

FAMILY, PATRIARCHALISM, AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN BRAZIL *

Eni de Mesquita Samara, Universidade de São Paulo
Dora Isabel Paiva da Costa, Universidade de São Paulo

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE DOWRY: WOMEN, FAMILIES, AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN SÃO PAULO, 1600–1900. By Muriel Nazzari. (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1991. Pp. 243. \$35.00 cloth.)

FAMILY AND FRONTIER IN COLONIAL BRAZIL: SANTANA DE PARNAIBA, 1580–1822. By Alida C. Metcalf. (Berkeley and Los Angeles, Calif.: University of California Press, 1992. Pp. 279. \$40.00 cloth.)

THE FAMILY IN BAHIA, BRAZIL, 1870–1945. By Dain Borges. (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1992. Pp. 422. \$52.50 cloth.)

GOSTO DO PECADO: CASAMENTO E SEXUALIDADE NOS MANUAIS DE CONFESSORES DOS SÉCULOS XVI E XVII. By Angela Mendes de Almeida. (Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 1993. Pp. 150.)

The subject of the family in Brazil was analyzed primarily by anthropologists and sociologists until the topic was fully incorporated into the historiography of the 1980s. Prior to that time, the contribution of historians to this field had been limited. Fearful of taking on the classic analyses on the subject, historians contributed timidly, reinforcing institutional models and genealogical studies. In addition, they were clearly approaching the topic from the angle of power in trying to understand the importance of the family in Brazilian society.

To imagine all that production as a whole, from the early twentieth-century until today, basically means understanding the treatment of the question of patriarchy and the differences and continuities presented in these analytical efforts. They began with the formulation of theoretical models in the 1920s and 1930s and continued up to the first revisionist studies in the 1960s. In the studies of the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, the ideological nuances emerged of a line of thinking that would prevail for decades regarding the nature, structure, function, conception, and importance of the Brazilian family.

Pioneering studies like those of Gilberto Freyre traced the outlines of the patriarchal Brazilian family and became classics in the national and

*Translated from the Portuguese by Sharon Kellum.

international literature, influencing innumerable studies that followed. It fell to Oliveira Vianna to consider the seignorial family and kinship clans in seeking to understand the colonial roots of Brazilian society and its evolution. The issue of family solidarity was raised by Luis de Aguiar Costa Pinto, who published in the 1940s the first edition of *Lutas de família no Brasil, era colonial*. Alcântara Machado, an innovator in his time who was heading in the direction of regional history, published *Vida e morte do bandeirante*. Creating a context rich in primary sources, this work described in an austere style the families, dwellings, furnishings, and fortunes of the era of the early explorers in Brazil.¹

The 1950s and 1960s were characterized by the beginning of the first inklings of revision of the theories that had been formulated on the Brazilian family. Antonio Cândido de Mello e Souza, Emílio Willems, Donald Pierson, Oracy Nogueira, Thales de Azevedo, Charles Wagley, and others wrote on the organization and structure of Brazilian family, marriage, and divorce. In this phase, the preoccupation with regional aspects could already be noted, along with concern with class and verification of the changes that had occurred in Brazilian society over time. The role of women was also analyzed by focusing not merely on exclusion and submission but also on their forms of interaction with society and within the nuclear family. What was taking shape here was an early break with the conventional image of Brazilian women.²

Undoubtedly, a review of the works produced until the 1960s would provide numerous and worthy examples of the treatment given to the

1. Gilberto Freyre, *Casa grande e senzala*, 17th ed. (Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio, 1975); Oliveira Vianna, *Populações meridionais do Brasil* (São Paulo: Monteiro Lobato, 1920); Luis de Aguiar Costa Pinto, *Lutas de famílias no Brasil, era colonial* (São Paulo and Brasília: Nacional and Instituto Nacional do Livro, 1980); Alcântara Machado, *Vida e morte do bandeirante*, 3d ed. (São Paulo and Belo Horizonte: Editora da Universidade de São Paulo and Itatiaia, 1980).

