



“Assume teus b.o.”, de Salinê Saunders, aquarela e acrílica sobre papel A3

Women are not passive immigrants nor do they follow in tow: feminization of immigration, work and the domestic arrangements of Portuguese women in an Amazonian capital (Belém, c.1850-c.1930)*

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Abstract

This article discusses the feminization of Portuguese immigration to an Amazonian capital, Belém, between 1850 and 1930, from the perspective of feminist studies that take into account the categories of gender, sexuality and race. My objective is to analyze the experience of immigrant women through the flux of travel, work and domestic arrangements, questioning the notion of passivity and companionship attributed to them, as well as the naturalization and subordination of their work. I will conclude by pointing out that the hierarchy of gender and sexuality reinforces stereotypes that subordinate female immigration both in history and in historiography. In turn, the positive racialization of the white European woman's body was activated as a counterpoint to Brazilian women. Methodologically, I investigate different scales of microhistory, associating the study of social networks with quantitative analysis.

Keywords: Feminization of immigration, Portuguese women, Amazon, Work, Domestic arrangements.

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Female presence was intense during the long migratory process, propelled by industrialization and commercialization, that traversed the end of the 19th Century and the start of the 20th Century. This presence, however, tends to be minimized, or even rendered invisible. Since the 1970s, with the expansion of research on the history of women, this invisibility has been debated. For new data to come into play, or for old data to be analyzed in a new light, it is often necessary for there to be a theoretical and political turn in the perspective of researchers (Lutz, 2010).

Authors such as Morokvasic, writing in the 1980s, reiterated that “Birds of Passage are also Women” (Morokvasic, 1984), underscoring the flux and diversity of female migration, drawing attention to the negligence of migrant women in research and government policies, as well as to the value of their work for the active economy, reiterating the passive character of their movement (Morokvasic, 1984). The emergence of “gender” as a category of research, in conjunction with the categories of “class”, “race” and “sexuality”, enabled a critique of the model of mass immigration centered on the male worker integrated into modern Capitalism. This model presupposes the idea of a young man who migrates in search of opportunities, and who, if he is married, is joined by his wife and children who “accompany” him in a journey in which he is the sole provider for his family (Kofman, 1999).

Even when the numbers showed a growing process of feminization of intercontinental or transoceanic migration, the role of women tended to be ignored. Women emerged as involuntary immigrants, companions to their kinspeople and husbands. It was the latter who assumed the role of protagonists. Even when they migrated alone or with their children, their movement was justified not by their own agency, but as a movement of following and/or reuniting with a providing kinsperson who was already residing in the destination country, thus reenforcing their subalternity and passive and supporting role in the process. What is lost in these approaches is that “in many processes of mass migration, women were, in diverse situations, the primary migrants themselves” (Lutz, 2010).

This perception of female migration must be discussed along with the asymmetrical notion of gender and work, marked by the hierarchy between a male activity that is seen to be productive, paid, and public in contradistinction to a female activity which is seen to be non-productive, linked to domestic chores, reproduction and care. Within this logic, the activities of women are not included in the active economy, nor are they considered to be work at all, since they are seen as an extension of women’s very nature (Vergès, 2020; Lisboa, 2007).

In Brazil, since the pioneering studies of Souza-Lobo (1991) on the sexual division of labor and the separation of productive and reproductive activities, right up to more recent research on care workers that reveal the devaluation of activities linked to care-giving, feminist epistemology has rallied against the segmentation and precarization of the job market by gender (Hirata, 2016). Furthermore, the use of the category ‘intersectionality’ by Black feminists (Crenshaw, 1989; Davis, 2016), as well as an emphasis on the relations between gender and race – which, in Brazil, hark back to the pioneering studies of Lélia Gonzalez and her discussion on Black women and the naturalization of their place as domestic maids (Gonzalez, 2020) – brought a new view to the theme of work and migration. These categories are important tools for thinking about, for instance, the racialization and sexualization of Portuguese (white, European) immigrant bodies in the world of labor, actualized in the eugenicist rhetoric of doctors and public health officials on immigrants and their relation to discipline and hygiene when contrasted with national workers (Fontes, 2016).

