional Suburbana para Formação de Operários* (Suburban Professional School for the Formation of Industrial Workers) would be created.¹⁵²

Note should be made that while the attentions of the 'left' lied on the workers, the Church through its 'social action' program (*Ação Social*) organized the women in *Clubes de Mães* (Mothers' Clubs) throughout the Subúrbio. As the name readily indicates, these informal groups were

¹⁵¹ On the impact of the Church and the left on social movements in Bahia, see Espineira Gonzalez 1991; see also Mainwaring 1979.

¹⁵² In the words of a left activist who moved with her husband to Plataforma precisely to start this work: "We moved to Plataforma to start a (political) work here, when there was this notion that it would be important to organize the industrial workers. Then we started the Escola Profissional Suburbana. But the factory here was already deactivated. We started the school and had the support of Father K. here from the parish. This was in 1976. Actually, we tried to influence the community in the way of collectively working towards organization... We tried to raise people's consciousness at the school.

originally geared to mothers and homemakers who met weekly to learn different skills, notions of health and hygiene and the like and, in particular, to socialize.¹⁵³ In Plataforma, they also became a means for the mobilization of women for communitarian actions. Thus, with the assistance of the Social Action Program of the Parish of São Braz and other Church agencies, women from the Clubes de Mães became involved in the creation of a community school catering to preschoolers and ran on a cooperative basis.¹⁵⁴

This experiment in closer parental involvement in school affairs instigated a group of mothers who also had older children attending a local public school, into denouncing its deplorable conditions. The building was in such a state that the teachers, fearing that one of the walls might fall down, were holding classes on the patio. Concerned for the safety of their children, these mothers began to mobilize others to fight for the needed repairs at the school. This eventually led to the creation of the *Associação de Mulheres de Plataforma-AMP* (Plataforma's Women's Association). As some of the women recall:

It was in 1977. We started because the school here, Escola São Braz, was falling apart which presented a clear risk for our children. So, a group of us mothers got together and decided to go to the Board of Education to ask for the needed repairs (member of AMPLA's Board of Directors).

But it was still during the dictatorship and there were all the limitations imposed by that. We tried to work around them.”

¹⁵³ On the Clubes de Mães in São Paulo see, for example, Sader 1988, Singer 1980.

¹⁵⁴ "In the Escolinha Comunitária the task of teaching is being undertaken by a team of mothers from the community who are receiving special training. This experience has shown the importance of incorporating the people from our own community in this activity even if they [still] lack the needed qualification. The community, or rather, the participating families feel free to evaluate the work of those in charge and thus become also interested in participating in the training even if on a less systematic basis (*Associação das Mulheres de Plataforma* 1980:12, my translation).

We got together because we felt the need, because we saw our children with no condition of studying, the school falling apart and the children in the patio, wasting the [school] year. We started to pass around petitions to take to the Board of Education. Later, we thought that it made no sense to have an association just of women, we needed a residents' association, [congregating] men and women (member of AMPLA's Board of Directors, in CEAS 1981:75, my translation).

Encouraged by the success obtained in solving the problem of the school--the building was promptly repaired--the women decided they could work towards finding solutions for many of the other problems affecting their neighborhood:

We mobilized other mothers and teachers and went to the *Secretaria* [Board of Education] to ask for a solution. We got it and thus discovered a way [to channel] other struggles" (In Magalhães et al 1990:70, my translation).

The contents of a letter dated 8/5/80, addressed to the Mayor of Salvador and signed by three of the women coordinating AMP at the time, indicate that from a group of 'concerned mothers' involved in the problem of the school, the Associação das Mulheres de Plataforma was actually expanding its horizons to take on 'bigger struggles':

As a member of the Federação de Sociedades de Bairros da Cidade de Salvador, our Association would like to remind you of the reivindications that our neighborhood presented to you on abril/80. As follows:

1. A petition with 2 thousand signatures reivindicating: more buses in the main route; other companies [to run them] and not just Ipiranga; new routes to Campo Grande, Barroquinha and Rodoviária. We also added the reivindicacion of a group of students who risk their lives everyday riding the precarious boats that link Ribeira-Plataforma, for a special route; the buses should ride until 1:00 AM; construction of the bus terminal as per the project discussed with the Prefeitura in October/1979.

2. A petition with 850 signatures [from residents] of Rua do Mabaço de Cima and Mabaço de Baixo reivindicating: the opening of the streets, sewage, pavementation and garbage collection.

3. Conclusion of the works in Ruas Santo Antonio, Esperança, Estrada do Cabrito, linking it to Avenida Ursula Catarino.

4. Construction of a Junior High (where the laundry is); the plant was discussed between residents and the Municipal Committee for Social Development on October/79 when it was promised that construction would begin in the second half of this year.

5. We also take this opportunity to reivindicare sewage systems and pavement for the following streets: Rua dos Tecelões, Paissandu, Iguaçú and Coqueiros (Arquivo da AMPLA).

When questioned why women instead of men took the initiative to organize and fight for improving living conditions in the neighborhood, members of the former *Associação das Mulheres* had this to say:

Women are more tuned in to the problems of the bairro. It is because we live these problems more closely. Most men leave early for work and only come back at night. They don't see what is happening and they don't have too much time to do all the work that is necessary like pass petitions around, go to the Secretaria and all these things. The women, that is, not all of the women because those that work in the street (trabalham na rua) also don't have the time, but most of the women are usually around most of the day and see what goes on (member of AMPLA's Board of Directors).

I think that women are more turned to their communities than men. It is not that men don't see the problems, there is no way you can live here and not see all the problems we face. They see the needs but they don't have the initiative to do something about it and many don't have the time, I guess. There are men working with us but when you look around and see who is really doing the work, you see women. It is probably because the problems affect the women more than men. Look, if a street is not paved when it rains it is a disaster. But guess who has to clean up afterwards; it is always the women (member of AMPLA's Board of Directors).

However, despite these justifications, in 1979, two years after the *Associação das Mulheres* had been created, the women deliberated for changing its name to *Associação de Moradores de Plataforma* -AMPLA

(Residents' Association of Plataforma) so as to mobilize the men.¹⁵⁵ In explaining this move, the women claimed that the problems faced by the residents were too numerous and diverse; therefore, it became necessary to amplify their resources. But they have also admitted that they felt insecure in dealing with and confronting public organs and authorities. It was believed that the men not only had more experience but would also show greater authority and slyness in these matters; it was only fair and just that they too embraced their struggles.

Of course, women's fears were not unfounded. Women have always been identified with the home sphere and the passage from the 'private' world of the family into the world of 'public' affairs is not easily accomplished. Surely, it may be argued that in the popular sectors women's domains are not strictly confined to the realms of the home. As Alda Britto da Motta (1993:417-418, my translation) well reminds us, as "organizers and providers of domestic consume, they necessarily enter in contact with those that offer goods and services and with the State as provider of collective services." Women thus have transit in the intermediary sphere between 'private' and 'public'--or in the 'social' sphere according to Britto da Motta (1991, 1993) and Lobo (1987)--such as the space of the *bairro*. This provides the means for women to cross over the border into the

¹⁵⁵ Although AMPLA was founded in 1979, it did not become formally 'institutionalized' until a year later, in 1980, which explains why in addressing the Mayor in the letter reproduced in the text, they still signed it as Associação das Mulheres de Plataforma.