2. Antonio Cândido de Mello e Souza, "The Brazilian Family," in *Brazil: Portrait of Half a Continent*, edited by T. Lynn Smith and A. Marchant (New York: Dryden, 1951), 291–312; Emílio Willems, "The Structure of Brazilian Family," *Social Forces*, no. 31 (May 1953):339–45; Donald Pierson, "The Family in Brazil," *Marriage and Family Living* 16, no. 4 (1954):308–14; Oracy Nogueira, *Família e comunidade: Um estudo sociológico de Itapetininga* (Rio de Janeiro: Centro Brasileiro de Pesquisas Educacionais, Instituto Nacional de Estudos Pedagógicos, and Ministério da Educação e Cultura, 1962); and Thales de Azevedo, "Family, Marriage, and Divorce in Brazil," in *Contemporary Cultures and Societies of Latin America*, edited by D. Heath and R. Adams (New York: Random House, 1965), 288–311; Charles Wagley, "Luso-Brazilian Kinship Patterns: The Persistence of a Cultural Tradition," in Wagley, *Latin American Tradition: Essays on the Unity and Diversity of Latin American Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), 175–93; John Lobo, "Family Life in Brazil," *Marriage and Family Living*, no. 10 (1954):8–10; Hiroshi Saito, "A família do imigrante japonês para o Brasil," *Sociologia* 22, no. 1:12–28; Licurgo dos Santos Filho, *Uma comunidade rural do Brasil antigo: Aspectos da vida patriarcal no sertão da Bahia nos séculos XVIII e XIX* (São Paulo: Nacional, 1956); Carmelita Hutchinson, "Notas preliminares ao estudo da família no Brasil," *Anais da II Reunião Brasileira de Antropologia* (Bahia: Centro de Estudos Baihanos, 1957); Maria Isaura Pereira de Queiroz, "Assimilação de três famílias em São Paulo," *Sociologia* 12, no. 1 (1950): 20–44; and Lena Ferreira Costa, *Uma família na história: Monografia sobre a família de Castelo Branco* (Goiana: Imprensa da Universidade Federal de Goiás, 1967).

family, but they were susceptible nonetheless to critical revision. By emphasizing the issues of power and kinship, these authors sought to discover the patriarchal bases of Brazilian society and hence an understanding of social and racial relations. The organization of the family was analyzed through this prism, with the idea remaining unassailable that the Brazilian family was one vast kinship network with common goals. Solidarity, duties, mutual obligations, and fictitious kinship integrated individuals into genuine networks of dependency. Given this situation, it would be impossible to think about Brazil without thinking about family.

Thorough reconsideration of the family as an object of study took place in the 1970s. Students of the family, at the center of a broad general revision of Brazilian history, dedicated themselves to researching historical documentary sources that led them to approach the old problems with new questions. Given the directions taken by the Brazilian historiography, the processes of rediscovering the family and claiming it as an object of study for historians have significance of their own, clearly manifested in the outlines of this literature. Yet it is difficult to detach this body of work from historical demography, given that most of the studies were made by demographer-historians interested in demographic structures as well as the family.³

With an overall goal and defined concerns, the studies in this phase as a whole focused on aspects related to family structure, marriage, fertility, and sex ratios gleaned from an array of manuscript and printed documents. Methodological difficulties in research characterized this phase, which yielded answers to larger questions arising out of regional contexts.

Divergences from and similarities to the generic family model in Brazil stimulated constant searches of the sources available on the period. The results that emerged revealed the impossibility of conceiving a single image of the family applicable over time to the various segments of Brazilian society. The studies also pointed toward the existence of other kinds of relations between the sexes and suggested the gap between the norm and social practice. For the population as a whole, behaviors, attitudes, and values were revealed that diverged from the ideal conceived according to the model of the patriarchal family. Alternative family con-

3. Darrel Levi, *A família Prado* (São Paulo: Cultura, 1977); Iraci del Nero da Costa, "A estrutura familiar e domiciliar em Vila Rica no alvorecer do século XIX," *Revista do Instituto de Estudos Brasileiros*, no. 19 (1977):17–34; Maria Beatriz Nizza da Silva, "Sistema de casamento no Brasil colonial," *Ciência e Cultura* 28, no. 11 (1976):1250–63; Donald Ramos, "Marriage and Family in Colonial Vila Rica," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 55, no. 2 (May 1975):200–225; Maria Luíza Marcílio, *A cidade de São Paulo* (São Paulo: Pioneira, 1974); Eni de Mesquita Samara, "A família na sociedade paulista no século XIX," Ph.D. diss, Universidade de São Paulo, 1979; Alida Metcalf, *Household and Family Structure in Late-Eighteenth-Century Ubatuba* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978); and Eni de Mesquita Samara, "Uma contribuição ao estudo da estrutura familiar em São Paulo durante o período colonial: A família agregada em Itu, 1780–1830," *Revista de História* 53, no. 105 (1976):33–45.

figurations, cohabitation, and more active participation by women in the social processes occurring brought to the fore discussion of the ideological influences built into the classic studies of the early twentieth century. The newer findings also pointed to differences over time and according to region, race, and class in formulating the concept of the Brazilian family.