The asymmetrical relationship between gender and work, and the subalternity attributed to female activities, yields a number of developments and pitfalls. Sayad draws attention to the fact that the image of the immigrant is strictly associated with work, such that immigration and work are basically a redundancy (Sayad, 1998). In this way, if women are not seen to be workers, then they are likewise not seen to be immigrants, assuming this role only insofar as they accompany a man who is in fact a worker, and hence an immigrant. Expressions such as “migrant workers and their families” reinforce the dichotomy between productive and reproductive work, reiterating the invisibility and non-recognition of female work (Morokvasic, 2014).

Questioning the nature of female work and stressing that women are not cargo towed by men allows us to see migration in a new light; migration, after all, whether internal (within the same country) or external (between different countries) is a social practice that can be spontaneous or induced, and

involves the displacement and geographical placement of people in a new territory, administratively and politically distinct from the immigrant's place of origin (Lisboa, 2007). However, even if it is pursued by an individual, migration tends to assume a collective character, shrouded in social networks of solidarity and support (Pessar, 1999). Thus, even those migratory flows in which women feature in smaller number, they are not, for this reason, less present and active in the migratory process if we consider that migration occurs via social networks in which wives, mothers, sisters and aunts constitute fundamental nodes of support during displacement. By assuming various functions including planning, care, production and maintenance of the family home in the place of origin, women make male migration viable. Female participation was thus a fundamental part of the process even when they were not ones directly migrating (Brettell, 1991; Matos et al., 2018).

This dimension of migration as collective practice dislodges the precepts of neoclassical theory, which tends to think of it as a process forged by macro-economics and the rational individual's autonomous decision, subject to market fluctuations and state policies. While economic and political issues are certainly important, they must be considered alongside the set of personal relations and traditions in the process of migration (Castles; Miller, 1998). Within this approach, studies of social and support networks are valuable methodological tools, enabling a dialogue between the structural economic and political context, with choices, interests and the needs of men and women involved in relations of kinship, friendship, and nationality. These interpersonal bonds are crucial for the formation of chains of migration, making possible exchanges that can be prolonged (Imízcoz, 2004), and which give permanence to migratory flows even when the economic climate becomes adverse, as is the case with Pará during the crisis of the rubber boom.

With these issues in focus, I analyze the feminization of Portuguese immigration to the Belém, the capital of Brazilian state of Pará, between the years of 1850 and 1930, during the rubber boom, observing the flow of movement, work and the domestic arrangements of immigrant women. To this end, I will methodologically explore the play of scales between a macro approach, centered on the quantitative and serial analysis of sources such as passports and consul registries, and a micro approach, relying on onomastic investigations, a methodological tool of micro-history that, by honing in on the names of people, can find them in various documents and learn about their experiences (Ginzburg, 1989; Davis, 1997).

Thus, the documentary body of the research is multifaceted and made up mostly of the registers of passports in the district of Oporto, which is the main place of origin of those who migrated not only to Pará, but also to Brazil in general. (Alves, 1993)¹. Registry books of immigrants kept at the Portuguese Consulate in Pará² are investigated alongside this source, as are passport requests in Lisbon³ and Pará newspapers⁴. These sources have been typically mustered in the History of Women, at least since the 1970s, because they give access to the universe of common people, their practices and representations (Rago, 2014). It is no easy task to trace the trajectories of people that have no income, no property, no political or social clout, as is true of most immigrant women (Mahler, Pesar 2006). This is why it is important to consult sources that allow for quantitative and nominal analysis, using a wider sample of people (Menezes; Matos, 2017).

Working with the History of Women during the research period, I was exposed to the intense presence of national and foreign migration in the make-up of the Amazonian population, with a large

¹ Passports were issued by the Civil Governments of Portugal. In this research, I checked 18,308 passport request processes in the district of Oporto between 1850 and 1930. The passport registries can be found in digitalized books available at the District Archive of Oporto. The books were downloaded, and the records gathered and organized in an Access model data bank. Access to this documentation is free, since the documents can be found in the archival website and are available for downloading.

² For this research, 12,035 records in the Books of the Portuguese Consulate in Pará were investigated, dating from the period between 1834 and 1930. These books were held by the Consulate to control immigration, and they are currently held by Library of the Portuguese Literary Guild of Pará. The books have been digitalized and can be freely accessed at the site of the Amazonia Memory Center. As with passports, these records were organized in an Access model data bank.

