

THE “POLACAS CARIOCAS”¹ JEWISH WOMEN PROSTITUTES AND THEIR MUTUAL AID ASSOCIATIONS²

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I. Introduction

“So, you want to know who we are?”

Thus began the meeting with Zelda, a lady in her eighties who had come to give body and voice to a research project. I had stumbled across her and her sister Celina on a sunny Sunday at the end of September 1993, during

1 “Carioca” refers to an inhabitant of the city of Rio de Janeiro; “polaca,” like “polack,” is a generically derogatory word for an Eastern European.

2 This text is a condensed version of my master’s dissertation (“Baile de Máscaras: as *polacas* num exercício de solidaridade e sociabilidade” [“Masquerade Ball: the *polacas* in an exercise of solidarity and sociability”]) defended before the Graduate Program in History at the Universidade Federal Fluminense on 11 November 1994. Here I concentrate specifically on the content of chapter 3 (“A irmandade da Caridade” [“The Fraternity of Charity”]), in which I analyzed the mutual aid society founded by a group of Jewish men and women in the city of Rio de Janeiro. During my research, I came across four other such societies (São Paulo, Santos, Buenos Aires, and New York). The first two are referred to in chapter 4 (“As moças de Chora Menino” [“The girls of Chora Menino”]) and the others are described in chapter 2 (“Reconhecendo o palco: alguns portos do trajeto” [“Recognizing the stage: a few stops along the way”]).

The dissertation was published in its entirety by Editora Imago on 1 September 1996, with the title *Baile de Máscaras — mulheres judias e prostituição. As polacas e suas associações de Ajúda Mútua* (Masquerade Ball: Jewish Women and Prostitution. The Polacas and their Mutual Aid Associations).

This text was translated to English by Benjamin F. Moser and reviewed by the Professors Nelson Vieira, from Brown University, and James Green, from California State University. I would like to thank them both, as well as Professor Margalit Bejarano, from the Hebrew University, for the efforts she put on having it printed on this book.

the ten Days of Awe, the most sacred time in the year in Judaism. According to tradition, between Rosh Hashanah, the New Year, and Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, the Book of Life is rewritten and “errors” can be erased. During this period, Jewish cemeteries throughout the world are full of visitors, and these ladies, too, were visiting their dead. However, they were in a place where visits are infrequent and where there have been no burials since 1970, although the cemetery is not yet full.

Zelda and Celina were in the carioca suburb of Inhaúma,³ Specifically, at the foot of the *favela do Rato Molhado* [“Slum of the Wet Rat”], in a cemetery containing the remains of 797 men, women, and children. Even more than in other Jewish cemeteries, a moral rule abides there that imposes silence and a sense of isolation.

The social exclusion of the place and its grave sites has some justification. For the Jewish writer and Nobel Prize laureate Isaac Bashevis Singer, who evoked the world of this group’s contemporaries in Eastern Europe, this separation demarcates polarities — positive and negative — within a community. He portrayed such a division clearly only in his last work. Writing about the Jewish world in his book *Scum*,⁴ Singer delved, even if not in depth, into a hidden part of the Jewish community, considered until today to be taboo. In this work, Singer returns to Wasaw of the turn of the century via a Polish Jew who immigrated to Argentina and then returned, longing and nostalgic, to his native land. In this text, Singer punishes his character. By telling of his journey and describing him as a pimp (not unique among Jews of his period) he condemns him to prison, something that was neither the rule nor the exception.⁵

In this respect, the present study, as much as Singer’s fiction, deals with an issue that has left deep impressions on certain segments of the world Jewish community: the existence of so many Jewish prostitutes in Europe and their later migrations to the Americas and the Orient, as well as the

3 A suburb (subúrbio) in Brazil is quite the opposite of what it is in the United States and is more comparable to a poor inner city. It is not exactly a slum, however, which is known as a *favela*.

4 Isaac Bashevis Singer. *Escória*. Rio de Janeiro, Editora Record, 1991.

5 It is interesting to note that the word *cáften* (Portuguese, pimp) has as one of its possible origins the *caftas* – long black coats – worn by Eastern European Jews.

pimping practiced by Jewish men and women. This “traffic in white slaves” has been addressed both historically⁶ and in world literature.⁷

The two parts of the issue — the existence both of Jewish prostitutes and Jewish pimps — are shrouded in silence and secrecy, a shameful memory for the Jewish community. Forgotten by some elements in the community, and eventually recalled in different forms of narrative, fictional or otherwise, the story of these women began in remote villages in Eastern Europe and even in the bigger cities — Odessa, Lodz, and Warsaw — from the middle of the nineteenth century to the first three decades of the twentieth. It ended in Western Europe — Paris and London — or in the Americas — New York, Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Santos, Montevideo — or in Africa, India, and China. In fact, in any place where immigration laws were still flexible and the market for prostitutes could accommodate such girls — the “exotic” Jewish women of Eastern Europe who became known in Brazil as *polacas*.

These women journeyed in a time and place of transition: around the turn of the century, from the poverty and religious persecution of the Old World to the modernity of the New. In the lands of American dreams, sweat, hard work, and little money could bring rapid fortunes. There were, however, secular traditions from the “old” world that remained part of the norms of this ethnic group and were brought to the promised lands by the immigrants. Thus, most accounts of the period, even the more recent

6 The most complete academic text on the subject, in terms of a global analysis of the phenomenon, is that of Edward Bristow, *Prostitution and Prejudice: The Jewish Fight against White Slavery, 1879-1939* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1982). With regard to Argentina, where the phenomenon became widely known and where police persecution had a greater effect, there are several important works, but one stands out, the most recent work of Donna J. Guy, *Sex and Danger in Buenos Aires: Prostitution, Family and Nation in Argentina* (Lincoln and London, University of Nebraska Press, 1991). The theme already received specific attention in the Brazilian case, as in the works of Margareth Rago, *Os prazeres da noite: prostituição e códigos de sexualidade feminina em São Paulo (1890-1930)* [*The pleasures of the night: prostitution and codes of female sexuality in São Paulo (1890-1930)*] (São Paulo, editora. Paz e Terra, 1991), and Lena Medeiros de Menezes, *Os estrangeiros e o comércio do prazer nas ruas do Rio de Janeiro* [*Foreigners and the pleasure trade in the streets of Rio de Janeiro*] (Rio de Janeiro: Arquivo Nacional, 1992).