The beginning of this revision of the great myths and archetypes of Brazilian society in the 1970s laid the groundwork for greater pluralism in the studies undertaken in the 1980s. These studies dealt with gender roles, marriage, cohabitation, sexuality, families in the dispossessed sectors, and the process of transferring fortunes. Analyses of inventories of estates, wills, and legal proceedings surrounding divorces, civil crimes, and legitimation raised fresh questions and overturned assumptions perpetuated by generations of researchers by defining new images of the Brazilian family.⁴

The discussion of patriarchalism in this phase was firmly linked to the idea of changes that took place in Brazilian society at the end of the colonial period and solidified throughout the nineteenth century. Hence arose the idea of a multiplicity of family models and a modified patriarchal system.

For the authors under review in this essay, this issue remains a crucial question. Yet despite their following the revisionist discussion, the notion of a grand "ideological model" of the Brazilian family is still evident in some of the books under review, particularly those by Dain Borges and Angela Mendes de Almeida. This undercurrent contrasts with the studies that point toward greater flexibility in the patriarchal system, especially in regional contexts, such as the works under review here by Muriel Nazzari and Alida Metcalf.

Patriarchalism: Continuity and Change

In analyzing dowries, Muriel Nazzari traces transformations in the functions of elite families in *The Disappearance of the Dowry: Women,*

4. See for example Elizabeth Kuznesof, "The Role of Female-Headed Households in Brazilian Modernization, 1765–1836," *Journal of Social History* 13, no. 4 (Summer 1980):589–613. She identified other forms of family organization and investigated their functionality during urbanization. See also Angela Mendes de Almeida, "Notas sobre a família no Brasil," in *Pensando a família no Brasil*, edited by Carneiro Almeida and Paula Gonçalves (Rio de Janeiro: Espaço e Tempo and Universidade Federal de Rio de Janeiro, 1987), 53–66; Roberto Da Matta, "A família como valor: Considerações não-familiares sobre a família à brasileira," also in *Pensando a família no Brasil*, 115–36; and Kátia Mattoso, *Família e sociedade na Bahia do século XIX* (São Paulo: Corrupio, 1988). All three of these authors start with the patriarchal model and affirm it regarding ethical support for other forms of family organization. In contrast, other scholars have questioned this notion. See Eni de Mesquita Samara, *A família brasileira* (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1984); Samara, "Tendências atuais da história da família no Brasil," in *Pensando a família no Brasil*, 25–36; and Mariza Correa, "Repensando a Família Patriarcal Brasileira," in *Colcha de retalhos*, edited by Antonio Augusto Arantes et al. (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1982), 13–38.

Families, and Social Change in São Paulo, 1600–1900. What led families to change their customs regarding the dowry system? To answer this question, Nazzari researched inventories of deceased members of Paulista families in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries.⁵ Her goal was to identify the means of transferring goods and to compare them over time. This study links the transformations that occurred in the functions of the family to those in marriage in Brazilian society.

According to Nazzari, Brazil in the seventeenth century was based on family clans and kinship, which also served as the organizing principle of Paulista society. The dowry in this period became a key means of allowing men to establish their own productive unit and permitting their daughters to marry, daughters being generally favored over their brothers in receiving a greater share of the goods transferred from one generation to the next (p. 22).