³ The processes for obtaining a passport were consulted at the National Archives Institute/Torre do Tombo, at the Civil Government of Lisbon Fund, comprising the period between 1889 and 1900.

⁴ Newspapers are in the archive of the Hemeroteca da Fundação Cultural Tancredo Neves (CENTUR).

contingent of Portuguese migrants among the foreign cohort. However, when consulting the bibliography on the theme, I was taken back by the relatively small volume of work on these immigrants when compared to other nationalities, a fact that is more evident where women are concerned. This is true not only for Amazonia, but likewise for other regions of Brazil (Boschilia, 2017). It is, in turn, important to recall the migratory movements have inverted at present, as more and more Brazilians migrate to Portugal (França; Oliveira 2021). By discussing past migrations, when Portuguese people came to Brazil, may help us to contextualize and widen the field of migratory experiences, thereby historicizing old and new stigmatizing rhetoric, both prejudiced and racialized, in reference to Brazilian women.

Flux and the feminization of immigration

European countries, with their different levels of industrialization, had high migratory rates throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. During this time, some 48 million immigrants left the continent, a number which corresponds to roughly 12% of the European population at the time. In economically dynamic and industrialized countries, such as England, 41% of the population immigrated. This percentage was slightly lower in countries such as Italy (29%), Spain (23%) and Portugal (30%), although in all cases it involved more than 20% of the population (Massey, 2003).

In what pertains to Portugal, a large part of immigration had Brazil as its main destination, not only because of the colonial relationship which defined the past between the two nations, but also because the second half of the 19th Century was a period of radical changes, as seen in the institutional end of slavery and the Brazilian monarchy, along with the implementation of the First Republic and the consolidation of free labor, even if working conditions were still precarious. It was a period of intense urbanization and industrialization which created incentives to internal and external migrations, resulting in a population increase and a change in demographic composition. (Matos; Borelli, 2012). This movement affected all Brazilian states, even if in different rhythms. Pará, for example, was, for many years, the second state to receive the greatest number of Portuguese immigrants, behind Rio de Janeiro, the nation's capital. This rank was linked to the increase of rubber export beginning in 1870, conferring greater liquidity to the state's economy.

However, as I have noted, this process should not be reduced to market fluctuations. Immigration must also be understood within the universe of social networks that involve kinspeople, countrymen, and acquaintances who make movement viable, even during times of economic crisis. It is only in this light that we can understand why, after the crash of the rubber economy in 1910, Portuguese migration to Pará was maintained until at least 1930, when Getúlio Vargas came to power and his government established a series of restrictive measures against immigration to Brazil.

In a survey of passports of immigrants hailing from the Oporto district and heading for Pará, we can see that 492 people entered the state in 1900, a year in which the rubber economy was on the rise and which saw an intense migratory flux. Amidst the economic crisis of the state, this number fell to 445 in 1910, and rose again to 521 in 1911, falling, once more, to 314 in 1912. The numbers from the district of Aveiro, also among the Portuguese districts to send the largest number of immigrants to Brazil, tell a similar story. In 1910, 888 people from Aveiro entered the state of Pará. This number rose to 934 in 1911, and fell to 516 in 1912 (Tavares, 2020). In what concerns the migratory flux of Braga, another conspicuous Portuguese district, the same trend can be discerned, with 119 immigrants in 1910, 234 in 1911, and 173 in 1912. Thus, the three Portuguese districts which sent most immigrants to Pará, actually sent more people in 1911, after the crash of the rubber boom. We can identify a decrease in the number of immigrants after 1911, but the fall is not that steep, and migration continues to be expressive and constant. It is true that migratory flows fall sharply during World War I, but they rise again after the end of the conflict, although they never again reach the numbers recorded at the start of the 20th Century.

This shows that while the economy is an important factor driving immigration, it must be understood in conjunction with other practices which allow us to understand how, despite the market crisis, migration continued to occur. People continued to activate their contacts, updating networks of work and housing that permitted migration to continue.