7 As far as fictional analysis, the number of works is vast and includes both Jewish and non-Jewish authors, Brazilians and foreigners. I hope to have selected the majority of these in the bibliography of my book.

ones,⁸ focus on the phenomenon of the migration of Jewish women and their activities in low harlotry, championing a notion that such women were victims — that girls were tricked and so had to prostitute themselves, under the threats of unscrupulous men who lived off their earnings.

However, the true picture was somewhat different, and one must consider several relevant factors: First, it is known that there was prostitution among Jewish women in Eastern Europe. The number of brothels run by Jews and serviced by Jewish women is noted in censuses, which demonstrate their hegemony.⁹ Second, the economic misery and the pogroms forced migration among the community, which included not only the Jewish urban workers but many others who had no hope of work or a finding of better life in Eastern Europe. Third, the size of the dowry precluded the possibility that women could improve their situation through marriage. The importance of marriage between people of the same faith gave birth to the folkloric personality of the matchmaker. These individuals — men or women — contracted unmarried Jewish men in the Americas, sent them pictures of potential brides and arranged the matter — by marrying the girls. Many narratives, fictional or otherwise, link the traffic in prostitution with the marriage business. The poverty of families prevented greater control over the destinies of its members. Many of the women knew what was in store, and “chose” such a life. Fourth, they lacked the necessary skills for any kind of factory work and were desperate for a means to earn their livelihood. Fifth, there are innumerable stories of attempts to save these unfortunates when they arrived in the Americas; members of the Jewish community under the impression that these women were being hoodwinked, went to the ports to warn the girls that promises of marriage could be untrue and that they might wind up in

8 I am specifically referring to two works of historical fiction published recently that reinforced such ideas, linking their analysis to preconceived images. They are: A.P. Maryan, *Quem matou “Pierrot”?* [Who killed Pierrot?/] (Rio de Janeiro, ed. Cátedra, 1989), which was published based on reports of the district police chief Anésio Frota Aguiar on the customs in Rio de Janeiro in the thirties. The second is the work of Ester Largman, *Jovens Polacas* [Young Polacas] (Rio de Janeiro, ed. Rosa dos Ventos, 1992).

9 E. Bristow’s study (1982) informs us that in 1889, the Russian Empire listed 289 licenses for brothels. Of these, 203 (70%) belonged to Jews. In the same year, of the 36 authorizations for the practice of white slavery in the city of Kherson, on the Black Sea, 30 belonged to Jewish procurers.

whorehouses. However, neither the harsh conditions faced by the Jewish community, nor the absence of an official framework to offer these girls alternatives seems to have slowed the influx of unmarried Jewish women, many of whom wound up as prostitutes.

Certainly there are many different life stories, the number of stories being proportional to the population at the time, and one cannot characterize a single path and identify it as a model. Each story is different and only slight resemblances relate them within a broader context. In the final analysis, however, one common thread was a strong sentiment on the part of this underclass of being cut off and isolated from the “positive” side of the Jewish community. For Singer, the dead to whom Zelda and Celina were paying their respects were what he, reflecting the attitudes within the ethnic group, would call the scum of the carioca Jewish community.

The first Jewish cemetery in Rio de Janeiro was opened in 1916 in the suburb of Inhaúma, and most of the Jews — men and women — who were involved in the immigrant prostitution market, as prostitutes and/or procurers, are buried there.

To the extent that historians have addressed this phenomenon in Brazil, the analyses have centered either on the expulsion of foreigners for pimping,¹⁰ or on the universe of pleasure embodied in red-light districts, its codes and the regulatory functioning of medical police, or juridical institutions.¹¹

I am suggesting that the subject be approached in another way. Using the metaphor of a masquerade ball, I shall look at the internal nature of the business,¹² and attempt to understand the universe of these men and women through a perception of their private worlds, by elucidating the mechanisms of solidarity and sociability this group created or remade in reaction to their social and ethnic exclusion. This study, then, was

10 Menezes, op.cit.

11 Rago, op. cit.

12 I insert caveat here: I am aware of the dangers and traps of using a metaphor. The possibility of falling into the incomprehension of a badly interpreted image is always present. However, I want to relate the idea that, at a masquerade ball, the most exciting moment is the end, when the faces are revealed. I did not want to analyze the social “masks” that the carioca *belle époque* — doctors, judges, police, aetc. — created for these women. Rather I wanted to get to know the people in these life stories as individuals — to see their faces and hear their voices.

designed to examine the networks of sociability developed within this marginalized space — or better, this group's private world.

For this, the reflection of Maffesoli in regard to the problematics of Mafias becomes fundamental.¹³ The rules of such organizations try to remake social ties when the “core society” is in crisis. However, within any social entity, including and principally Mafias, the notion of coagulation becomes primary. In such a group, there is no self-identification as an outsider, as everyone is part of the group.

The Mafia phenomenon can be distinguished by two particular aspects: its propensity for violence and its “Mafia attitude.” I have used the second attribute — the whole and its parts all have roles, life in the community offers the advantage of letting every member participate in the collective where solidarity is the essence of the group. The perception of a “big Mafia family,” which is not necessarily violent but is the locus of protection and identification, becomes the image *par excellence*.

The group I am studying embodies prime characteristics of the uprooted — it was made up of immigrants and they were socially marginal. They made the notions of protection and solidarity the thread that unites this space and allows its comprehension. In this sense, this social circle is the best place for understanding the need among immigrants to preserve their uniqueness and their cultural identity. As immigrants, they had to protect themselves, as they were excluded not only from the social life of the city, but from their own ethnic group as well. Their need to socialize and to help one another led the polacas, wherever they went, to create mutual aid societies, and this study attempts to elucidate life within the sphere of these associations.

II. The Private World of Public Women: Their Self-Help Associations

“Charter:

Jewish Benevolent Funerary and Religious Association

[...] with its center at 68 rua Luiz de Camões, second floor. Its goals are [...] to found a synagogue in this Capital and therein practice and observe all the precepts, ceremonies, and acts of the Jewish

13 I base this on the work of the French sociologist Michel Maffesoli (“La Maffia. Note sur la socialité de base.” *Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, vol. 73, 1982.)

religion; to maintain a free primary school, for the education and the moral and intellectual instruction of unprotected Jewish children of both sexes; to help its associates when they are ill; [...] to conduct the funerals of its associates who pass away in this Capital; [...] only those of its associates who are up to date with their dues six months after their admission and the installation and regular functioning of the Association shall enjoy and be entitled to its assistance and benefits.”¹⁴

The above paragraph contains the founding directives that ruled a particular civic association in Rio de Janeiro for more than sixty years. *The Jewish Benevolent Funeralary and Religious Association* [ABFRI – *Associação Beneficente Funerária e Religiosa Israelita*] was founded on October 10th, 1906 and was registered by its First Secretary Mathilde Huberger at the First Special Registry of Titles and Documents.¹⁵ This act marked the institutionalization of a philanthropic, socializing, and self-protecting action on the part of women as well as men — as will be noted later — who participated in the commerce and practice of foreign prostitution in the red-light district of Rio and who had something essential in common: they were Jewish.