The eighteenth century witnessed some changes in the central-southern region, particularly in São Paulo. The Portuguese Crown's increasing control in the area via greater professionalization of the army and the militia undermined patriarchs' power and control over their grown sons (p. 48). At this time, increased wealth led to military power, in contrast to the seventeenth century, when military power and clan cohesion had led to wealth. The sons' search for gold, silver, and diamonds in the mines promoted the dispersion of families and fortunes (p. 46).⁶ Moreover, income was being generated from commerce that allowed men to accumulate capital by using their entrepreneurial abilities (pp. 54–55). This alternative of establishing businesses of their own and generating profits made possible a new attitude toward patriarchal power in determining marriages and alliances. Sons who became businessmen could now arrange their own matrimonial deals, based on their own wishes and values, no longer having to depend on their parents and on a dowry being granted by the fiancée's family (pp. 84–85). These phenomena indicate, according to Nazzari, that the extended family, clan, or kin group was no longer the only basis for alliances in business. This assertion leads to her hypothesis that the eighteenth century must have been a landmark in the sense of change in the social structures, which had repercussions on the organization of the patriarchal Paulista family. Such a finding suggests that the same thing could have happened in other regions of Brazil.

Even more far-reaching transformations were to occur during the nineteenth century. Pursuing this path in *The Disappearance of the Dowry*, Nazzari points out that the growth in literacy among elite women, how-

5. *Paulista* refers here to the region of the capitania de São Vicente.

6. Brazil at the end of the seventeenth century and throughout the eighteenth experienced a boom in gold mining in the region that today is the state of Minas Gerais.

ever small, represented in part a response to the weakening of the power of patriarchs and extended families over younger generations (pp. 46–47). The growth in small and medium-sized fortunes as well as the appearance of the middle class and the liberal professions made possible new sources of power (pp. 94–98). Changes in the field of criminal legislation also dampened one pillar of support for patriarchalism by making the individual solely responsible for committing a crime (rather than the family), thus promoting the displacement of punishment onto the individual (p. 98). Civil legislation also lowered the age of majority from twenty-five to twenty-one (p. 98). Business associations among persons outside the family became much more frequent, and some new procedures were being introduced to differentiate these associations from family accounting practices (p. 102). Husbands' capacity to support their wives and offspring came to be an important requirement in marriages among families new to the elite (p. 148).

All these developments weakened patriarchalism and strengthened individualism, a fact that has been pointed out frequently by various authors. Darrel Levi, another scholar studying Paulista society, has indicated the existence by the nineteenth century of a dynamic and flexible family structure that allowed abandoning the old bonds and creating new ones in response to cultural, economic, and political changes. In his view, the case of the Prado family in the Paulista elite showed breaks with the norms of a society that could by this point be considered semi-patriarchal.⁷

Alida Metcalf also manifests concern with this subject in *Family and Frontier in Colonial Brazil: Santana de Parnaíba, 1580–1822*, in which she analyzes “cultural attitudes and economic resources from generation to generation among people of this community of Santana de Parnaíba” (p. 1). Metcalf argues that families' strategies in relation to the frontier constitute a basic means of understanding the colonization of Brazil and the origins of social stratification. Toward this end, Metcalf develops a methodology in which she segments the population into social classes in order to comprehend the behaviors of families living in one frontier area. She finds various family models, reinforcing the theme of multiplicity evident throughout the research of the 1980s.

For Metcalf, the big planters, the peasants, and the slaves experienced different impacts, which she differentiates according to appropriation or nonappropriation of natural resources in the environment. The frontier nature of the capitancy of São Vicente promoted fluid interaction between the population and the frontier, in contrast with Pernambuco and Bahia, where the image of settled families is rooted in the historiography (p. 42).

7. Darrel Levi, *A família Prado*.

Following Nazzari's example, Metcalf also devotes her efforts to understanding various kinds of inequality and transfer of wealth. In the class of wealthy planters, for example, Metcalf finds that the early colonizers exhibited the usual pattern of the son-in-law assuming the position of leadership in the family, while the sons were obliged to emigrate and cultivate new lands (pp. 116–18). Other sources in the Brazilian literature focusing on the landed gentry in the western part of the state of São Paulo between 1765 and 1855 have debated this conclusion regarding the son-in-law's leadership in big planter families. Carlos Bacellar asserted, "analysis of land succession has failed in not following the sons' migration beyond Santana de Parnaíba . . . because many times they inherited greater legacies than their sisters who remained in their native village."⁸

The attitudes and behaviors displayed in transmitting goods must be viewed as variants of processes of succeeding to power in which many variables must be analyzed in more detail: the number, age, and gender of legitimate and illegitimate offspring; the relative position of the family in relation to alliances at the local, regional, and national levels;⁹ and even the role played by the individual in particular families. In this sense, the notion of a generic model of the patriarchal family would collapse if historians took into consideration the complexity of factors intrinsic and extrinsic to the family, associating internal variables with the structural transformations experienced by Paulista society from the eighteenth century onward.