As well as issues involving the migratory flow, we must also consider the profile of immigrants who went to the state at the turn of the 20th Century, a period in which the immigration of women increased. It should be noted that this increase did not only take place in Pará, as we can see in studies of the states of São Paulo (Freitas, 2016; Matos et al., 2018) and Rio de Janeiro (Sarmiento; Menezes, 2020). Indeed, this increase is a global phenomenon, not only for Portuguese women, but for women from a range of nationalities whose migratory movements intensified within the European continent and beyond it, configuring a process which researchers have called the ‘feminization of migration’ during the 20th Century (Lutz, 2010). A look at Pará gives us a glimpse of the dimension of this process. When we calculate sex of migrants from the district of Oporto, we find 99 men for every woman in the period from 1841 to 1850; 17 men for every woman in the period between 1891 and 1900; nine men for every woman between 1911 and 1920; and 2 men for every woman between 1921 and 1930.

Drawing attention to the significant growth in the migration of women questions their invisibility in the process of mass migration which takes place in modern Capitalism. They migrated in ever-increasing numbers, not merely in supporting roles, being towed by a husband or relative. In fact, most of them were not even married, or were underage. The data from Oporto shows that most immigrant women were over 18 years old, and, among those who declared their marital status, single and married women each made up 46% of all immigrants, followed by widows (8%) and divorcées (0.2%).

When the sample is widened to the data kept in the registries of the consulate in Pará, the number of single women is even more expressive, reaching close to 77%, most of them over the age of 18. Married women were about 15%, followed by widows (9%) and divorcées (1%).

The numbers above, which refer to the marital status of women immigrants, corroborate the intense presence of adult women who were single, widowed or divorced. They were every bit as present in migrations as married women, which puts into question the assumption that women immigrated as companions of a spouse or relative.

Some immigrant women traveled with their children, but most did not. In the passports from the district of Oporto, few of the women who declared themselves to be single traveled with their children (10%), a number which was higher among widows (33%). None of the women who declared themselves to be divorced traveled with children. In the consulate registries, the number of single women travelling with children is somewhat higher than those recorded at the district of Oporto (16%), while the numbers for widowed women travelling with children was significantly lower (11%). Among divorcées, these records show that 50% migrated with their children.

The data shows that single, widowed and divorced immigrant women mostly traveled alone, without children, spouses or kinspeople. Nonetheless, the literature on immigration continues to refer to women as migrants who “follow” or “reunite with” a male provider who is already established at the destination, whether this be their father, brother, brother-in-law, or husband. What is missing from this account is that the provider is very often the immigrating woman herself, or perhaps another woman, such as a mother, sister, or acquaintance who is already resident in Brazil, who makes the journey possible and enables their stay in the destination city.

I should observe that, despite using the ‘single’ status recorded in documents, I appreciate the limitations of these official sources, which did not consider to be ‘married’ women in conjugal relationships not institutionalized by Church and/or State. The fact that documents record the ‘single’ status of these immigrant women does not mean that they were not in conjugal relations. In Portugal it was not uncommon to find, alongside families made legitimate by matrimony, what Scott (2002) calls “possible families”, headed “by lone women (single, widowed, with absent husbands)”, living in houses with their natural-born children or in relations of concubinage. It is thus unsurprising to find “single” women immigrating, with or without their children. Although recorded as being “single”, these women may well have formed “possible families”.

Following this line of thought, what should be stressed is that when a man migrates alone it is often assumed that he does so in search of work and better living conditions, while when a woman migrates alone, even when she is single, widowed, or divorced, it is assumed that she does so to reunite with family. However, even if a woman migrates to reunite with family, even if she is not the

first in her circle of kin to migrate and needs to help of someone close, whether a spouse or a kinsperson, to establish herself at her destination, this does not mean that she is not also migrating in search of work or seeking better living conditions. Likewise, if a married woman travels to meet her husband who is already resident in Brazil, she is migrating for work and seeking to exercise her profession – after all, female activities, even when they are unpaid, are fundamental to the upkeep of the family, even if they remain unrecognized as such by the asymmetrical and subalternized relations of the division of labor based on relations of sex and power.

Women and their many displacements

The migratory experience of Portuguese women under analysis in this article was very often not defined by a single movement from Portugal to Brazil. Beyond an itinerary framed by an exit and an entrance, some of these women carried out numerous trips between the two countries, a practice not restricted to those who had possessions, but also to poor workers.