This association, though, is not the oldest charity structure founded by such a group. Apparently, the practice was repeated in every city in which they lived in both the Old and the New Worlds. Much earlier than the carioca entity were those created in Eastern Europe. Over the course of this research, I found evidence of four other such associations in the New World. Of these, the oldest dates from 1896 and was founded in New York as the *New York Independent Benevolent Association* [IBA]. A second association, perhaps the most famous, was established in the same year as the ABFRI in Buenos Aires as the *Warsaw Mutual Aid Society*, and later split into the *Zwi Migdal Mutual Aid Socceity* and the *Asquenazim*. In Brazil, there were the *Hebrew Feminine Religious and Beneficent Society* [SFRBI – *Sociedade Feminina Religiosa e Beneficente Israelita*] founded in São Paulo state, and the Jewish Beneficent Society of Santos (São Paulo, state) of 1930.¹⁶

14 *Diário Oficial*, Rio de Janeiro, 13 November 1906, p. 6124 (“Sociedades Anônimas” — reproduction of the Assembly of 3 Nov. 1906). Arquivo Nacional, Rio de Janeiro.

15 This material can be found in the Livro # 1 do Registro de Sociedades Civis, under number 107, Nov. 14, 1906.

16 The two non-Brazilian societies are analyzed in the second chapter of my book. It was impossible to find the material produced inside these associations, and of them there are only the commentaries of third parties. Therefore, these trajectories are compared to the carioca and paulista groups. Of these two, whole internal documentation was

Through the discovery of extracts found of the Statutes, it seems that all these societies had the same objective: to establish and maintain a philanthropic organization that provided their members with a Jewish religious life and also reconstructed their identities as part of the same ethnic group. They also wished to establish mechanisms for mutual aid in difficult times.

Helping out in sickness and death, helping the needy of the community, and creating solidarity were the principal goals of these associations.

I chose to analyze the carioca community of *polacas* for two reasons: first, because there is no other such study, and second, because a good part of the documentation that institutionalized them is on deposit at the Brazilian National Archives.

* * *

The history of the *ABFRI* spanned, officially, sixty-two years. Conceived and created primarily by women, it went through years of mixed administration. Its history can be divided into three periods, the first dates from its founding in 1906 until 1914; the second, in which men and women both had a share in coordinating its activities, lasted from 1915 to 1932; and the third, from 1932 to 1968, saw the group's rise and decline.

It was in the first period that the institution's foundations were laid down, but 1906 cannot be seen as the date that the *polacas* arrived in Rio de Janeiro or even in Brazil. They might have organized only in the first part of the twentieth century because they were at that time ready to undertake such a project, but their arrival certainly predates 1906. So when did the first carioca *polacas* arrive?

The most frequently given date for the first registered arrivals of these women is 1867. Rio de Janeiro was the point of debarkation, and though not all of them remained there, when the *ABFRI* was founded, this informally organized community had already been in the city for four decades.

Thus the admission ritual of the *ABFRI* is a good starting point for understanding how this world was organized. To be a member, one had to

found (minutes of meetings, Treasury Book, Death Registry, Statutes, and oral testimonies of the treasurer and others familiar with the group). Through this, it is possible to trace parallels between Brazilian and foreign entities and between fiction and reality. One also notes the extent to which the world of prostitution is subject to stereotypes.

be sponsored by a current fully paid up member. Second, the potential member could not be an invalid and had to be in perfect health, since the relief aspect of the organization required it to help members first, before they had received health benefits from the association. And last, they had to be practicing Jews.

The society was established in a hierarchy of founding members, contributors, and dues-paying members, and basically it was a primarily female profile that directed the *ABFRI* until 1914, at which time the group reorganized and redefined itself in a new statute.

It was impossible to find any evidence related to this new beginning, on the part of the former female administration, that would account for such a change. However, the new Statute was found as well as two articles in the *Diário Oficial*. On January 16, 1915, this newspaper reported on the existence of a society named the Jewish Benevolent Funerary and Religious Association, and the article gives the impression that there has been a reorganization. One week later, on January 23, a ratification was published that mentions that the society “[...] will be directed by a President, a Vice-President, a 1st and 2nd Secretary, a 1st and 2nd Treasurer, a Procurator, and three delegates making up the Fiscal Council.”¹⁷ Following this change is a chapter of the new Statute in which the rights of members are explained, and this is what shows the important change in the *ABFRI* at the time, as it establishes that “the female members cannot be voted into the offices of the board.” Thus, the *ABFRI* was divided into two branches — one for administration and one for welfare. The first was run by men, and the second was directed by women and would consist of “a President, a Vice President, and a Secretary of the old society as well as eight funeral supervisors.” The women’s functions at the time were restricted to burials and hospital aid for the members, since “the same privileges will be conceded to male members, when the board so resolves without the intervention of the female aid workers.”¹⁸

Oddly enough, the changes in the society came about at the same time as legislation regarding civil societies in the country. In January 1916, based on the formulation of the Civil Code, Law 3.071 began to regulate such bodies. While there is nothing in that law that would justify the

17 *Diário Oficial*, Rio de Janeiro, 1915.

18 The Statute of the *ABFRI* from 1915 is on deposit at the National Archives in Rio de Janeiro and can be found in the Registro de Títulos e outros papéis, Livro II das Sociedades Civas, Registro Geral “B,” Livro 8 - número de ordem 699, protocolo 160056 (Livro 16), registry date Jan. 23, 1915.

modifications undertaken by the *ABFRI*, it certainly forced a general restructuring of similar organizations.