In analyzing peasant families, Metcalf shows that they developed strategies in the sense of maintaining their autonomy by migrating toward the virgin areas of the forest or to the villages, surviving sometimes as peasants, other times as artisans, weavers, or spinners when large landowners tried to reduce them to day laborers. An interesting aspect of Metcalf's family model is that it does not appear to be a unique type of family structure, as it has traditionally been viewed. Families organized themselves not only in nuclear families but also in extended families, single-person households, and those headed by women, all of which demonstrates the complexity of family forms within the same social class.¹⁰

8. Carlos de A. P. Bacellar, *Família, herança e poder em São Paulo, 1765–1855*, Estudos CEDHAL no. 7 (São Paulo: Centro de Demografia Histórica da América Latina, 1991), 74.

9. See also Metcalf's article, "Fathers and Sons: The Politics of Inheritance in a Colonial Brazilian Township," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 66, no. 3 (Aug. 1986):455–84; and comments by Daniel Scott Smith in "Family Strategy: More than a Metaphor?" *Historical Methods* 20, no. 3 (1987):113–25, 119.

10. On the complexity of family structures in Europe, see Richard Wall, J. Robin, and P. Laslett, *Family Forms in Historic Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). Compare with the commentary of Laurel L. Cornell, "Household Studies: A Review Essay," *Historical Methods* 19, no. 3 (1986):129–34. See also the earlier study by P. Laslett and Richard Wall, *Household and Family in the Past Time: Comparative Studies in the Size and Structure of the Domestic Group over the Last Three Centuries in England, France, Serbia, Japan, and Colonial North America with Further Materials from Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

Such a perspective undoubtedly contradicts simplistic visions of colonial Brazil. Another aspect observed by Metcalf in *Family and Frontier in Colonial Brazil* is the cycle of development of the rural family in relation to its agricultural productivity, which indicates that peasants reached their peak productivity in their late forties.¹¹

As another facet of her interest in the society as a whole and in networks of solidarity, Metcalf also analyzes godparenting, an issue fundamental to understanding families in Brazil. Peasants' children were baptized by the large landowners who gave them protection, and the peasants lent their services as day laborers on the godfather's land. What Metcalf does not discuss, although she shows it in her statistical data, is the growth in the proportion of horizontal sponsorship among the peasants: 17 percent had their children baptized by members of their same social class in 1774–1776, but as many as 42 percent did so in 1819–1821 (pp. 138–39, esp. t. 13). What is the significance of this change in attitude? Was it a fraction of the peasants breaking with the reciprocity inherent in the classical model of patriarchy?

To understand Brazilian patriarchal society, Nazzari and Metcalf base their analyses on the economic systems of families and property, stressing the complexity and differences among races and classes across time. Additional studies of women and family following this same path are those by Maria Odila Leite da Silva Dias, Elizabeth Kuznesof, and Eni de Mesquita Samara.¹²

Other sources, however, still find it necessary to analyze patriarchy as an ideological model and a model of social behavior of Brazilians. In this regard, the analyses of Dain Borges and Angela Mendes de Almeida come into the discussion.

Borges's goal in *The Family in Bahia, Brazil, 1870–1945* is to demonstrate the changes in attitudes and values in Bahian families in the direction of those held by conjugal families (p. 274). But his findings demonstrate much more continuity in aspects considered traditional, which leads him to conclude that the importance of the family as an ethical value cultivated by the Bahian elites basically supported the Brazilian social organization (pp. 234–35). Borges also finds that "patriarchal and semi-patriarchal forms of families were not successive stages of social

1972); and Iraci del Nero da Costa, "Revisitando o domicílio complexo," *Estudos Econômicos* 21, no. 3 (1991):401–7.

11. See also Alida Metcalf, "Recursos e estruturas familiares no século XVIII, em Ubatuba, Brasil," *Estudos Econômicos* 13, special issue (1983):771–85; Maria Luiza Marcílio, "A fecundidade camponesa no Brasil antigo: O caso de Ubatuba," *Estudos Econômicos* 15, special issue (1985):111–26; and Marcílio, *Caiçara: Terra e população* (São Paulo: Paulinas and Centro de Demografia Histórica da América Latina, 1986).