These many displacements can be tracked through an analysis of passport requests and consulate records. Women traveled alone or with their children and/or relatives, assuming the responsibilities and demands of the immigration process, such as the need for documentation and the resources required for travel and registering families with the competent authorities. These women had different social and age markers, practices different activities and had different marital statuses.

Take, for instance, Carina Augusta Esteves, a seamstress. She came from the district of Viana do Castelo. She first arrived in Belém in 1920, at the age of 42, along with her 18-year-old daughter. Carina traveled at least four times between Pará and Portugal. Maria da Encarnação Pereira, a widow, traveled five times between the two places. Maria was a domestic worker, born in the district of Vizeu. She was poor and, already a widow, she migrated to Pará at the ages of 39, 40, 42, 45 and 46. Her first recorded trip was in 1906. Maria da Encarnação traveled with her elderly mother – who was 80 years old in 1906 – and her four children, the eldest of which, Francisco, was 18 and the youngest, Diozinda, 7 years old. Maria da Encarnação lived in Belém, and, since she was poor, she had her consulate fees for registering herself and her family waived. Eduarda Isabel traveled four times between Portugal and Pará, with no companion. She was a laundress and her migration took place in 1915. Later, at the ages of 40, 42 and 44, she repeated this journey, the last registered trip having been in 1925.

There are also registers of single women carrying out numerous trips, as is the case of Marcelina Emília Pereira. She was a maid and carried out seven trips between Portugal and Pará when she was 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, and 67 years old. Marcelina came from the Oporto district and lived in Belém. Some single women traveled with their children, suggesting that although they may have been registered as ‘single’ they may have lived, or they may have previously lived, in conditions of concubinage. This was the situation of Emília Veloso Dias, from the Braga district. Emília was a single mother who worked as a seamstress. She lived in Belém with her daughter Aurora, who was 30 years old. Like her mother, Aurora was also a seamstress. After migrating to the state of Pará in 1927, at the age of 54, Emília and her daughter traveled two more times to Portugal. The name of Aurora’s father is not recorded in the registries.

It is not uncommon to find more than one generation of women from the same family moving to Pará throughout the years, revealing the transit and agency of these immigrant women. The widow Ana da Conceição Costa was from the district of Coimbra. In 1896, at the age of 35 and already a widow, she migrated to Pará with her six children. After 31 years, in 1927, she returns to Portugal with two of her daughters, Maria das Dores Costa, 38 years old, and Irene Idafina da Costa, 23 years old. Both were single and domestic workers. Mother and daughters had consulate fees waived, a right afforded to people with meagre means.

I could multiply examples, but what is important to note is the range of ages, activities, and marital status of immigrants, as well as registering their names, their many travels, and to question, by focusing on their practices, the purported passivity of women in the migratory process.

The reasons for traveling are rarely mentioned in the available documents. In some of the records for passport emission immigrants claimed that they were traveling to Pará to “tend to house matters”, to “exercise their profession”, “to seek means of occupation”. However, for most documents

such information is absent. Nonetheless, it can be inferred that family members who stayed in Portugal, possible illness of the immigrant and/or her kinspeople, family events such as baptisms, marriages, or even deaths, can account for the many travels of these women. To these possibilities, we must add improvements in the means of transport with the development of steam boats, the greater security of transoceanic travel, the shorter time in which the trip was completed, and, therefore, the greater certainty of when one would arrive at a destination (Alves, 1993).

At any rate, and despite improvements in transport, there remained many adversities which immigrants had to face in their travels, which adds further weight to the agency of the women who carried out multiple trips across the Atlantic. I refer to Portuguese legislation which placed restrictions on the immigration of women, demanding that married women get their husband's permission to travel, and single women under the age of 21 obtain their father's permission. These laws stripped women of autonomy and institutionalized their subalternity in relation to their spouses and family members. To this we can add the negative value accrued to women who migrated, and the belief that, far from the control of their families, they were bound to "lose themselves" or that they would become "used products", an image which rebounded onto their families. To allow a daughter to emigrate under the risk that she would become less desirable as a potential spouse was considered an admission of poverty (Brettell, 1999).

Despite the set of difficulties caused by legislation and negative stereotypes, many immigrant women carried out not one, but many trips between Portugal and Brazil. Working women of different generations who provided for themselves and their family, breaking down barriers, gender prejudices, and questioning, through their acts, their supposed condition as involuntary immigrants.