Several questions can be formulated based on the new design of the group: who controlled the treasury of the society? Why would the female members accept such a situation? Were the men their pimps and did the violent relationship between prostitutes and their exploiters shown in works of fiction reappear inside the *ABFRI*? We will never know. From the idea of the “Mafia attitude” developed by Maffesoli, which informs the theoretical basis of this work, it can be seen that the dominant link in this organization was the one that formed a group wherein the whole (the collective) and the parts (each member) each had its role, but only one function: collaboration between its members. However, whatever degree of harmony and/or violence developed in the context of a mutual aid society such as this one, those involved certainly established a dynamic that made a social life possible. Each participant wished to belong to a group and enjoy the benefits thereof, and for that reason wanted to associate with an organization such as this one. Moreover, the idea of a “family” is fundamental to this “attitude.” Thus the *ABFRI* should be viewed as an entity made up of married couples who abided by the prevailing social rules within the group, wherein the man was the boss.

These societies were collective acts between men and women, and even when both were not contributing members, they received aid like a couple in case of need. But the majority of the membership was certainly always female. This is made clear in the Registry Book that recorded the monthly dues payments, as well as in the membership card found that belonged to a member.¹⁹

Of the 1,030 names found in the Registry Book and the Register of Death maintained over the sixty years of the *ABFRI*, only 19% were men — thus proving that there were always more women than men: many of the women were married when they joined, or married Jews or non-Jews in Brazil, or established common-law relationships.²⁰

19 Both of these — the Registry Book and the membership card — belong to the last auditor of the *ABFRI* (between 1954 and 1968). According to *his request, he will be identified as “Mr. O.”*

20 Two things should be mentioned here: first, the Registry of Deaths of the *ABFRI* showed many couples inside the organization. This also occurred in the group in São Paulo. Second, in chapters 3 and 4 of my book, in which the trajectory of the *polacas* in Rio and São Paulo are respectively analyzed, are annexes in which I chronologically compare all the directories of these groups, noting the first and last names of the female members. Diverging from São Paulo, which from the beginning was established as a feminine organization and where name changes are not

The small number of men in this group makes one think again about at least two aspects: (a) the supposedly violent relationship portrayed in fiction that marked the lives of the prostitute and her pimp. Often the pimp is her husband and is seen by society as her exploiter; and (b) the necessity seen here in the day-to-day life of this world to be as human as possible and conform to social norms. There is nothing, then, of the vanguard resistance in groups like this. It copies the mutual-aid model from which its members were excluded.

* * *

One cannot know precisely why the *ABFRI* set itself up, between 1915 and 1931, as a group in which the men were in charge of the patrimony. One can only guess. The vast number of administrative and beneficent offices set up by the Statute, and the need to fill them, certainly indicated a period of relative prosperity, in which the number of members and activities undertaken must have been great.

Contrary to what might be imagined, there was no rupture between the two phases of the society, and a few examples support this idea. First, women's initiatives brought about a concrete result in this phase: the opening of the group's own cemetery, which came about because in February 1912 the Procurator of the *ABFRI*, Norma Pargament, followed up with a second demand of the city's mayor:

that we be sold or granted a piece of land next to the Cemetery of Inhaúma, so that the same Association might install there its cemetery in order that all its associates might be buried therein.²¹

In August 1916, in the middle of the mixed period of the society, the demand was accepted, and just before the group's tenth anniversary, the city's first Jewish cemetery was inaugurated. This year represents and embodies the central objective of a group such as this one: to maintain an ethno-religious identity. According to Jewish law, suicides and prostitutes must be buried next to a wall inside the cemetery, marking their social exclusion. Therefore, in their own place, a second institutional objective was realized: the members cast off this stigma and were not discriminated against because of their activities.

registered, the members of the *ABFRI* registered name changes when they married and added the names of their husbands, mostly non-Jews, to their own.

21 General Archives of the City of Rio de Janeiro (vol. 4, p. 598, cod. 58-3-22).

It seems that these men and women were not unknown in the city of Rio de Janeiro. The opening of this cemetery was covered on the front page of the newspaper *A Noite*,²² where stereotypical images are interwoven with facts. To this material was added the response of the editor-in-chief David J. Perez of the carioca Jewish community's organ *A Columna*. In a condemnatory tone, Perez tried to separate the elements of the community so that antisemites and/or moralizers could distinguish between the wheat and the chaff. His attitude defined the attitude of the official side of the community for as long as there were members of the *ABFRI*. For Perez and the people he represented, "these people do not belong to us. We are not linked to them in life or in death; this cemetery therefore is destined for pimps and their whores."²³

A second clue pointing to the continuity between the phases of the society is the presence of male members who died after the end of mixed leadership and who are buried in the Inhaúma cemetery. There is no division here between women and men.

Besides these two examples, two other hints confirm the notion of continuity between the *ABFRI*'s different phases. A third may be seen in the reformulation of the Statute, the association's penultimate, in 1925. In it the emblems for the directors and the members are described, as well as the group's flag with two parallel blue stripes, one on top and one on the bottom, and with a Star of David in the middle. These symbols remained the same throughout the group's history. The fourth indication is fundamental to the understanding of the form the organization took after 1932, its third and final stage. When the cemetery was opened in 1916, the board gave the members of the managing body the title of Member-Benefactor and the directors, Fanny Zusman and Regina Hirsch were given the distinction of Distinguished Members. Later, Fanny's title was reconfirmed and that of Regina given to Amália Schkolnik, without any explanation. However, the vision of unity between the work of the women's and men's reinforces the idea of family inside that associative

22 "Uma festa macabra - os exploradores do judaísmo. Os 'wizugths' pagam o seu tributo — o destino de Helena" ["A macabre party — the exploiters of Judaism. The 'wizugths' pay their tribute — the destiny of Helena"], *A Noite*, Rio de Janeiro, 30 Oct. 1916, p. 1.

23 "A inauguração macabra de um cemitério — os verdadeiros israelitas condenam os fundadores da nova necrópole" ["The macabre inauguration of a cemetery — the real Jews condemn the founders of the new necropolis"], *A Noite*, Rio de Janeiro, Nov. 2, 1916, p. 4.

space. In the third phase of the society's life the Distinguished Members and their responsibilities define the course of the group until its end.

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The mixed-group version of the *ABFRI* lasted about eighteen years. After the reformulation of the Statutes, four-year terms of office were established, so, there must have been such a term from 1925 to 1932. Various directors died during this period, which perhaps made it more difficult to create new boards, as well as conclude the work of the previous one.

In March 1932, the need to restructure the society brought about the last Statute of the *ABFRI*. In it, restrictions of the election of female members are removed,²⁴ and, from this point on, women are in charge. A plaque inaugurated in the cemetery in Inhaúma mentions the "1st directory of female Associates elected and sworn in on March 22, 1932," which was, according to the new Statute, "constituted by an unlimited number of members of both sexes who are of the Israelite creed." Although directed by women, the *ABFRI* emphasized its mixed character.