12. Maria Odila Leite da Silva Dias, *Quotidiano e poder em São Paulo no século XIX: Ana Gertrudes de Jesus* (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1984); Kuznesof, "Role of Female-Headed Households"; and Samara, "A família na sociedade paulista no século XIX."

development but rather coexisting and alternative forms of legitimizing and organizing family" (p. 49).

Borges identifies various types of families. Yet he argues that the inherent meaning of this difference was to achieve the set of goals common to all families: to belong to a powerful patriarchy.

The private life of the families studied has been recaptured via correspondence and memoirs and also by analyzing novels in which the varying images of women (the "saintly woman," the obedient wife, the cloistered young girl awaiting marriage, the ideal of feminine chastity), the double standard, and the ideal of virility found in the masculine figures all reinforce portraits sketched by Gilberto Freyre in his classic work. Urban elite families, which were variants of rural families, maintained the ideal of the lively home full of hubbub, always involving long visits by relatives who enhanced the ideal of the extended family in the urban world.

Borges shows the distinction operating in the minds of the Bahian elite regarding "the families and the people." He concludes in regard to Bahian society's view of itself, "Outside of the 'families,' the rest of Bahian society was disorganized, anonymous, 'the populace.' The realm of the 'families' was the house, that of the 'povo,' the street" (p. 79). Consensual unions were common practice among the rich and the poor in villages and rural areas. Marriage was a ceremony limited to the few guaranteeing the transmittal of goods among elite families. For the elite in this context, the notion of *casa de família* meant the presence of a man as head of the household (p. 80).

In his efforts to comprehend social changes, Borges also analyzes medical science to determine whether it influenced the attitudes of families of various classes regarding health, illness, motherhood, children, servants, women's roles, and sexuality. He concludes that "medicine did not have an ideology that could integrate the Brazilian nation" (p. 111).¹³

In dealing with civil legislation and reforms affecting the family, Borges finds that the family was fundamentally conservative in nature. In his view, the modernization of public institutions took on formal aspects representing an ideology with few attractions for the people and their experiences (p. 79). Borges finds that Brazilian society was far from integrating its social segments: the basis of the shared national identity was a dialogue that had features far more personal than institutional (pp. 150–51).

Focusing on "the relation between informal ethics of behavior inside and outside the family" (p. 187), Borges analyzes customs surrounding engagement, marriage, popular stereotypes, problems arising from

13. For example, Dr. Raimundo Nina Rodrigues, who practiced in Bahia around the turn of the twentieth century, described the religious practices of blacks as symptoms of a degenerate social psychology.

the notion of family honor, the role of women in clientelism, patronage based in the family, and its corollary, the ideal of family loyalty and reciprocity. He studies these facets as ethical values cultivated by the elites.

Borges also observes that the marriage market widened from the local scale to the national. The proportion of persons remaining celibate and marriages among relatives diminished, along with the number of children, even though old mentalities and strategies persisted among Bahians (pp. 237–73).

Borges retrieves throughout his study images that indicate changes over time and attitudes that led to the disintegration and the exclusion of some segments of society. Yet he also emphasizes the continuities, an approach that in constructing the study's general argument ends up reinforcing a monolithic conception of patriarchalism.

Thus Borges recognizes that the clientelism of the poorest classes is not the only aspect to be highlighted in patriarchal family relations. The people had institutions of their own, apart from organized society: *candomblé*, the religious brotherhoods, the favelas, and the carnival associations. Borges concludes that as a result of the legacy of slavery and the medieval Portuguese worldview, "from the perspective of one segment of the lower class in Bahia, the culture looked less like a continuum from order to disorder than the combination of two alien hemispheres into a single globe" (pp. 82–83). On this point, Kátia Mattoso's interpretation of this disjunction has portrayed a break with the dominant culture in an effort by common people to affirm their own cultural identity. She associates the growth of *candomblé* with the rejection of Africans by the Catholic brotherhoods.¹⁴