'public' world.¹⁵⁶ However, as Elizabeth Jelin further adverts, their 'public' appearance tends to be 'transitory':

Given the organization of the family and the sexual division of labor, which impede women's public participation because of their domestic responsibilities and the ideological burden of femininity, it would seem that women participate more frequently in protest movements which arise at particular critical moments than in more long lasting, formal and institutionalized organizations, which involve greater responsibilities and commitment of time and energy (as well as opposition from their male partners) (1990:8).

Even when such constraints can be overcome, women may further encounter if not necessarily open opposition to their presence in the 'public' world, for certain difficulties in legitimizing it, as seen in the case of women's participation in the strike movements. Indeed, the case of Plataforma women exemplifies this situation. Their association met with opposition in the process of articulating the creation of the Federação das Associações de Bairros de Salvador-FABS. At the time, most of the other neighborhood associations were still headed by men while Plataforma's was clearly a women's association. In the words of a community leader:

AMPLA was forged as a women's organization, it only became a 'residents' association' two years later... There was a large presence of women and we believed that women should not have to struggle for the neighborhood alone, men also had an obligation. So we decided to *ampliar* (expand), like '*ampla*'. But our association always had a majority of women ... I followed closely what happened in other neighborhoods, both in reactivating their associations and in creating new ones...The process during the 1970s was in the hands of men. Our association had an influence on FABS, it took part in the process of creating it--and this, in turn, had an influence in changing our association to 'residents' association'; FABS was a coalition of residents' associations, not of women's associations.

¹⁵⁶ Maxine Molyneux (1985) points out, for instance, that 'combative motherhood' is neither a novelty in human history nor a privilege of women of the working classes.

With the creation of AMPLA, men joined it and were elected to the first board of directors. However, as many who witnessed the process have confided, this first board of directors conducted AMPLA both with authoritharism and indolence. Once in power, men quickly established a 'sexual division of labor.' They gave the orders and distributed the tasks; but they were never available for meetings with governmental officials nor for public collective actions. Indeed, with the noted exception of those instances which involved meeting with an 'important' politician and/or in which the presence of the media in the action was ensured beforehand, men kept themselves away - atop and distant from the daily workings and all the work of the association. Women, in turn - though away from the directive posts and hierarchically subordinated to the men - continued to conduct all the process of mobilization and organization but without taking any major part in the top decisions. Furthermore, it not only fell upon them to do the busy work of organizing and leading the rallies and demonstrations, but also to deal with and hold their footing through the bureaucratic labyrinth of governmental organs and their invariably uncooperative functionaries.

However, working under the administration of men became a valuable experience for the women involved and for AMPLA as a whole. On the one hand, they not only became increasingly aware of their own strength and capabilities, gradually losing their fears of facing and dealing with the 'public' world but, more importantly perhaps, they began to question the hierarchy between the sexes in the 'public' as well as the

'private' world.¹⁵⁷ On the other hand, the experience with 'authoritarianism' in the association made those involved aware of the risks that were incurred in building an organization that propounded to be 'communitarian and democratic' on the basis of a hierarchical structure. This experience brought to light the importance of collective deliberations and of shared responsibility. It has since led the members of the association in trying new forms of organization that could contribute to the dilution of the hierarchical distribution of power and the distinction between 'base' and 'leadership'.¹⁵⁸

One of the forms in which the women from AMPLA found to democratize the activities of the association and respond more closely to the needs of the residents was to 'consult the bases' (*consultar as bases*) by means of a survey. This, of course, was not a novelty in neighborhood movements. It had been used by the coalition of Clubes de Mesas in Sao Paulo a few years before with considerable success.¹⁵⁹ And following their footsteps, AMPLA also sought the assistance of local organizations (CEAS and the Bahian Medical Association) in elaborating the project but made sure that the survey - which covered more than 300 households - was conducted by the women themselves. This procedure became an important vehicle for mobilizing other women into joining the association while, at

¹⁵⁷ As Britto da Motta (1993) observed, in familiarizing the political women also politicize the private world of the family.

¹⁵⁸ The 'board of directors' at AMPLA today operates as a 'coordinating council'. For a more detailed discussion, see Magalhães et al 1990.

¹⁵⁹ The surveys conducted in different neighborhoods led to the Movimento Contra a Carestia-MCC (Movement Against the High Cost of Living) which expanded from the periferia of Sao Paulo to other state. On the Movimento Contra a Carestia see, for example Singer 1980, Sader 1988.

the same time, enabled AMPLA to gain a greater grasp of the problems affecting the bairro.¹⁶⁰

In the survey, residents were asked to list, in order of importance, what they believed the association should attempt to secure for their neighborhood. The results obviously reflected the fact that most of the interviews were conducted during the day when more women than men are found at home. At the top of the list by a large margin appeared daycare centers, followed by a health center, sewage systems, more schools, recreation areas, and legalization of the lots. The demand for daycare centers spoke closely to the needs of the women at AMPLA as well as to their previous experience in the *Escolinha Comunitária*. They immediately began to work towards the construction of a communitarian day care center. To that end, they secured from the Parish of São Braz the donation of a lot next to the Church. And with the assistance of CEAS, a project was elaborated and sent to different national and international organizations to obtain funds to cover its construction and the training of local women to run it. The project was approved and received the solicited funds from different organizations (MISEREOR, CEBEMO and Ford Foundation). Nevertheless, construction costs had gone up and the solution found by the women was to mobilize the community to build the daycare center by means of *mutirão* (joined efforts). In the words of women who took part in this effort:

¹⁶⁰ For a discussion of the results of this survey see CEAS 1981

"...little kids, bigger kids, they all worked. You should've seen the little ones carrying the bricks!

...everybody helped there, those who could brought something to help--a pot of beans, or rice, to feed the others" (In Magalhães et al 1991:71).

Two years after plans were elaborated, the daycare center was finally inaugurated (on August/82) amidst much celebrating in the neighborhood, the events being amply reported in the local media (*A Tarde* 9/19/82, *Jornal da FABS* 8/85). Tending to 120 of the neediest children in the neighborhood, the center was initially staffed by a team of 33 women associates who were paid with funds provided by the Ford Foundation. The *Creche Comunitária* became the hallmark of AMPLA's struggles, tipping off movements for creches in other neighborhoods throughout the Subúrbio. However, fifteen months later it would be temporarily closed for lack of funds (*A Tarde* 12/5/83). The problems involved were summarized in a report published by the *Jornal da FABS* which obviously endorsed AMPLA's actions:

After a year, the money provided by the Ford Foundation, as already anticipated, began to run out. With the diminishing funds, problems began to emerge as to the [lack of] discipline among the staff (because of their great lack of experience)...

The first step decided upon by the coordination in a meeting was to make cut among the staff, all of whom were members of AMPLA. Manipulated by political forces opposing the Organized Community, the monitors who were dismissed moved a labor suit against AMPLA which, in turn, had established no contract with the team of monitors since they were volunteers. In face of so many problems, the members of AMPLA, in a large meeting, decided to temporarily close down the daycare center (*Jornal da FABS*, August/85:3, my translation)

The problem with the daycare center grew into a major crisis within AMPLA itself. It revealed that the work in which they were engaged had

different meanings for different people undertaking it; objectives and goals would have to be redefined.¹⁶¹ More importantly perhaps, it exposed the existence of rivalry within its midst as well as opposition against the association in the neighborhood.¹⁶²

At the same time, however, the crisis situation showed that spirit of solidarity and cooperation still prevailed. To guarantee the reopening of the center, for instance, the remaining monitors decided to work precisely as volunteers (without pay) at least until the financial problems were solved. Likewise, people young and old alike collected money in street tolls and engaged in fund-raising activities of all sorts, thus demonstrating their support for the work of the association.