Ever since the 1920s the association had occupied the second floor of a building on the Praça da República, which also housed the synagogue. Zelda, Celina, and their other sister Etel were married there one year after their mother, a member of the *ABFRI*, had them sent over from Odessa. All had arranged marriages with members of the group or their sons. Celina recalled that the place was "the whole second floor with two salons. There was a Torah and everything. It was lovely."²⁵ Zelda adds that there was a rabbi and "there was music. It's a shame that at that time we didn't have film and things to take a picture. Those red carpets decorated with roses were so pretty."²⁶

The year 1932 was an important one for the society, in that women took back the reins of administration. In that same year, however, they lost an important member Amália Schkolnik. Nine years later, on the eve of the *ABFRI*'s 35th anniversary, they lost the other Distinguished Member when Fanny Zusman died. Fanny and Amália and two other members

24 The Statute of the *ABFRI* from 1932 is on deposit at the National Archives in Rio, in the pile of the 3rd Office of Document registry, Civil Society # 166, registered on May 5, 1932.

25 Interviewed by the author on Dez. 22, 1993.

26 Interviewed by the author on Sept. 21, 1993.

embodied the third stage of the society, where the fundamental goals were the works of charity and philanthropy among the members — something, certainly, that dated from the group's very beginnings. These women founded a philanthropic body called the sisters of Heiset Chell Emes, which means “charity of truth,” that which wants nothing in return. Of this sisterhood, four became Sisters Superior: Fanny, Amália, Angelina Schaffran, and Rebecca Freedman.²⁷

Mr. O. was the last treasurer of the *ABFRI*, serving between 1954 and 1968. Commenting on the fraternal spirit with which they had imbued the society he said,

There were occasions in which they called each other sisters. When [they said, justifying an absence]: sister so-and-so didn't come, or is at sister so-and-so's house. But this was very rare inside the meetings [...]. Sometimes I heard people talking about sister this, sister that. But I didn't know what it was. My uncle, who had worked there before me, made a reference to the fraternity: “this looks like a fraternity or is a fraternity.”²⁸

Based on this notion of fraternity and on this testimony of the treasurer, one can make out prominent figures in this world, because as an administrator of the association, Mr. O possesses, among other documents provided for this research, the second and last minutes of the meetings, which covers the period from 1939 to 1966. This register can clarify the group's final period, since it deals with the happenings of twenty-seven years of the *ABFRI*. It is also the voice of the private world of the *polacas* — their worries and questions, as well as the names that are prominent in the group's history.

* * *

Women might once again have been in charge in 1932, but the history of the *ABFRI* demonstrates that there were problems in realizing the group's objectives. The tone of this society seems to be one of eternal restarts; the individual who led this effort for the longest stretch was Angelina

27 In the photos I found of Fanny and Amália, both are wearing a belt with the inscription “Sister Superior.” On the back of Fanny's tombstone in Inhaúma, director Angelina had a homage engraved with the names of the members of Heiset Chell Emes. These pictures as well as pictures of Angelina and Rebecca are to be found in the annex to chapter 3 of my book.

28 Interviewed by the author on May 4, 1993.

Schaffran, who during the long period of the end of the 1930s to 1946, and again from 1948 to 1961, took up the reins and directed the group, and struggled to succeed in her role.

What were the association's principal questions in this period? According to the second book of minutes, in 1939 the *ABFRI* occupied premises on the second floor of 337 rua General Câmara. However, the principal worry of the early 1940s was the social seat, since the remodeling of Avenida Presidente Vargas had destroyed many buildings, including some on rua General Câmara. The absence of resources meant that the administration needed to exercise greater control over the members, trying to find out who was contributing and who came to the meetings. Such a fact shows the limits of the profession of these women, which did not tend to make one wealthy. Once again, there was an impasse in regard to maintaining the group's beneficent activities.

In 1942, though, the last social center was purchased, at 171 rua Afonso Cavalcanti, on the border that separated the Praça Onze — center of the city's Jewish community — and the Mangue area — the red-light district. In a two-story house, the first floor was dedicated to administration and the second functioned as the synagogue.²⁹ This acquisition was made possible by donations from female members of the society who were in a better financial situation.

The synagogue was a room with a capacity for around 120 people, with chairs of jacarandá³⁰ and all possible comforts for members and everything that was necessary for Jewish rites. The invitation cards ceded by Mr. O show that all the religious festivals were celebrated there. However, as there were then few men, the directors had to invite outsiders to make up the required minyan (ten Jewish men over the age of thirteen). In place of a rabbi to lead the prayers there was a cantor — a situation that was not at all unusual. This all makes it clear there was nothing rebellious or revolutionary about the society. These women wanted to create an exact copy of the "space" they had been denied.

The growing financial difficulties in this period are demonstrated by the official reinauguration of the synagogue and by the installation of commemorative plaques in the center and in the cemetery fourteen years after the purchase of the house on rua Afonso Cavalcanti, in the middle of the 1950s. It is also shown by the first meetings in the new center, in 1943. On this occasion, there was an important modification in the

29 Photos from 1972, which show the façade of the house as well as the interior of the synagogue, are in the annex to chapter 3 of my book.

30 An expensive Brazilian hardwood (trans.)

Statute, which was already a sign of the times. By supplanting article 18 b, which regulated the category of paid-up members and exempted members who had contributed for fifteen years and had served for five on the board, the society showed how much it needed to shore up the treasury. This was especially true since there were more and more elderly poor taking care of others in the same situation. With rare exceptions, poverty was eventual fate of these women. Another important alteration was increasing the term of managers from one to two years and the lowering of the number of members of the board, from eight to four. This was all justified,

First, for economic reasons, as regards the concession of exemption from dues for full members. [...] as for the extension of the term and the diminution of the number of members of the board [...] this is justified by the difficulties in paying the members of the same.³¹

One can thus see the difficulties encountered by these women. However, their lives took various paths, from unrelieved misery to a certain type of comfort.