Another scholar who has studied the symptoms of change in patriarchal society is Maria Odila Leite da Silva Dias, particularly in *Quotidiano e poder em São Paulo no século XIX: Ana Gertrudes de Jesus*. In reconstructing a scenario of an urban economy, she focused on white, black, and *mulata* women who supported themselves by renting houses, heading families, or operating black-market businesses in basic necessities. Slave, free, and poor white women distinguished themselves in heading households that Silva Dias considers forms of organization for survival and for holding families together. In her view, "the economy in this era could not absorb the natural growth of the population, not even that of whites, who were in principle an integral part of the system of domination," a situation that Silva Dias describes as "one symptom of the crisis in the colonial system."¹⁵ Elaborating the ideas of crisis and social change

14. Kátia Mattoso, "Un nouveau monde: Une province d'un nouvel empire, Bahia au XIXe siècle," Doctorat d'Etat, Université de Paris IV, 1986, 241–42.

15. Silva Dias, *Quotidiano e poder em São Paulo*, 71.

simultaneously, Silva Dias views women's work and being heads of households as alternative activities of social roles and also as urban occupations opening up in more dynamic sectors, in which individuals could opt to live with a greater degree of autonomy.

She recognizes nonetheless that despite this greater flexibility in roles, the elite groups still embodied the ideal set of principles of colonization. Overbearing matriarchs raised and socialized their children accordingly, heading family groups and exercising a cohesive role.¹⁶

Continuities and persisting characteristics, present at the beginning of colonization, appear to be monolithic in *Gosto do pecado: Casamento e sexualidade nos manuais de confessores dos séculos XVI e XVII*. Angela Mendes de Almeida concludes in this study that "the patriarchal family is evident in the architecture of the texts, father and son being titular owners of the patrimony made up of the *fazenda* and of family honor" (pp. 73–74). She applies this characterization to Portugal in that era as well as to Brazil, particularly nineteenth-century São Paulo.¹⁷

To arrive at such a conclusion, Almeida sets out to reconstruct "the sentimental history of the family in Brasil," trying to recapture "the mental orchestration of these men and women, their habits and their ways of thinking, their ideals, and the manner in which they employed certain terms that for us, today, have different meanings . . . , by inventorying the material available, locating it within the general living conditions of the populations of those centuries and trying to reconstruct the physical, moral, and intellectual universe in which they were submersed" (pp. 7–8). For Almeida, understanding the nature of the patriarchal system is possible only after it has been analyzed from the perspective of the history of mentalities.¹⁸ To this end, she utilizes as her major source the manuals of confessors kept in the seventeenth century, which were found in Portugal.

The concept of sin contained in these manuals identifies intention (will) with action: "a lustful thought equals a lustful act . . . ; it seems that no distinction was made between desire and act." This equation leads Almeida to conclude, "the obsessive presence of sin-thought regarding desire is living testimony to how much men felt themselves martyred by having to repress their sexuality, and what's more, by having to control the voices of passion" (pp. 66–69).

The ambiguous notions of crime and sin were important problems

16. Silva Dias, *Quotidiano e poder em São Paulo*, 74. See also Antonio Cândido de Mello e Souza, who also stresses this idea in "The Brazilian Family," *Brazil: Portrait of Half a Continent*, 296.

17. See the monolithic use that Almeida makes of the concept of patriarchalism on comparing seventeenth-century Portuguese behaviors with those of nineteenth-century Paulista society (pp. 119–20).

18. Angela Mendes de Almeida, "Notas sobre a família no Brasil," in *Pensando a família no Brasil*, 55.

that church and state tried to resolve in the many conflicts manifested in the intertwining of civil and ecclesiastical legislation. Only in the thirteenth century did the Catholic Church succeed in elevating marriage to the condition of a sacrament, as it is known today. Marriage “by vows” made outside the church occurred routinely among the nobility and in various strata in Portugal, before and even much after the Council of Trent. Almeida concludes from this practice that cohabitation, illegitimacy, prostitution, and divorce were institutions of the old regime rather than forms of resistance, rebellion, or insubordination to the established order (pp. 120–23).¹⁹

Almeida asks, “What material and intellectual conditions, what mindset did men and women have in colonial and imperial Brazil to defy—with a level of consistency that characterized rebellion—the set of laws, norms, and ideals implanted by the church and the Portuguese metropolis?” She continues, “careful observation of the Portuguese texts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries does not lead to the conclusion of ‘modernity’ . . . but in the opposite direction. The factors indicated as the expression of the presence of a modern conjugal family in the history of Brazil . . . actually correspond to recollections, undoubtedly inaccurate and modified, of norms and proceedings typical of the medieval Christian family and marriage, as brought up to date by the Council of Trent” (pp. 120–21).