In an attempt to solve the problem, the women from AMPLA began to petition the Mayor's Office that the center monitors be hired as city employees. However, to do so, the Mayoralty stipulated that the center be formally separated from AMPLA to become a governmental organ, a proposition which was vehemently refused by the membership. They insisted that the center be maintained under the community's control. As per the following statements registered by Magalhães et al (1990:72-73):

"with us here in the center we are sure that our children are well cared for."

"when the government takes over the people are cut short."

"we were the ones who built the center, we should be the ones who command it."

¹⁶¹ On the issue of the 'plurality of meanings' of social movements see Melucci 1989.

¹⁶² There are other associations in Plataforma congregated in UNEPLA. See Tribuna da Bahia 4/2/88.

The center was reopened within four months and has remained bound to AMPLA despite the constant shortage of funds to run it. To this day, in fact, the center is the central focus of AMPLA's activities and concerns. It is also AMPLA's emblem in the community; most people refer to the association by 'the women from the center' than by AMPLA.

While the problem of the daycare center unfolded, however, the women from AMPLA were also waging another battle-- for the construction of a health center in the neighborhood-- which would last for nearly five years. This long process began in May/81 with the realization of a debate, organized by AMPLA, on issues regarding 'health and sanitation' in the Subúrbios to which were invited to speak representatives of different health associations (*A Tarde* 4/5/81). Following this debate and with the assistance of these organizations, AMPLA elaborated a project for the creation of a health center that was presented to city and state organs. The ins-and-outs of the path of the struggles that followed can be traced through articles appearing in the local media throughout those years. On 6/23/81, for instance, the newspaper *A Tarde*, reports that 'Plataforma Wins Health Center' ("Plataforma ganha Centro de Saúde"). However, it was only a year later that construction of the Center was started: "After an intense struggle by the local residents, construction of the Centro de Saúde de Plataforma is finally initiated" (*A Tarde* 8/14/82). But two years later, though the building had for long been erected, the center had yet to start operating as witnessed in the contents of an article appearing in *A Tarde* entitled "Plataforma's Health Center with no Date for

its Inauguration" ('Posto Médico de Plataforma sem prazo para inauguração'):

The Bureau of Health [*Secretaria da Saúde*] has no prevision for the inauguration of the Health Center in Plataforma, built for over a year and a half, nor intends to consider the indications presented by the community for those that will be hired to staff it. This task is the prerogative of the leadership of PDS, among them the ex-congressman Lourival Evangelista and the President of the State Congress, Luís Eduardo Magalhães. This information was given to members of the Associação de Moradores de Plataforma yesterday afternoon by Nelson Barros, the Head of the Bureau ('secretario') (*A Tarde* 2/29/84, my translation).

To pressure for the opening of the Center, AMPLA led a large protest rally which counted with the presence of representatives of different associations (*A Tarde* 7/12/84). But the Center would only be inaugurated on January/85. In the opening ceremony, the women from AMPLA were there to protest. The women had fought for the Center and yet, when it was finally opened--in a ceremony which counted with the presence of governmental authorities and local politicians--AMPLA was not only ignored but more importantly, those speaking on stage claimed to themselves the credit for "giving to the people of Plataforma a health center."

More than any other struggle, in fact, the fight for the health center exposed the women to the 'nitty-gritty' of the politicking involved in the relations between the State and neighborhood associations as well as to the constant attempts by opportunistic politicians to manipulate them to their own benefit. All of this has reinforced women's negative attitudes towards 'politics.' When they refer to their work, to their struggles, the women

stress the notion of 'community politics'. In this manner, they try to distinguish what they do from 'politics' in general which many refuse to be a part. Their attitudes find counterparts in many other groups of women involved in neighborhood-based struggles (Caldeira 1990, Britto da Motta 1991). Indeed, as in Elizabeth Jelin's considerations, they too

(...)clearly distinguish what they do and what they categorize as 'political', that is, between the immediate interests of the neighborhood 'of the people' and something distant and strange that takes place in another sphere 'between them out there.' The struggle for power involves a struggle for personal interests and is 'theirs'; 'ours' involves struggling for collective interests, for needs (1990:191).

Coalitions and Alliances

By 'community politics' the women of AMPLA understand not only working for their own community but also joining those struggles which though not necessarily neighborhood-based, can be perceived as being to their interest, that is to say, they embrace those struggles that seek the improvement of the living conditions of the population as a whole. This is what is understood by the women as 'general struggles'.

During the late 1970s and early 1980s, these struggles in Brazil centered primarily on the fight for the end of the military rule and return of democracy. They mobilized large sectors of the population culminating with the immense festive rallies and demonstrations staged all over the country for the immediate re-establishment of 'direct' elections for the presidency--i.e., the *diretas* demonstrations. This was the context in which many social movements flourished in Brazil, collective actions multiplied, and a new notion of *cidadania* (citizen hood) and citizens' rights was

simultaneously forged.¹⁶³ This was also the moment in which different coalitions began to be formed in Salvador as part of what has become known as *Movimento Popular* (popular movement) (cf. Espineira Gonzalez 1991). AMPLA played an important part in the creation of several of them.¹⁶⁴

Involvement in these struggles and coalitions has had an obvious effect in the manner the women now conceptualize the needs of the neighborhood. Consonant with the new notion of citizenship (*cidadania*) that was forged in the process of re-democratization, the women have redefined their demands: neighborhood needs have become rights (*direitos*) which Plataforma residents, as citizens, should not simply reivindicade but 'demand.'¹⁶⁵

It is with this understanding that the women of Plataforma have also played a leading role in the mobilization of the different women's groups in the Subúrbio. According to women leaders, the initiative to mobilize them originated at the time FABS was being created when the women from AMPLA pressured for the inclusion of a Women's Commission in the organization. Although these women's groups were numerous and active in their neighborhoods, they had no 'visibility' within the *Movimento Popular* as a whole. Several attempts were thus made to congregate the women. One

¹⁶³ For discussions of social movements and the consolidation of democracy in Brazil, see, for example, Cardoso 1988, Alvarez 1990, Durham 1984.

¹⁶⁴ For example, *Movimento dos Desabrigados de Salvador* (Homeless Movement of Salvador), *Associação de Cooperação Comunitária das Áreas Problemas de Salvador* (Association of Communitarian Cooperation of the Problem Areas of Salvador), Comitê Contra a Fome de Salvador (Committee Against Hunger of Salvador) and, in particular, FABS. As D.Josefina explained, joining these coalitions is the means by which the "weak (os fracos) unite to fight the strong ones (os fortes)."

of such attempts was the *Encontro das Mulheres* (Meeting of the Women) held in 1979 in Escada (a neighborhood within the sub-district of Plataforma), which brought together 37 women representing not only neighborhoods of the Subúrbio but other poor areas of Salvador as well.