* * *

Entering into a private world, one has the opportunity to see faces. There is, for example, Zelda's mother, who worked selling clothes, writing letters in Yiddish for friends to send to families in Europe, as a check-out girl in a bakery, and

[...] at the end she sold tickets. Until the end of her life, she sold lottery tickets there on the rua da Carioca, close to a newsstand. She sold them and made good living. She had her clientele. And she made a good living.³²

This was not an unusual occupation among former prostitutes when they grew old. Chaja Berliner was member No. 162 and died at age eighty in 1962. In the Death Registry of the *ABFRI* it notes that she died in the Hospital Colônia Curupaiti, in the neighborhood of Jacarepaguá, in the Western Zone of Rio de Janeiro, where she had been interned since 1955 for the treatment of hansenitis. On her hospital registration, she declared herself to be a maid, odd-job worker, and lottery saleswoman. Like Chaja, four other polacas were also interned and died in another Hospital Colônia

31 Book of Minutes of the *ABFRI*, 1943, p. 5

32 Interviewed by the author on Sept. 22, 1933.

in Jacarepaguá, the Juliano Moreira, which specialized in mental illnesses. These women went there for depression and for a recurrence of syphilis, which can damage the central nervous system.

The hospital reports concerning these women tells of a continuous stream of prevalent images surrounding the world of prostitution. The nurse responsible for the report makes the following notation:

this patient has polaca friends who have already tried to get her released, with the objective of, according to information, making her a pimp. The psychiatrist and the Director of the Colônia are firmly opposed to such a release.

Facing the distance between their fantasy and their actual reality, when dead, and without any note on the existence of relatives on hospital reports, these four women were buried in the Jewish Cemetery of Inhaúma. Two of them, who died after 1954, were registered in the *ABFRI* by Mr. O and paid their monthly contributions to the group until just before their deaths. Once again, the association followed through with its principal role.

After the 1950s the advanced age of these women registered in the *ABFRI* began to signal the approaching end of the polacas. If many died of old age, many also killed themselves, a grim reminder of their personal difficulties in life. Estera Gladkowicer, a Russian naturalized Brazilian, born on May 20, 1907, single, arrived in Brazil in 1927 at the age of twenty.³³ Estera was member No. 65 of the *ABFRI* and died in 1968 from an ingestion of barbituates. For many years she was the girl friend of the composer Moreira da Silva, who dedicated the samba “Judia Rara” [Uncommon Jewish Girl] to her.

Moreira da Silva, *habitué* of the area of Mangue and Lapa, a taxi driver, and a typical carioca rascal, made a point of saying during the interview he gave to this researcher that he had not met Estera in the red-light district, but at a friend’s house in Estácio. The affair, which lasted eighteen years, let him learn her story and understand the importance of the Jewish Cemetery of Inhaúma for those women. Estera was one of the last to be buried in that place.

There were, though, happier ends, and this counterpoint is necessary in order not to reinforce the image that victimizes those women. They were alive, and they responded as best they could, individually and/or collectively to the pulse of life. In order to see that there were some

33 Dates gathered from the registration in the Customs Department of Rio de Janeiro.

happier narratives as well, one must look at the lives of some of the entrepreneurs of the profession, which is possible because I was able to locate 102 police reports on foreign prostitutes, from many countries — Poles, Russians, and Argentines — who are in the register of the *ABFRI*, filled out between the mid-1950s and the beginning of the 1970s.³⁴ This makes a group of thirty-two reports, including that of Estera. Of this group, there were thirteen reports of polacas from São Paulo, who migrated to Rio in the 1950s after the former closed down its red-light district. These paulistas often owned brothels in Rio and São Paulo.³⁵ The other nineteen are carioca polacas.

Through this material, one must see its exact significance: besides a registry, it represented control over lives, marks of a stigma. The police of the time had the destiny of these women in their hands through these annotations. To erase or maintain charges depended on the good conduct of the dangerous individual and made the difference between legality and illegality. However, starting with these dossiers one can begin to understand a little of each story. Besides the name or nickname, nationality, names of parents, birthday, address, declared profession, marriage status, level of education, color and characteristic marks, and a little bit of life history, there were also, on the back, observations about which red-light districts they haunted, warnings they received, dates of their arrests, when they left custody, and the most revealing of all — their pictures.

I selected several to demonstrate less tragic life stories. Mindel Bierbrair, known as Emília, member No. 128 of the *ABFRI* was born in Russia in January 1893 and came to Rio in 1915, aged twenty-two, and worked as a seamstress. Years later, she became the madam of the brothels at 20 rua da Glória, 26 rua do Catete, and 22 Conde Lage. Her 3 x 4 police photo shows a pretty and elegant woman — already a lady — with fine features. Widowed and living in Glória, she became Dvora (Dora) Sosnowski Guimarães's partner, in the house at 360 rua Júlio do Carmo.

34 The nonexistence of a police archive in Rio means that this material is lost. Most of it is in the hands of old chiefs of police, as was the case of these files, given by Chief Armando Pereira. Some others were found in the station of the Cidade Nova area, where the material is deposited in a room, carelessly and without a minimum of upkeep. The 102 reports located during this work were donated to the Public Archives of the State of Rio de Janeiro.

35 The analysis of this material is in chapter 4 of my book, where I studied the society of the paulist polacas.

Dora, who was Polish, widowed, and lived in the neighborhood of Flamengo, was born in August 1892 and was member No 99 of the association. In the dossier she is shown to be a well-kept lady with a round face and large features. Mindel and Dora can be thought of as being in a relatively good situation, since they exploited prostitution and did not necessarily work as whores. However, the last list of members made up by Mr. O, in the beginning of the 1960s, showed the Association having 102 members — sixty-one contributors and forty-one paid-up. Both Dora and Mindel were paid-up; that is they did not contribute.

The sisters Sura Pesa Gdanska and Léa Glikman were prostitutes, and both were buried at Inhaúma. Sura, or Paulina, born in 1894 and a widow, was Polish and a member of the house at 360 Júlio do Carmo. She was No. 72 of the Society and contributed 200 cruzeiros monthly from 1954. The photo taken in 1960, when she was sixty-six, shows a clear-skinned woman who looks her age. Dora Bran Chinquel was a member of the last Fiscal Council of the Society, elected in 1966. Member No. 151, she contributed, in the 1950s and 1960s, 200 cruzeiros a month to the association. Born in Russia, she got to Brazil at age twenty-three, in 1918. After she separated from her husband, she worked in the red-light district, in the house on Afonso Cavalcanti, from which she retired in May 1961. Her picture shows a short woman with glasses, with a friendly look.