Women and Work

When we leave the realm of travel and seek to understand the work of immigrant women, we can discern the many activities they were engaged in, the representations of their work, and the difficulties they encountered in establishing themselves at their destination.

I begin with an analysis of a 17-year-old Portuguese immigrant, Margarida Liffry Dupant, who knew how to read, write and sew. I came to know her story through Araújo's (2023) study of the lives of Portuguese women in Pará. Margarida was a victim of rape when she was already residing in Pará. A police investigation sought to verify the claim, and through the documents of this investigation we learn that she migrated to Pará in 1910, during a crisis of the rubber economy, accompanied by an uncle in the hope of living with her mother, Maria Rita, who was residing in Belém with her lover, Francisco. Margarida had disagreements with her mother, and some time after arriving left her mother's house. She went to live with her uncle but spent little time in his residence, having soon acquired work as a housemaid living in her employer's home. She later left this job and home in search of work in stores and sewing workshops in the city (Araújo, 2023).

Margarida's story shows us how a woman, in this case young and single, migrated with her uncle to come and live with her mother, later finding employment as a maid and a seamstress to provide for herself. The fact that she migrated with a family member to meet her mother, who was already resident in Belém, would put her into the category of women who came to "reunite with her family". Yet, what we can glimpse from her biography, is that, although she travelled with a relative and went to meet her mother who lived in Belém, Margarida worked as a maid and as a seamstress. In other words, the fact that she came to meet family, or that she traveled with family, did not strip her of her role as a protagonist in her migration and her upkeep. Margarida migrated in search of a better life and work. Her experience reiterates that these women did not play supporting roles, and that even when they moved to "reunite" with family, they worked and did not necessarily remain dependent on a provider, nor were they party to a passive and involuntary migration where they remained at the mercy of their family or husbands – the latter, in contrast, taken to be the universal immigrants who always triggered the chain of movements that makes up the migratory process.

Among the studies that help us to understand the universe of the work of Portuguese women residing in Belém, Fontes' (2016) study of job offers in Pará newspapers between 1884 and 1914 stands out. The author noted Portuguese women's preference for domestic jobs, such as milkmaids and housekeepers. Fontes discusses the relation between these preferences and theories of whitening,

progress, and civilization, represented by European peoples in eugenicist theories. According to this view, Portuguese women were associated with hygiene and purity, in contradistinction to black and mulatto women who were seen to be libertines, contagious, with bad habits, which reveals the racial criteria that permeated the job market in the capital of Pará.

Like Fontes (2016), I consulted a range of job ads which showed a preference for foreigners, particularly for Spaniards and Portuguese. One ad, published in the *Folha do Norte* newspaper, offering a job as a milkmaid, reads: “Those interested should ask at the Bar in the São Matheus Alley, on the corner of Riachuelo street, should be Portuguese and have just arrived by steamboat from Europe. Cleanliness and good conduct are guaranteed” (*Folha do Norte*, (3) 1900). Having just arrived from Europe seems to have afforded a degree of authenticity to the immigrant, suggesting, as it were, that she still bore the freshness of the civilization of the European climate, not yet having been contaminated by the backwardness and filth of the tropics and the tenement houses which were the enemies of the hygienist outlook and the public health movement (Freire, 2009). At times the ad did not determine the nationality of the potential employee, but left evident the racialization of desirable bodies (Ahmed, 2015), as we can see in this ad for a nanny position: “One is needed, who is white and caring, at the house of Dr Olympio Chermont, 112, Nazareth Road” (*Folha do Norte*, (1) 1900:6). As with the previous ad, the idea transmitted is that the white woman is caring, which generates a carbon-copy image, a counterpoint, the *Other*, represented by the black or mulatto woman who are described in Pará newspapers as libertines, rude, hailing from poorly-structured families and living in contagious tenement housing (Fontes, 2016).

It must be remembered that after the abolition of slavery, Portuguese women were incorporated as domestic maids, considered “dedicated workers, clean and honest” (Matos, 2013). This logic served the construction of a new work ethic within Capitalist society, conferring upon labor positive values which ordered society and moral. According to this perspective, the immigrant was fundamental because she, supposedly, carried with her the values of civilized European society, and hence displayed an upright, sober demeanor, with a positive work ethic.