As apparent in the proceedings of this meeting, however, at that particular moment issues dealing specifically to women's interests were not of great concern in the minds of participants nor for the organizers. As witnessed in the list of questions they presented to the participants for discussion:

1. Why the majority of the people earns the minimum wage
2. What are the consequences of the High Cost of Living for:
health, education, family, community
3. Unemployment causes hunger. What can we do about it
4. What can we do to lower the prices of goods
5. Why are prices at the stands higher
6. What can we do to change this situation (AMPLA 1979:1).¹⁶⁶

However, although the focus of the discussions lied elsewhere, the issue of vindicating daycare centers was brought up. Indeed, among the many proposals that came out of the *Encontro das Mulheres*, that for mobilizing the communities towards the fight for daycare centers was the only one that was carried out. In particular, this proposal was encamped by FABS and has since become the major issue mobilizing the Women's Commission.

On April of 1983, FABS sponsored the first *Encontro da Mulher Suburbana* (Suburban Women's Meeting) which was defined as a means of

¹⁶⁵ On social movement and the construction of the notion of 'cidadania', see Durham 1984.

"searching for a collective solution to the problems faced by the women in the Subúrbio" (*Jornal da FABS*, August 1985:3). However, it was not until the realization of the third meeting, held in 1985, that issues dealing more closely to the 'specific struggles' began to gain greater attention. In preparation for that Encontro, the Women's Commission held several small meetings and reported that "these meetings have counted with the large participation of *companheiras* who begin to awake to the need for women to fight for their rights and their emancipation" (*Boletim Informativo da Comissão de Mulheres da FABS* 1985:2, my translation).

Nevertheless, the major thrust towards a greater emphasis on women's issues in the Suburbio would only be given in 1987, with the mobilizations that surrounded the drawing of a new constitution for the country. Women's groups all over Brazil were mobilized at that moment in order to defend the inclusion of women's rights in the constitution.¹⁶⁷ In Salvador, as in other major cities, a Women's Forum was created and the different groups and organizations that joined it--among them AMPLA--participated in debates, petition drives, rallies and other public manifestations. This process was maintained throughout the drawing of the new state and municipal constitutions, providing the basis for a greater articulation and cooperation among women's groups--feminist and non-feminist alike--in the city. Through this articulation--such as the one

¹⁶⁶ It is apparent from the discussion questions that the meeting had as a major objective the mobilization of the women for the Movimento contra a Carestia. On this movement, see Singer 1980, Sader 1988.

¹⁶⁷ On women's movements in Brazil see for example Sarti 1989, Alvarez 1990, Costa & Sardenberg 1994, Saffioti 1988.

existing since then between AMPLA and NEIM--efforts have been conjugated towards creating forums of discussion centering on women's issues towards the Subúrbio. No doubt, these efforts (in which my own have been included) if not necessarily contributing directly to the process of construction of the collective identity of the women of the Subúrbio as 'fighters,' have certainly had a considerable influence in the shaping of their discourse.¹⁶⁸

The Fight Against União Fabril

We come back then to our first 'scene' in this dissertation: the women from AMPLA gathered at the mayor's office, demanding to be heard in their struggles against União Fabril – and not as their 'boss' but now solely as their 'landlord'. Indeed, they have come full circle, from sitting on the sidelines during their struggles as factory workers, to taking full leadership in the community current confrontation with their former bosses.

If we may recall, in the photo described at the beginning of this work, D.Elenita and D.Luciana, two former factory workers who in the past stopped their machines to go on strikes, but did not take an active role in them, are now in the forefront of the community's fight against União Fabril to gain control over the properties where their homes sit. In the more recent past, they fought for schools, daycare centers and health

¹⁶⁸ But note should be made that to a great extent, this influence has been limited to the leadership of the women's movement in the Subúrbio. See, for example, Sardenberg & Costa 1993.

centers for their families. And they have also taken part in movements for women's rights. Now, then, it is time for them to confront – and win over – União Fabril!

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Conclusion

Introduction

Historically, the emergence of the factory system has been so closely entwined with the emergence of the cotton manufacturing industry that it is often almost impossible—if not unwarranted—to try to separate their early histories. This holds true not only for the ‘history of industrialization’ as a whole but also for the ‘histories’ of the development of industry in different countries. In most instances, in fact, it is usually the establishment of cotton mills that marks the first spurts of industrialization. And it is usually among textile workers that one is to find the first generations of the nascent urban proletariat.

The history of the rise of industry in Brazil is not an exception; it also begins with the establishments of the first cotton mills. Most of these mills were created from the mid-1800s onward and relied primarily on a female labor force. As seen in Chapter Three, they also commonly offered company housing to the employees and their families, operating on a factory/workers’ villa system.

Fábrica São Braz, the mill focused in this study, was a case in point. Founded in 1875 and set in Plataforma, a suburb of the city of Salvador in Bahia, Fábrica São Braz operated on such a system for nearly a century. Workers lived in company housing and lots in the “backyard of the factory” where they fell in love, raised their children, struggled, died and

were buried. However, those who lived through the closing of the factory in 1959 and remained in Plataforma, have witnessed its transformation from a relatively isolated suburb inhabited primarily by families whose members worked at the factory, to a densely populated poor neighborhood of Salvador, presently besieged by soaring rates of unemployment, violence of all sorts, and an acute precariousness of urban infrastructure.

In this work, I retraced the ‘making and unmaking’ of Plataforma as a *vila operária* as seen from the perspective of the women and men who were a part of that process. In particular, I have tried to reconstruct and analyze work relations and everyday life of women and men textile workers in this community. I have also retraced the transformation of this neighborhood and of Fábrica São Braz, from 1875 when it was created, through the 1960s when it was finally closed as part of the more encompassing changes engendered by the economic development of the Salvador metropolitan area.

In reconstructing these processes, I have attempted to demonstrate that women and men experienced factory work differently, had distinct domains of influence, and faced different struggles. Indeed, patriarchal gender ideology and, in particular, the emphasis on women’s domesticity put at the service of industrial paternalism, acted as a dividing line within the workforce, blurring class allegiances and blocking women’s access to the protection and power of the unions.

Factory and Family

Feminists have often argued that women's participation in wage work cannot be dissociated from their domestic roles. It must be regarded in light of gender ideology encoded in the bourgeois family-household model which assigns to men the role of provider and to women that of a dependent 'nurturer' (Barret 1980). At the same time that it allocates women to 'domesticity' it also makes them attractive to capital as a 'cheap' source of labor. Moreover, because of their subordinate position in the family – and their supposed 'natural' docility – women have been preferred over men as they were expected to conform more readily to the process of 'domestication' of the worker to the factory system.

I have contended in this work that this rationale underscored the experience of women workers at Fábrica São Braz throughout its entire history. As outlined in Chapter Five of this dissertation, the workforce at this mill was made up primarily of women. According to payroll records for 1945, for example, women represented 83.5% of all workers in the mill. Their presence was even more impressive when only workers in the production line (spinners and weavers and directly related occupations) were concerned: women amounted to 91.2% of these workers. Moreover, the analysis of the female workforce included in the sample of 385 workers drawn from employees' records revealed that it was highly homogenous. For example, 49.7% of women in the mill force were under the ages of twenty-five (Table 5.6); 82.8% were Plataforma residents (Table 5.10);

40.3% were natural of Plataforma as well (Table 5.11)/ and 84.5% were either black or brown (*pardo*, Table 5.12).