Maria Fairman left Russia in 1911, at age seventeen, and went first to Buenos Aires, and then worked as a prostitute in the red-light districts of Rio and São Paulo. At the end of the 1920s, already over thirty, she was widowed and returned to prostitution. Between 1954 and 1959 she worked in the houses at 382 and 369 rua Júlio do Carmo, 21 Pereira Franco and 20 and 29 Pinto de Azevedo. Member No. 258, she contributed, starting in 1954, 50 cruzeiros a month. Ana Gurte arrived in Brazil in 1942, at age twenty-seven. Her picture taken around then, shows a girl with broad features who appears older than she is. In 1970, at age fifty-five, she was still in Mangue, working in a house at 31 rua Pereira Franco. Single, she was member No. 273 and contributed, until the end of the *ABFRI*, 200 cruzeiros a month. Genendla Kulinska, or Janete, was a Pole from Warsaw. Single, she was born in June 1907, and worked in the houses at 23 and 30 rua Pinto de Azevedo. Readmitted to the association in July 1955, she received No. 206.³⁶

36 The other reports belong to Minca Blesman, Chana Minska, Rachela Flumenbaum, Maria or Lindla Friesner, Feiga Nossenchug, Fella Srebnik, Asna Sziff, Brandla Luftman and Perla Ajdelman Peixoto de Castro. All had a membership number from the *ABFRI*.

These files make it possible to see faces and stories, something I very much wanted, and which gave me access to an until then unknown universe. However, the most important face of the *ABFRI* was another one, and her story also clarifies the nuances of this group. She was the last president of the Society and the last Sister Superior, with sixty-eight years of her life linked to this community space.

* * *

Rebecca Freedman, or Becca, who was described by everyone who knew her by the same phrase: “who didn’t know how to read or write, but could add numbers in her head,” arrived alone in Brazil in August 1916, from the little Polish town of Zacrichin. Single and thirty-five years old, she took the steamship *São Paulo* from the port of New York, with a third-class passage, declaring herself to be American.³⁷

Mrs. D, who worked in the Hospital Israelita do Rio de Janeiro between the end of the 1960s until the middle of the 1980s, remembers some of these women and their stories.

In the hospital it was the first time I knew they existed. But the contact I had was only when they were interned, released, and buried, because when they passed away, I had to get into contact with the person we called the Queen — their chief — who was Rebecca, Becca.³⁸

Rebecca was again elected President for a four-year term, to 1970, but was never replaced. After sixty-two years of existence, the *ABFRI* was exhausted. The dues no longer covered expenses and the associates could no longer meet the monthly expenses. Profoundly concerned with formalities, the treasurer recalls that

It’s not even that it [the society] died. It was exhausted. Because it didn’t have [that] moment [at the end]. Because there is always that moment to [say to oneself]: “Well, it’s over. Let’s go. Put everything up, pay whomever we owe.” There was none of that. It kept losing the ability, losing, losing. [...] It no longer had the ability to keep up with its finances because there was no longer any treasury. The last receipt was of 12 cruzeiros. So there was no need to have one more meeting. No need, it was over. There was no last

37 These facts were taken from the file of Rebecca Freedman at the Registry of Foreigners (National Archives/SRE 1010048).

38 Interviewed by the author on Nov. 16, 1992.

meeting. There were 12 cruzeiros left. When we had money, we'd have another meeting. There wasn't, and that was it. There was no meeting to say it was over. There wasn't any of that.³⁹

However, consulting the register provided by Mr. O, one sees that in 1968 the society had seventy-three members, of whom thirty-two did not contribute, overburdening the other forty-one. To this list was added another, possibly the last, which mentions 102 members. Of these, 61 contributed monthly, annually, or every trimester amounts varying from 20 to 1000 cruzeiros, and there were forty-one fully paid-up members. So it is clear that when the *ABFRI* was exhausted, some of its members were still alive. Mr. O suggested that members of some worth leave their belongings to the Society, as did Becca. This money reverted to the living members who had no resources, so that they would not be destitute. This was not enough, though, and many were left in dire need.

In the 1970s the work on the Metro expropriated houses in the Mangue area. The center of the Society was then destroyed. The ornaments of the synagogue were hotly disputed by two carioca Jewish entities and ended up as part of a temple in a Jewish club in the North Zone of the city. Rebecca, until at least 1972, kept living in the Mangue area, at 48 rua Pereira Franco, on a second floor in which she sublet rooms. Through friends who visited her, she learned of the interest of the Jewish community in the ornaments of her temple and commented that "they used to discriminate against us, and now they're fighting over us." Already sick, she remained bedridden, receiving help from old friends.

Later, Becca, her health failing, moved to one of her houses, in the suburb of Ramos. Far from her old companions she, who had always been a role model and a source of help, was prevented from helping them. Zelda, Celina, Mr. O, and the journalist Zevi Ghivelder visited her a few times. Then, in November 1984, at age 103, she passed away. Perhaps this is the real date of the end of the *ABFRI* and the end of a cycle: that of the existence as much of Jewish prostitutes who immigrated to the Americas as of the need for self-protection and sociability that brought these women together and made them establish societies like this one.

However, unlike her comrades and certainly against her will, Becca was buried in the Cemitério Communal do Cajú,⁴⁰ a Jewish facility that still takes care of the cemetery in Inhaúma. Even with the bureaucratic

39 Interviewed by the author on June 4, 1993.

40 The Jewish part of the huge necropolis north of downtown Rio (trans.)

end of this Society, that cemetery still received new burials. In the 1960s, according to the Cemetery Commission of Rio de Janeiro, its annual average in the cemetery in Inhaúma was eight burials. The Registry of Deaths of the *ABFRI* ends in 1967; however, five other members were buried there up to September 1970. After that year, though, because of the absence of resources and people to care for it, it was abandoned.

The efforts of the members of the *ABFRI* to find a solution reached an impasse and the transfer of the cemetery to another Jewish authority is recounted by Mr. O as a long process. Even in the end of the 1960s he was sought by another group wishing to take it over, but principally with the idea to use its free areas for new burials for people other than the members of the *ABFRI*, with the *ABFRI* members already buried being moved to one section, something that is not permitted in Judaism. Years later, at the end of the 1970s, the society then responsible for it — the Sociedade Cemitério Communal — sought out Mr. O.⁴¹

Prostitution, according to Mrs. D, did not provide for these women in their old age, since “those I knew ended life very poor.” Support for this idea can be found in the Registry of Deaths of Inhaúma, which contains the name of the place of death of the associates. Out of a total of 207 identified members, one can make the following list:

Number of Members	Place of Death
102	At home
38	In public hospitals
23	In private hospitals
21	In asylums ⁴²
12	In the police morgue
6	In the Jewish hospital
4	In the Colônia Hospital Juliano Moreira ⁴³
1	In the Colônia Hospital Curupaiti ⁴⁴

41 Handing over the care of the Inhaúma cemetery to the Sociedade Cemitério Communal, Mr. O gave over the Registry of Deaths and burials. He realized in that cemetery of members of the *ABFRI* with the intention that further deaths of members would be recorded therein, which was not done.