From this point on, two kinds of reflections prevail in *Gosto do pecado*. The first kind rest on Almeida’s understanding of theological ideas of the seventeenth century. Her introduction directs the reader’s attention to this statement: “historians of note were already sounding alerts about the mistake of taking literally normative texts as an expression of all the historical concreteness of an era, being ignorant of how surely people managed to transgress the norms.”²⁰ Yet Almeida ends up falling into this trap herself when she does not question whether this ideology of the theologians and the Catholic Church was shared by peasants and the population in general. She also seems to doubt the possibility of the existence of rebellion in this period.

Second, cohabitation and illegitimacy can be interpreted as long-standing phenomena that were redefined via cultural behaviors of peoples of mixed races who were living their lives under new social conditions in a milieu that differed from the metropole.

Borges also points out differences when he examines the relation between white culture and black culture. One part developed in the sphere of order, stressing clientelistic and paternal relations that were

19. Samara came to the same conclusion in her book on the Brazilian family, which focuses on families in São Paulo in the nineteenth century. See *A família brasileira*, 44, 55, 80.

20. G. Duby, *Idade média, idade dos homens: Do amor e outros ensaios* (São Paulo: Letras, 1989), 13, as cited by Almeida (p. 10).

intended to build a bridge between the slave culture and that of their masters. The other part involving the slaves' culture remained exotic and independent.²¹

Analogously, on examining the relation between the indigenous populations and the white population regarding the appropriation of natural resources on the frontier, Metcalf suggests a disjunction between such cultural experiences: "The word *sertão* designated the frontier, the unknown, the vast wilderness. On maps, *sertão* specified the interior of Brazil, the territories under Indian control, and the virgin forest that might still exist around and between Portuguese settlements. If the *reino* represented one pole on a continuum that extended from the Old World to the New World, the *sertão* epitomized the opposite—America in its natural state" (p. 44). The church and the municipal council represented the religious legacy and the tradition of Portuguese local civic governments that symbolized the identity and the aspirations of the first Portuguese colonizers. Indigenous peoples, in contrast, associated the village (representing the Portuguese kingdom) with slavery (pp. 43–48).

Such disjunction or lack of integration between different cultures, between perceptions and identities can be understood in terms of a process of exclusion and social differentiation. This interpretation contradicts the models first proposed by Gilberto Freyre and Antonio Cândido, which stressed a situation of integration and social acculturation in which paternalism established clientelistic relations.²²

The response of some of the most displaced segments to being excluded socially compelled them to behave indifferently toward the norms and procedures of the Catholic Church, the governing officials, and local authorities. It is therefore valid to interpret such indifference as rebellion, resistance, or insubordination and to construe these behaviors as independent forms of organization. In this sense, celibacy, cohabitation, mistresses, and illegitimate children can mean resistance in a context where the church and the local authorities were removed from the daily needs of the people.²³ Another portion of the marginalized segments attempted and apparently succeeded one way or another in integrating themselves into or identifying with the dominant strata, even using intermarriage as a strategy of upward social mobility.

The new social milieu made up of indigenous peoples, African blacks, Portuguese, *mulatos*, and *pardos* cannot be interpreted in the same manner as the conditions of the rural Portuguese world, which was

21. Sidney Mintz and Richard Price, *An Anthropological Approach to the Afro-American Past: A Caribbean Perspective* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1976), as cited by Borges (pp. 82–83).

22. Gilberto Freyre, *Casa grande e senzala*; and Souza, "The Brazilian Family," *Brazil: Portrait of Half a Continent*.

23. Samara, *A família brasileira*, 44, 55, 80.

almost medieval. In Brazil, new cultural forces were interacting in a totally different way, and this dimension must be taken into account in analyzing the norms and laws of church and state.

For all these reasons, the questioning of the monolithic view of patriarchalism must necessarily undertake research that focuses on aspects of the diversification of experiences of social, ethnic, and gender groups in different regions of Brazil. In particular, future studies must assess the attitudes that led to the disintegration of these cultures and experiences over Brazilian families' four centuries of history.