Nevertheless, in accordance with the precepts of the patriarchal division of labor within the mill, the chain of command was essentially white, male, and older. Indeed, as I have shown in Chapter Six, white men occupied all the supervising positions, especially those of *mestre* (overseer) and *contramestre* (assistant), who were known to be ‘ruthless’ with the operatives, and, not rarely, sexually harass them. Patriarchal gender ideology was also expressed in the naturalization of the gender divide in the workplace. It was manifested in the assignment of tasks and occupations according to the ‘natural’ attributes of the sexes, in the lower wages and lack of opportunities for advancement and even horizontal mobility offered to women as opposed to men, and in the domestication of women to the more docile behavior expected of the female sex. While ‘misbehaving’ on the part of men was tolerated (perhaps because men were seen as being ‘naturally’ more unruly), women were dismissed at the first showing of insubordination. If, then, on the one hand, the employment of women in the mill broke away from patriarchal family morality which assigned to women a domestic role, on the other, the gender divide at play in the workplace sustained those principles, ensuring that women remained in a subordinate position.

However, it is my contention that a contrasting – even contradictory – situation emerged in the domestic sphere. Indeed, the mill’s greater reliance on a female labor force enhanced the position of women in their

households. In particular, a right to a house or house lot and a paycheck made other members of the domestic group dependent on women. Thus, despite the sustaining at the level of representations of the dominant model of the family and ensuing gender roles which accorded to men the role of head as providers, in the families studied, this role was more often fulfilled by the women. On the one hand, men's jobs were usually unstable, rarely paying them a 'family wage', and thus obliging other members of the family-households to join the labor market to meet household needs. On the other hand, the greater availability of jobs for women and girls in the factory, promoted their incorporation in the labor market at an early age, while the 'open door' policy at work in the factory as well as the availability of maternity leaves, a nursery, and the help of relatives and neighbor women, allowed women to continue working throughout their reproductive years. This did not alter the gender division of labor in the domestic sphere in that domestic tasks remained a female 'prerogative'. However, in granting women greater economic independence, women's work in the factory contributed to the undermining of the rule of the father/husband and to the emergence of a more egalitarian pattern of gender relations among couples.

As I have demonstrated in Chapter Nine, to this effect also contributed the higher incidence of consensual unions as opposed to 'legal marriages' among the families studied. Even if some of the consensual unions were in fact long-lasting, and might, in time, be legalized, the practice of 'serial monogamy' in that women would have different partners

during their life time was actually common. That as factory workers women had access to company housing, and to renting the homes in their names, gave them greater autonomy in ending consensual relationships. It also reinforced the tendency towards matrilocal unions and the constitution of matrilocal extended households and ensuing matrifocal families, already common among the Bahian working classes. To be sure, this did not incur in a rejection of the dominant model of the family and ensuing gender roles. However, while this model remained as an 'ideal' model, it was redefined according to the material conditions of existence of the families studied.

Gender, Class, and Protest Revisited

It is not unwarranted to believe that this situation was reinforced by – while simultaneously contributing to – the reproduction of industrial paternalism. Indeed, this study shows that the system of 'patriarchal capitalism' which had characterized early industry in Brazil, particularly in the area of cotton textile manufacturing, was maintained in Bahia well through the first half of this century. At Fábrica São Braz, it was grounded on the concentration of industrial capital and ownership of territorial property in Plataforma in the hands of the Catharino family, who founded and still controls Companhia Progresso & União Fabril da Bahia. As outlined in Chapter Four, this system was sustained by the exercise of paternalistic dominance which extended beyond the gates of the factory into the domestic sphere and the community-at-large through the provision

of company-owned housing, schooling, a general store and other 'benefits' to the workers and their families, as well as through the patronage of different events in the social life of the community.

In general, however, as delineated in Chapter Six, work conditions at the factory were harsh, wages low, and the code of conduct for employees strict and rigidly enforced. Violations were met with immediate suspensions and, often, with subsequent dismissals. Yet, these punishments were enacted by those in the lower echelons of command, thus preserving the image of Comendador Bernardo Catharino, head of União Fabril from the mid-1920s until 1944, as that of a benevolent patron, still remembered by some of his surviving employees and long-time residents as the 'true father of Plataforma.'

In Chapter Seven of this dissertation, it was seen that the era of Comendador Catharino—regarded by workers as a time of 'community and plenty' in Plataforma—came to an end with his death at precisely the same moment in which, in response to World War II market demands, textile production was increased in all major factories throughout Brazil. Workers' rights were considerably restricted during this period in the name of 'national security'. Following the end of the war and the lifting of these restrictions, workers' protest gained momentum all over Brazil. This marked the moment in which workers at Fábrica São Braz began to 'unmask' the supposed benevolence of their patrons, joining the strikes called by textile and weavers' unions in Bahia.

However, information regarding these strike movements and from those in which preceding generations of workers had engaged comes more readily from written sources than from former workers interviewed in the course of this study. They have no 'social memory' of the earlier movements. More importantly, their recollections of the strikes that occurred during the years they themselves were working in the factory are generally vague and fragmented.

What is particularly striking, however, is the clear distinctions observed in the memories of the women as opposed to the men regarding these movements. Actually, it is women's memories that tend to be more fragmented and to cast these movements within a 'negative' frame. Whereas men not always agreed as to which were the major strikes, they remember the years they took place, they are assertive as to the aims of the movements, and they speak of positive results. Women, in contrast, have shown little recollection and no apparent interest in discussing the strikes. They claim ignorance as to the objectives of these movements and question their results. Indeed, when they do speak of the strikes, they usually recall only the 'confusion' and the 'violence' that went along with it.

As James Fentress & Chris Wickham (1992:xi) point out, social memory is often selective and 'inaccurate'. However, that the memories of these women differ from that of men is certainly an indication that their experience of these strikes was also imprinted on gender lines. In Fentress and Wickham's words:

“Women’s life stories give less, or different, space to ‘public’ history than men’s do, for the simple reason that women were less involved in it, or involved in ways that created different sorts of perspectives” (1992:141).

The women interviewed have actually denied any direct participation in the strikes. Yet, it is clear that in stopping their machines (as most did in fact affirm having thus proceeded), women obviously joined these movements even if unwillingly. The success of these movements at Fábrica São Braz rested largely on the women. They comprised the majority of workers in the production lines of the factory, therefore any strike would be doomed if women were not mobilized. As disclosed in Chapter Seven, the women affirm that they complied with ‘union orders’ and shut their machines. But they have added that they went straight home and stayed there for the duration of the strikes.

It could be said that the fact that these strikes were called by the unions explains in part why the women would tend to be marginalized in those movements. As far as I was able to ascertain, women had a very limited participation in the unions. Membership in these organizations was theoretically open to all adult men and women, but in practice, the paths towards their actual participation in organized labor were largely blocked by the workings of patriarchal gender ideology. As discussed in Chapter Seven, the women themselves internalized this ideology: they defined themselves primarily as homemakers and mothers, regarding matters related to the workplace as secondary concerns. Even when they thought otherwise and had time to participate in union affairs, women were often

barred from doing so by the men in their households. As they themselves have affirmed, “the unions belonged to the men, not to the women.”