Something that shocks upon entering the cemetery is the quantity of broken headstones, with the names erased. A feeling of poverty hovers in the air, which is the opposite of the desire of those men and women when they founded their own cemetery.

42 Dispensary of Méier, Santa Maria Asylum, São Luiz House, Cristo Redentor Asylum, São Francisco de Assis House.

43 Public Hospital administered by the Health Ministry specializing in the treatment of mental illness.

One can see from this list not only the innumerable difficulties these women went through, but their efforts to face them, demonstrated in the creation and maintenance of an associative life over more than six decades. The life together in that environment certainly fulfilled its most important objective by creating lifelong ties. Mr. O, referring to his work, says:

[...] I was there a long time. From 1953 till today, since until the hour that the society ended, I was still there. I still feel myself a part of it. Sometimes I feel like going there, to the cemetery, but I'm afraid. It hurts a lot to see it all broken like it is. Now, you see, I'm not Jewish, I didn't live with them except at work. [...] They were people who worked hard and were dedicated [...] it was from dedication and not from obligation.⁴⁵

These men and women organized a mutual aid organization based on charity with only one goal: to preserve, in a dynamic manner, their religious and cultural identities. The French historian Michelle Perrot,⁴⁶ analyzing the difficulties in finding stories of the socially excluded, comments that the question centers on their descendants. Ashamed of the past of their fathers, uncles and grandparents, they tend to crave silence and erase the small vestiges that remain. Becca, representative of a group that was made up in search of solidarity among equals, when summing up her life embodied the legitimacy and the dignity they make for themselves.

The impression dona Becca gave me was that of a person contented with herself. She knew that she was the product of a necessity. She had lived that necessity. She told me once: "What do you think? I'm telling you the truth. There are children and grandchildren I know who are ashamed of what their grandmother was, of what their mother was. And there's nothing to be ashamed of. Today you meet these people and ask them what your grandma was, and they say she was a fur seller."⁴⁷

44 Public Hospital administered by the Health Ministry specializing in the treatment of leprosy.

45 Interviewed by the author on June 4, 1993.

46 Perrot, Michelle. "Práticas de Memória Feminina" ["Practices of Women's Memory"]. *Revista Brasileira de História*, São Paulo, vol. 9 #18, Aug-Sep. 1989, pp. 9-18.

47 Interview with Zevi Ghivelder with the author on 9 May 1995.

Fortunately, during this research, meetings with some descendants were made possible, as those of Zelda and Celina, whose relatives, unlike the others I encountered, were at peace with the past. However, if the polacas continue to be a taboo, it is due as much to direct descendants as to individuals connected with the historiography of the Jewish community in general, none of whom can properly appreciate the common humanity among all lives.

For as long as Becca lived, she unfortunately did not live long enough for us to know her. I hope to have brought her here as well as her sisters.

III. In Conclusion...

In carrying out this research I came to meet a group in itself fascinating and one often surrounded by mysteries and secrets not of their own making. In proposing to study a group of Jewish prostitutes and pimps through their mutual aid associations, this study was different from others that linked the question of prostitution to the search for codes of sexuality, or through the view that immigrants were undesirable, going through criminal trials for the expulsion of foreigners for pimping. It was a question here, then, of a unique project. In a perspective sometimes seen as risky, I resolved to follow a path that led me to encounters with a vision of the group itself.

The object chosen for this study — the associations of mutual aid created by them and their documentation — treasury registers, minutes of meetings, death registers, as well as the testimonies of people who had that community experience to a greater or lesser degree guided this study in the direction of learning about the paths taken by Jewish men and women involved in the traffic in immigrant prostitution. By establishing links of solidarity and sociability, they sustained an individual identity socially seen as positive.

As such, one must understand that while this concept of identity is far from quantifiable, it nonetheless exists and is made up of possibilities of construction lived out within the practices of a collective.⁴⁸ Therefore, the profile of a category takes into consideration and reflects its particular vision in regard to its specific circumstances and of the society that breeds

48 Lafer, Celso. "Identidade individual e identidade coletiva: o judaísmo e os dilemas da modernidade." ["Individual identity and collective identity: Judaism and dilemmas of modernity"] *Ensaio Liberais*. São Paulo, ed. Siciliano, 1991.

it. Seeing that these groups of Jewish prostitutes struggled their whole lives for the right to exercise the day-to-day rituals of their religious convictions, in spite of having been marginalized from their religious group, I began to reflect upon how important their associative experiences were. There they tried every day to build a life of dignity, and to separate work from leisure, searching for a religious and social space that guaranteed solidarity, sociability, and socializing.⁴⁹

Such groups existed as long as the polacas were alive and needed self-protecting ties. Surviving for more than sixty years, the *ABFRI* was exhausted when the phenomenon came to an end. Even with descendants, since many of these women had children, these societies had no heirs.

The journey of the *ABFRI* is certainly the most interesting thing to observe. Over the course of this work, I saw that the theatricality of the life lived there had a broader objective: to create and maintain a positive identity based on the religious specificity of the group. This drama, in the sense of staging and not of suffering, reveals the importance of associative practices. These meant to insert into a whole all that meant and signified existence, making possible an associative life. Drama is above all else acting and representing and, in this case, is solidarity and sociability.⁵⁰ Although they were seen as transgressors of an order — more by circumstance than by choice — many of these women did not let themselves fall into the trap of exclusion. Thus, they thought and achieved their belonging through religious association. Their lives are marked by acts, conscious or not, of conservation, transposition, and the creation of images to give order to their private universes, making the community space as much a protective wall as a way to articulate and confront the diversities of life.

The reelaboration of the collective past, via customs and traditions, made it possible for them to have a life outside the limits of their marginal condition because they reelaborated their histories, constructing them and reconstructing them according to prevailing conditions and, in that way engaged themselves with a common heritage. Understanding that faith has no owner, they exercised in their everyday lives the union between idea and action, acting and representing. Though most of them died poor, they created a positive side to their lives through the constant search for dignity.

49 Le Goff, Jacques. "Calendário." *Encyclopédia Einaudi*. Porto: Imprensa Nacional/Casa de Moeda, 1984. (vol. 1).

50 Maffersoli, op. cit.