The racialization of Portuguese women immigrants and their white and European condition cuts across their class and gender status (Brah, 2006). They will articulate with the precepts and ideas that strengthen a positive work ideology, and which counterpose immigrant to national workers within a prejudiced framework, placing greater value on the former. In this way, in many places throughout Brazil where there was a high presence of immigrants, the preference for white women relegated black women to less valued and underpaid positions (Matos; Borelli, 2012).

It is not always possible to know the activities carried out by immigrant women. In passports and consulate records, the field which was meant to register the occupation of women was frequently left blank, or else written as “domestic chores” which was a sort of umbrella-expression for all types of functions that took place within the home. It is as if women’s chores associated to the domestic sphere and to caring for others were naturalized, so much so that there was no need to mention them, even when they amounted to paid work. This trend limited information on women’s occupation, but, nonetheless, it is possible to get an idea of what these were. In the passport registries for the district of Oporto, among the activities recorded, the most common are: housewives (334), seamstresses (37), servants (18), maids (8), laundresses (4), landladies (4), students (3), cooks (2), vampers (2), commercial employees (2), and workers (7). In consulate registries we find the activities above, but also one record of a midwife.

It is thus evident that representations and activities within the domain of work reenforce the dichotomy and experience of women in domestic and care-giving activities, within a hierarchical and asymmetrical system between the sexes which, often, potentializes the precarization and feminization of poverty (Vergès, 2020; Hirata, 2016; Lisboa, 2007). This is true even though, in the content of newspaper job ads, Portuguese immigrant women partook of positive images in the workplace when compared to Brazilian workers. The hygienist rhetoric of the time racialized female bodies, associated Black and Brazilian women to negative images and poor care-giving, laziness, and contagion, making it harder for them to find honest work.

Women, Housing and domestic arrangements

Many Portuguese women worked and lived in estates, with conjugated rooms, alongside fellow countrymen and national migrants. With urbanization, demographic increase, the increasing precarity of services, and the high cost of living, rents began to soar and farms, tenement houses and villas became the typical living spaces for the poor population.

When we analyze consulate documents, we find references to poor Portuguese women, mostly laundresses and/or housemaids, who lived very close to one another, in the same street or even the same street number, even though they were not related, suggesting that living in estates or shanties with various rooms may have been a common practice. This was the situation of various Portuguese women who lived at the Almirante Tamandaré Avenue. They were single or widowed, with a median age of between 25 and 51, some of them hailing from the same Portuguese district. A part of them had children, like the laundress Maria da Encarnação, a 33-year-old widow from the Vizeu district. She had two children, Américo, who was 3-years-old, and Virgínia who was 2. Maria da Encarnação had her consulate fees waived because she was poor. The same is true for Eduarda Izabel, a 40-year-old laundress and widow. She was also from the Vizeu district, and could not read or write. Eduarda first arrived in Belém in 1915. She registered in the consulate in Pará in 1924 and had her fees waived for “being a widow and poor”. In 1923 Eduardo again registered in the Portuguese consulate, at the age of 42, still residing in Almirante Tamandaré Avenue. Finally, we can look at the housemaid Leopoldina Ferreira Alcantara, single, 25-years-old, who could not read or write, hailing from the Lisbon district. Leopoldina lived in Belém, in the Almirante Tamandaré Avenue, when she registered at the consulate in 1920. In her registration she said that she arrived in Pará for the last time in 1911, coming from Lisbon. Leopoldina’s registration was free, and she was returning to Portugal “repatriated by the Portuguese Repatriation League”, an institution which helped in the return of those with few means.

The fact that these immigrants lived close by was associated to the process of concentrating the poor population in less central parts of the city, or those with more precarious infrastructure, such as the Almirante Tamandaré Avenue. But it is also linked to the search for living spaces close to people of the same origin to bolster social networks, which was true not only for Portuguese immigrants, but also for Brazilian migrants. These networks could reduce risks and supply living spaces, jobs, and stability in the destination city (Cancela, 2022). However, this proximity could also generate conflict.