Exclusion from unions, however, has not necessarily barred women in other circumstances from voicing their protest against low wages and poor working conditions and in staging strikes. In point of fact, women textile workers, in particular, have been noted for their ‘combativeness’, those of Lowell, Massachusetts figuring among the most celebrated. During the 1830s and throughout the 1840s, these women staged several successful strikes. However, in the second half of that same century strike movements led by women in Lowell mills tended to dwindle. Contrasting the level of mobilization demonstrated by women in the two different periods, Thomas Dublin (1986) has stressed that, in the first decade of the century, the workforce in those mills was not only essentially female, but also highly homogeneous. In addition, the housing of women in boardinghouses and the work conditions women experienced, contributed to the development of a strong sense of community among them, fostering their joint participation in collective actions.

For Dublin, the decrease in labor protest in the mills of Lowell after the 1850s is to be found both in the entry of male operatives, children, and immigrants (which rendered the work force more heterogeneous) as well as on the parallel dispersal of operatives out of company boardinghouses and into private boarding houses and tenements, where many lived with their families. This deterred the growth of a greater sense of ‘community’ among workers and women in particular, as they became not only more dispersed

and less dependent on each other, but dependent on their own households – and vice-versa, the households on their labor – than were the earlier generations of women workers in Lowell.

When we consider the apparent ‘lack of combativeness’ on the part of the *operárias* at Fábrica São Braz in light of Dublin’s interpretation of the situation in Lowell in the two distinct periods, some important points come to attention. Similarly to what Dublin observed for Lowell in the earlier period (i.e., up to the 1850s), the female workforce at Fábrica São Braz not only outnumbered the male force by a large margin but was also considerably homogeneous throughout the period focused in this work (1930s to late 1950s). However, unlike the earlier female workforce in Lowell, the women in Fábrica São Braz lived in separate households which depended not only on their wages, but particularly on their jobs in the factory for the securing of company housing. In this aspect, in fact, they resembled the female workforce in Lowell in the post-1850s.

It is well to point out, nevertheless, that while Dublin’s considerations shed light in the situation in Lowell in the two distinct period, they fall short of accounting for the mobilization of women workers in the neighboring textile town of Lawrence. According to Ardis Cameron (1985), despite coming from distinct ethnic groups and living in family-households in many cases similar to those described by Dublin for Lowell in the late 1800s, Lawrence women showed a high degree of mobilization for action. In January, 1912, for instance, upon learning that they were faced with a cut in pay, women operatives at the Everett Mill

started a major movement – the ‘Bread and Roses’ strike movements – that spread out to other mills and gained the support of their communities. As Ardis Cameron has described:

Throwing down their aprons and grabbing picker sticks, the women marched out of the mill and called for others to follow them. They stood on one another’s shoulders to shout orders, and sent ‘flying squadrons’ of men and women through all the other mills to recruit supporters and shut down machines. Carrying American and Italian flags, 3,500 marchers linked arms and stormed the city’s major mills, slashing power belts, smashing windows, and breaking down mill gates to release other workers. By January 13, 25,000 operatives had gone out. The ‘Bread and Roses’ strike of 1912 was under way (1985:43).

Let it be noted that contradicting predominant views in which the success of this movement has been attributed to the mobilizing strategies of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), Ardis Cameron emphasizes instead the role of women’s networks in the community as the ‘hidden’ forces for action. Cameron observes that women workers often lived in “densely crowded neighborhoods which surrounded Lawrence’s vast mill district.” Regardless of the type of households in which they lived – there were various different household arrangements in these neighborhoods – women’s “traditional domestic responsibilities such as child care, laundry, food preparation, sewing and nursing, also encouraged mutual support among female neighbors and kin, and secured the household as well as other communal spaces as women’s prerogatives” (1985:47). This worked so as to create bonds – neighborhood and kin based bonds – among women who worked in different mills as well as among women millworkers and non-workers alike. As such, the strike movements not only spread from mill to mill, but also engaged the support of the communities. For

Cameron, in fact, it was not the IWW that fueled women's militancy but precisely the reverse; that is to say, it was women's networking that boosted the actions of the unions.

Cameron's considerations gain importance insofar as the 'networking' she describes for Lawrence also was – and it still remains so – an important feature of women's life in Plataforma, as shown in Chapter Ten. Yet, even if this was the case, as far as one is able to gather from the testimony of former workers, the existing 'women's networking' was not tapped by the unions nor put to work in Plataforma by the women themselves to protest their own working conditions.

A possible explanation for that state of affairs may be drawn from Joy Parr's (1990) analysis of the movements that took place in 1949 in the Penman Mill of Paris, a town in the Province of Ontario, Canada. According to Parr, despite the 'less vigorous' efforts on the part of local unions in recruiting women as opposed to men, Penman's women workers showed high levels of militancy and mobilization. However, unlike the workforce in the Lowell mills studied by Dublin, that of Paris was neither homogenous nor were the women concentrated in special company housing. Moreover, Parr notes that in Paris the women more likely to support the strike and be more active in the unions were not young but instead, "on the average six years older than the men and four years older than the average among women employed by the firm" (1990:100). She also notes that whereas the men who were more active tended to be mostly

single, these 'older' women were usually married or widowed. According to

Parr:

While in their young years female workers had been fearful of the boss, as they took responsibility for raising children and running households, fear turned to disdain. They grew less tolerant of the petty tyranny and favoritism practiced by the foremen and lead hands, more confident of their own worth, more confirmed in their own sense of dignity and honor" (1990:101).

Unfortunately, it was not possible to check union records for the period outlined in *Plataforma*, making it difficult to assess how many women did in fact join the unions or what they averaged in terms of age brackets. However, it is known that a large proportion of the labor force consisted of young women. If we take Joy Parr's considerations into account, this could explain their 'non-participation.'

It is important to observe, nevertheless, that when we consider the examples cited above taken together, it becomes evident that women's mobilization for action can occur independent of whether they are young or older, single or married, live in boardinghouses or private homes with their families, have different or similar backgrounds, and are more or less sought by union recruiters. What seems to be at play are not these factors in and of themselves, but whether, in specific instances, they create the conditions for the flourishing of a sense of 'community' – for the identification of a commonality of interests and goals – as well as for greater autonomy for the women to join the movements.

In this respect, it pays to consider Louise Tilly's (1896) comparative analysis of women's collective action in distinct contexts in France. Tilly

looks at women involved in ‘typical proletarian situations’ which involve a ‘mix’ of “organization of production and household division of labor”: a) household manufacturers of linen in Cambrésis; b) silk industry in Lyon; c) textile industries in the north of France; d) mining and metalworking towns; e) and the tobacco industry. She regards them as constituting a continuum of contexts, from those in which women are least likely to participate in collective actions, represented here by the case of the Cambrésis, to those in which conditions favor such actions – as exemplified by the tobacco industry. In Louise Tilly’s analysis, not only circumstances promoting commonality of interests, but also the degree to which the division of labor in the household gave the women “the opportunity to act autonomously” (1986:39) were determinant factors.

Of particular interest to the purposes of this work are Louise Tilly’s accounts of the participation of women textile workers of the North in the strike movements that took place there during the nineteenth century. Tilly (1986:32-33) observes that, in general, women in the northern textile mills joined other workers in their strikes, some women being even imprisoned along with the men. However, she also notes that “women workers were in a difficult position in the northern mills. Male workers accused women of competing, at low wages, for men’s jobs” (1986:33). More importantly, women workers were “especially vulnerable” in those mills since they were young and faced great competition for jobs with other equally young women. Those who joined strikes could be easily replaced (as in some

instances they were). Besides, these young women (whether single or married),

(...) lived with families. Their families claimed their wages and loyalty and could influence, particularly among young women, their decisions about striking. That women were proletarian wage earners was not sufficient to promote their participation in collective action parallel to that of men. This was due less to personal characteristics, such as the female passivity so often invoked by contemporaries, than to situational factors. Young single women, in particular, were less likely to strike because of their economically vulnerable position, their relatively brief commitment to industrial employment, their lack of opportunity to develop solidarity on or off the job, and finally, their reliance on the family for personal wellbeing” (Tilly 1986:33-34).

