

Mariza de Carvalho Soares: *People of Faith. Slavery and African Catholics in Eighteenth-Century Rio de Janeiro*. Durham: Duke University Press 2011. XIII y 321 páginas.

When Mariza de Carvalho Soares first published her book in 2000, originally entitled “Devotos da cor. Identidade étnica, religiosidade e escravidão no Rio de Janeiro, século XVIII”, it attracted attention because of its concentration on a single black nation in Rio, the Mina, and more specifically the sub-group of the Mahi. Up to then, Brazilian historiography tended to use undifferentiated concepts of slavery and black people. The Mahi were part of the Gbe speaking language group, called Jêje in Brazil, coming from the Bight of Benin. Soares’ objective was to make out the meaning and importance of Mahi identity within the African community of eighteenth century Rio de Janeiro. According to her, the trinity of slavery, ethnicity, and religiosity was central for the construction of the Mahi’s social understanding. She insists, however, that black people in Brazil were much more influenced by their immediate conditions of captivity and local environment than by memories of the past. She prefers to talk of nations instead of culture or ethnicity, when dealing with the distinctive traits of groups like the Mina (or Mahi), because the concept of nations includes the actual social arrangement within the framework of the Portuguese Empire and the Atlantic world imposed by colonial agents.

Soares’ key source is a manuscript of nearly seventy pages written in or around 1786 by Francisco Alves de Sousa, a freed slave shipped to Brazil in the 1730s. In Rio he joined a group of Mina blacks, all of whom originally came from the Bight of Benin. In the manuscript, written in the form of a dialogue, he recounts how he

became the head of the Mahi Congregation, which was based in the Church of Santo Elesbão and Santa Efigênia. Additional sources include baptismal and burial records, as well as the brotherhood’s foundational statutes and the complete correspondence between the worshippers of Santo Elesbão, the bishop of Rio de Janeiro, and the Tribunal of Conscience and Orders in Lisbon, from 1740 to 1767.

Mariza Soares’ book consists of two parts with three chapters each. As she explains, these chapters “can be imagined as a series of six photographs taken of the same subject, each with a tighter zoom and sharper central focus”. While the narrative of the first chapters concerning the beginnings of the Portuguese overseas expansion and slave trade are widely known and contain several minor inaccuracies, the more the reading advances, the more interesting, innovative, and concrete the book gets, culminating in the depiction of the Mahi Congregation’s daily life. In terms of theoretical approach, Mariza Soares declares herself influenced by Norbert Elias, transposing his interpretation of the court society to colonial Rio de Janeiro. Looking into the expressions of imperial pomp in elaborate festivals, processions, and funerals, the election of kings and queens, and the organization of royal courts within black lay brotherhoods, she uncovers the rules of sociability of the Ancien Régime.

For the author of the Mahi manuscript, the underlying objective of religious devotion was to erase paganism and substitute it with Catholicism. Soares, however, does not bother much with religiosity, Catholicism, or alternative religious orientations. She perceives the Brotherhood of Santo Elesbão and Santa Efigênia mainly as being one of the rare spaces in the city of Rio de Janeiro where the Mina could construct their own sociability. Though acknowledging that brotherhoods were a

medium of indoctrination for African peoples within the Portuguese society, she highlights that at the same time they were places where black slaves could enjoy a certain kind of liberty. They may have come to Brazil as captives, but they were not entirely stripped of the capacity of self-determination. Thus, for Soares devotion was the necessary condition to enter a brotherhood, being the one social space protected from major interventions by the dominant institutions of colonial Brazil. Devotion paved the route to achieve social prominence for Africans in urban Rio.

Belonging to a brotherhood was also nearly the only means for slaves and black people to obtain a socially recognized Christian burial, instead of being confined to the ignoble anonymity of mass graves. When analyzing the burial records, Soares points out that although more men than women were brought to Brazil from Africa, more women than men received a decent burial. This indicates that in early 18th century Rio more African women attained the better socio-economic conditions necessary for a Christian burial than men. This profile was especially marked concerning Mina burials. Women, most probably, also had a notable influence on the administration of the brotherhoods to which they belonged.

Soares' exceedingly skilful exegesis of sources provides a vivid picture of the Mahi nation. With *People of Faith* she wrote an enjoyably readable and greatly instructive book, now also accessible to a non-Portuguese reading audience. As such, it will join the classic works by Stuart Schwartz, A. J. R. Russel-Wood, and Mary Karash on Brazilian urban social life, lay brotherhoods, slavery, and freed black people.

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Marlen Eckl: "Das Paradies ist überall verloren". Das Brasilienbild von Flüchtlingen des Nationalsozialismus. Frankfurt: Vervuert 2010. 586 páginas.

A tese de doutorado de Marlen Eckl dedica-se aos exilados de fala alemã no Brasil e a sua produção literária durante o Estado Novo. A autora chama a atenção para imagens do Brasil de exilados que diferem da narrativa famosa de Stefan Zweig, feita no seu livro "Brasilien. Ein Land der Zukunft" que, da sua parte, baseia-se em clichés do nacionalismo brasileiro. Por este fim, Eckl analisa os autores pouco conhecidos Alfredo Gartenberg, Martha Brill, Hugo Simon, Richard Katz e Ernst Feder, considerando também brevemente obras de Wolfgang Hoffmann-Harnisch, Frank Arnau, Paul Frischauer e Karl Lustig-Prean. A perspectiva do livro é interdisciplinária porque foca o contexto histórico, por um lado, e trabalha com textos literários como romances, por outro lado. Além da análise literária, Eckl considera vasto material de fontes de vários arquivos históricos.

A tese é organizada em oito capítulos: na primeira parte introduz-se a história do exílio de fala alemã no Brasil nos anos 1930 e 1940, seguido por um sumário da historiografia sobre o assunto. Na segunda seção, a autora apresenta os currículos dos cinco autores em questão. Segue um excuro que contém as sinopses dos três romances analisados de Gartenberg, Brill e Simon assim como dos livros sobre o Brasil de Katz e do "Diário brasileiro" de Feder. No excuro, Eckl também recorre à teoria usada, focando especialmente aspectos autobiográficos e a relação entre fatos e ficção na literatura de exílio. Com o terceiro capítulo, começa a parte analítica do livro que é muito bem organizada. Em seis capítulos são descritos seis tópicos que aparecem em todas as obras literárias ana-