Certainly, similarly to the instances observed by Louise Tilly, one cannot attribute to a supposed ‘female passivity’ nor to women’s lack of solidarity towards fellow workers, their less than active roles in the strike movements staged at Fábrica São Braz. Actually, as noted in Chapter Seven, women workers there showed a potential for ‘mobilization’. Strong bonds of solidarity among them were created and sealed in the shop floor through mutual help in the accomplishment of tasks and in ‘covering up’ and/or ‘sticking up’ for each other. Not rarely, in fact, friendships started at the factory were often extended beyond the gates and carried out throughout life, growing at times into relations of *compadrio* (or ‘*comadrio*’). Besides, that these workers were usually neighbors and in many instances also related through ‘real’ or fictive kin ties, probably strengthened the sense of community among them.

However, it must be emphasized here that nearly all the women who were interviewed, were still under the age of 25 - many still in their teens - when the strike movements here considered (post WWII) took place. In

addition to being young, they were also members of families who depended, not only on their wages, but often also on their situation as factory workers for access to company housing and the other ‘fringe’ benefits related to factory work. Let it also not be forgotten that some of these women were also mothers of young children. Work in the factory, even if under the poor conditions faced in the workplace, was preferable than seeking a job elsewhere. It made it easier for those women who lived in Plataforma to reconcile wage labor with their domestic roles. These factors probably combined so as to inhibit women’s more prominent participation in the strike movements.

Before drawing any further conclusions as to the attitudes of these women regarding strike movements in Plataforma, it pays to consider here Charles Tilly’s (1978:7) analysis of collective action – defined by him as a “groups’ application of pooled resources to common ends.”¹⁶⁹ For Charles Tilly, this is a process consisting of “five big components: interest, organization, mobilization, opportunity, and collective action itself.” Note that for Charles Tilly, ‘interests’ pertains to gains and losses that result from a group’s interaction with others, for example, between workers and capitalists. By organization, he refers to the aspect of a “group’s structure which most directly affects its capacity to act on its interests” (1978:7). Tilly’s concept of ‘mobilization’ applies to the process through which the

¹⁶⁹ It is well to note that Charles Tilly’s major concern in conceptualizing this model was to understand how collective mobilization ‘catapults into revolution.’ Yet, the model is not restricted to collective action of that port, not even to that of strike movements. Indeed, even the passing of a petition can be seen as a collective action as well.

group in question takes control of the needed resources for action, whereas ‘opportunity’ pertains to the group’s relationship to the external world – to situations in which putting the resources to work to common goals become more favorable. For collective action to occur, all of these conditions should be met.¹⁷⁰

Thus far in this discussion, we have assumed that, as workers, the women and men of Plataforma shared common interests, defined in terms of ‘gains and losses’ resulting from their interaction with their employers. Based on these assumptions, we have focused primarily on issues pertaining to ‘organization’ and ‘mobilization’, as per Tilly’s definitions. Yet, we must now ask: did the women in question perceive their interests to be similar to those of the men? Did they believe the unions to be acting on their behalf?

Charles Tilly (1981:15) has elsewhere observed that in considering collective actions we should take “the definitions and beliefs of the participants seriously.” This should also be valid for those that do not participate in these actions. Perhaps, then, the explanation given by the women themselves for shying away from the union and strikes deserves greater attention. The women affirmed that they did not “have the time” and, indeed, it fell upon them the burden of domestic tasks – and thus of a ‘double-day’ – robbing them of any free time to dedicate to such matters. But more importantly, they also have proclaimed that such matters were

¹⁷⁰ Not surprisingly, as James C. Scott (1985) has observed, collective actions on the part of workers are not as common as we may desire them to be. In this respect, see also Melucci (1989).

regarded as part of the 'dominion of men', not of women. Moreover, as it may be recalled, women such as D.Thelma and D.Nina firmly stated that the unions did not take women's problems into consideration. Not surprisingly, then, most of the former *operárias* interviewed demonstrated, if not outward disdain, for certain little concern for union affairs.

It is my thesis that the structuring of gender ideology and the sexual division of labor observed in Plataforma, both in the workplace as well as in the domestic sphere, contributed in the way of dividing the workforce along gender line, obscuring to women's eyes the commonality of interests that they, as workers, ultimately shared with their male colleagues. To this contributed the fact that women were often sexually harassed by their male colleagues and supervisors alike; they were commonly 'seduced and abandoned' by them when found to be 'with child'; and, not rarely, they had partners who failed to fulfill the role of 'providers' expected of them. Against this backdrop and, in particular, against the absence of strong male authority figures and providers at home, industrial paternalism found strong adherents among the women. It is not surprising then that the identification of Comendador Catharino as 'the father of Plataforma' was more commonly expressed by women instead of men.

In the past, therefore, the only collective manifestation in which women, as factory workers, took an active part was in the Bloco the Bacalhau, the festive celebration held on the Saturday preceding Carnaval when, at the end of the workday, they would leave the factory joined together, roaming through the neighborhood singing and dancing to the

beat of a band. As they passed, they would be joined by others on the streets, such that in the end, the 'Bacalhau' would turn into a celebration of the entire community.

As I pointed out in this work, the Bacalhau could be seen as a ritual representation of the role of women in the community. Just as the Bacalhau left from within the gates of the factory to cross the streets of the neighborhood, so too women's roles transverse across the boundaries between workplace, the community, and the family. In particular, women were the articulators of 'life in the backyard of the factory', building links between households and families through mutual help as well as through the organization and carrying out of the major religious events in the life of the community.

Change and Continuity

Within the last four decades, Plataforma has experienced significant changes engendered by the revitalization of Salvador's economy following the discovery of petroleum in the area and the subsequent creation of Petrobras and SUDENE. The economic development of the area has engendered a re-organization of the urban space. New roads were built linking the Subúrbio to the center of Salvador while real estate speculation displaced on the poor population towards the outskirts of the city, leading to the inflow of waves of new residents to Plataforma and surroundings. As seen in Chapter Eleven, along with the closing of the factory, this

development contributed to the de-characterization of Plataforma as a *vila operária* and emergence a *bairro de periferia*, a poor neighborhood.

In this work, I have shown that with the closing of the factory, most former factory workers experienced a process of *desobrerização*, that is to say, of ‘de-skilling’ in that most were not absorbed by the new industry developing in the area. This was especially true for the older generation of workers and particularly marked in the case of women. First, women had worked at the less skilled occupations in the production line in the mill, many of which were made obsolete with the development of new machinery and techniques appropriate to the production of synthetic textiles. Second, unlike the traditional cotton textile industry which had relied primarily on the employment of women, the petrochemical industry employs mainly men.

Moreover, that women had to seek jobs away from the neighborhood made the reconciling of wage work and the accomplishment of domestic tasks more difficult. This, allied to the non-absorption of women by the new industry in the area, left them with few options but that of resorting to the so-called ‘informal sector’. They became laundresses, domestic servants, petty-commodity producers, operators of food stands, and the like. More importantly, this break with their condition as industrial workers would be extended to the succeeding generations of women in the community. The daughters, and granddaughters, of former factory workers are no longer factory workers themselves.

The demise of the traditional cotton manufacturing industry in Bahia and the simultaneous rise of the petrochemical industry in the region, demarcate as well a moment of transition in Bahian labor history. The women and men who worked at Fábrica São Braz and in other similar textile mills and factories first established in the nineteenth century represent the ‘old’, the ‘traditional’ urban Bahian proletariat. This study has shown that this ‘traditional’ proletariat was essentially poor, female, black, illiterate, lived in *vilas operárias*, and was caught in the webs of industrial paternalism. In contrast, industrial workers in Bahia today – particularly those engaged by the petrochemical industry which demands a highly skilled work force – are overwhelmingly male, better educated, moved away from the poorer neighborhoods. Although still representative of the population of Salvador which is 85% black, these workers have experienced social mobility moving up into the so-called “middle-classes.” They are noted for creating labor unions that have demonstrated their high level of combativeness in strikes that have paralyzed the Petrochemical Pole in different occasions.¹⁷¹ They have, as such, guaranteed a ‘family wage’ and thus been able to materialize the ‘ideal’ model of the family: indeed, their women have retired to the confines of ‘domesticity’ (Guimarães 1988, 1996).

In Plataforma, as seen in Chapter Eleven of this dissertation, very few workers and their families have made this transition. The former

¹⁷¹ Among the numerous studies on industrial workers in Bahia today, see, for example, Agier (1990), Guimarães and Castro (1988, 1990a, 1990b), and Guimarães (1991).

workers here portrayed and many of their children and grandchildren have remained in the neighborhood. They are now part of the working masses inhabiting the overcrowded, poor neighborhoods in the outskirts of Salvador, still largely dependent on the income of their women.

Like their former employees, the ‘rational’ industrial bourgeoisie here represented by the Catharino family, owner of União Fabril, have not successfully branched out in to the petrochemical industry. Instead, União Fabril has taken advantage of the value upgrading of vast extensions of landed property attached to the old mills. Urban development in Salvador has fostered the shift of interest on the part of the company from industrial production to the real estate business. Indeed, the company still owns most of the land in Plataforma and environs and, as such, has not severed its ties with its former *vila operária*. It is now up to the people of Plataforma to free their neighborhood from the remaining bonds of industrial paternalism.

In this respect, it must be emphasized that the reconstruction of the history of Plataforma – from the closing of Fábrica São Braz until present days – will show that significant changes have taken place, not only in the make of its population, but specially in the kind of struggles the residents have waged. As we have seen in Chapter Twelve, Plataforma figures today as a leading force in the ‘popular movements’ on Salvador, in the struggles of the poor neighborhoods of the periphery for the needed public services. In these struggles, it is the women of Plataforma who have taken the leadership and been particularly active.

“Gendering” Labor History in Brazil

The winding, discontinuous, on-and-off path traced by the rise of industry in Bahia has for long drawn the attention of Brazilian economic historians. For the most part, however, the studies produced have focused on the analysis of the so-called *enigma baiano* (the Bahian enigma). They have tried to explain why and how after purging ahead in the 19th century as the leading province in the country in industrial enterprising, Bahia fell short of keeping up with the pace of industrial development registered in the South and Southeast regions.¹⁷² As such, little attention was paid to the fact that, despite the seeming process of ‘industrial involution’ (Tavares 1968) installed in Bahia in the first decades of the 20th century, some of the old mills survived the crisis, remaining in operation until relatively recent years. This was of consequence to studies in Bahian labor history. They have disregarded for the most part the ‘old’ urban proletariat, the women and men who were part of the history of early industrialization in the state. This is true even for the studies – the few ones – that have attempted to reconstruct the history of the old mills, such as in the case of Pamponet Sampaio (1975) and Waldir Freitas de Oliveira (1985). Although certainly commendable and valuable to the reconstruction of the rise of industry in the region, they have focused primarily on the class of industrial entrepreneurs, not on the workers.

In this respect, it is well to note that, for years, labor history in Brazil remained a very small, atrophied branch of Brazilian historiography,

characterized by two paths of inquiry which tended to grow widely apart. On the one hand were the works which delved primarily on the macrostructural determinants of class and class formation, attempting to answer if, when, where, and how (or why not) emerged in Brazil a bourgeoisie and an urban proletariat. On the other hand, stood those which taking class as a pre-given structural position ('class in itself'), sought to analyze the organization, ideology, and advancements of labor movements in Brazil. Labor history, then, was not a history of workers – just of their institutions (Hahner 1985). Moreover, as Vinicius Brant (1981) points out, the 'advancements' (or lack of) were often measured taking as model of reference the political movements of the European working classes, particularly those movements in the first half of the 20th century. The perspectives varied in that some were more optimistic (or less pessimistic) than others, however, "many of the analysis concentrated their attention on the similarities and differences between the reality and the model" (Brant 1981:10).

Following the paths traced by the studies of Michelle Perrot, Natalie Semon Davis and, in particular, E.P. Thompson, the 'new' studies have attempted to unravel and reconstruct the history of the Brazilian working classes. These studies have tried to unravel how workers 'experienced' the process of industrialization not simply from the perspective of their struggles but in its totality – in the workplace as well as in the domestic sphere, in their relations with employers as well as with fellow workers,

¹⁷² Among these studies, see for example, Tavares (1968) and Azevedo and Lins (1969).

and in the different ways that they have expressed their protest and celebrated life.¹⁷³ With few exceptions, however, these studies have focused on workers in the South and Southeast regions. Similar efforts should be directed to retracing the history of workers in other regions of Brazil.

This work has represented one such effort. My primary concern here was to reconsider and rethink the process of industrialization and class formation in Bahia from the perspective of the workers who were part of that history. This procedure has brought to light faces and facets of this process which, for the most part, have been ignored. In particular, it has revealed that the history of workers cannot be regarded as a ‘homogeneous’ process: it has not been the same for women as opposed to men. The gender divide resulting from the working of patriarchal gender ideology has profoundly marked the history of the workers. Brazilian labor history, then, must be ‘genderized.’

In this work I have made use of a gender perspective, delineating how gender articulates and intersects with class, age/generation, and racial constructions, to produce different experiences of industrial capitalism for men and women of the working classes. In the past, while Fábrica São Braz was still in operation, the articulation of these different social determinants kept women away from strike movements against União Fabril. In the last two decades, however, this articulation has operated

¹⁷³ Among the many studies that have followed this perspective, see, for example, Alvim (1979), Chalhoub (1986), Cunha (1989), Decca (1987), Engle (1989), Esteves (1989), and Leite Lopes (1988).

such that women, not only are now in the forefront of the present struggles against the same company, but also – and more importantly perhaps - are recognized throughout the city of Salvador for their activism in neighborhood-based movements as well as in local women's movements. I am proud to join hands with them in these struggles!

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2. Newspaper Articles

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29/01/89, “A Perigosa aventura de uma viagem de trem no Subúrbio.”

06/12/93, “Moradores querem deixar de pagar taxa à União Fabril.”

04/17/94, “Uma visão do início do século.”

10/22/94, “Salvador pode perder mais um dos símbolos da sua tradição”

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3. Archival Materials (all located at União Fabril)

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