When Igues Marin became a widow at the age of 34, she went to live with her daughter, Alice dos Santos, who was 16, in the estate of a fellow countryman, the 22-year-old Francisco Henrique Serafim. Igues’ mother worked as a cook in a family home. After some time, Francisco was accused of raping Alice. All residents of this shanty were from the same Portuguese council, São Vicente de Raia, in the Vila Real district, and all bore witness in Alice’s favor. This proved essential to pressure Francisco, after raping Alice, to marry her (Araújo, 2023). The fact that all came from the same region was likely important in making it possible to rent a room in the estate where many countrymen lived, favoring proximity, intimacy, and trust. The same trust which was broken with the rape of Alice also activated networks of support and peer pressure.

Beyond the residence of immigrant in streets, shanties, and houses that were close by, the sources also reveal a number of domestic arrangements involving single mothers (Finamori; Batista, 2022), as with Igues and her daughter Alice. Consulate registries permit us to track various domestic arrangements made up of mothers and daughters; single sisters; grandmothers, mothers and children. For example, Lucinda Lopes and Margarida Lopes were sisters from the Castelo Branco district. Lucinda, the eldest, was 32-years-old. She arrived in Belém in 1915 and worked as a servant. Margarida, her younger sister, was 29-years-old when she arrived in Belém one year later, in 1916, and like her sister she obtained a job as a servant. They lived together in São Jerônimo Avenue. It is likely that once Lucinda was established, and had a place to live and a job, she was able to call her younger sister to live in Belém, and to provide support during the start of her stay in the city, living in the same house and getting her a job as a servant.

In other situations, sisters migrated together, such as Ana and Lídia Dias from Resende. Both were single and worked as housemaids. Ana was 24-years-old and Lidia 21. They came from the Aveiro district and migrated to Pará in 1908. They were orphans and lived together in a house in Trindade Square.

These examples refer to situations in which sisters lived together. Other arrangements were also common, such as mother and daughter living and working in the same house. This was the situation of Margarida dos Santos, a single woman who was 68-years-old and worked as a servant in 1925. She lived with her daughter, Julia, a 34-year-old widow who also worked as a servant. They were from the district of Vizeu. Another example is that of Ana Joaquina de Jesus, a 57-year-old widow from the district of Oporto who lived with her daughter, Olinda da Silva Tavares, 33 years old. Both were widows and worked as laundresses. They did not have means to pay for the consulate fees, although, despite their condition, they traveled many times, always together, between Pará and Portugal.

Finally, there is the domestic arrangement of the family of Ricardina dos Anjos Rodrigues, a 64-year-old single woman from the district of Bragança. She first arrived in Belém in 1899, worked as a housemaid and lived in the Village of Mosqueiro. In 1925 she lived with her 37-year-old single daughter, Germana da Assunção Fernandes, and her grandchildren, Amadeu, who was 16, and Alice, 13. The situation of Ricardina's family is emblematic. Ricardina declared herself to be single. She had a 37-year-old daughter who was also single and who had herself two children all of whom lived with Ricardina. Two generations of single working women, living their lives together in the Americas, sharing responsibility for the care and upkeep of their young kinspeople.

These women composed domestic arrangements anchored in female parenthood and on the responsibility of single mothers, strengthening the autonomy of female immigrants and their networks of support, work and residence through which they established themselves in Belém, even during the crisis of the rubber economy, revealing how social networks are important tools for understanding migration beyond the fluctuations of the market.

Final Thoughts

Studies of female migration are part of the Social History of Women, and should be approached through studies centered on gender, sexuality, and race.

In the first part of this article, I showed how the experiences of the women mentioned here draw our attention to the need to look at mass European migration to Brazil at the turn of the 20th Century in a less generic way, shifting from the uniform image of the white working man. The feminization of immigration was a gradual process and women took part in mass immigration even when they were not themselves direct immigrants, staying in Portugal to care and feed kin while other kin and spouses migrated. I used the methods of micro-history and its play of scales between analyses which have recourse quantitative data and macro politics and economics, but which do not immediately exhaust the experiences of these people and the dynamics of these processes, bringing to light the importance of social networks to understand immigration not as a practice of rational, atomized individuals postulated by liberal theories, but as a collective process, translated into networks of support between kinspeople and acquaintances, in which women tend to play a starring role.

Portuguese women's experience of travel between the two sides of the Atlantic was discussed in the second part of the article. Contrary to what is often imagined, immigration was not necessarily exhausted by one exit from Portuguese ports and an entrance into Brazilian ones. Women with various social markers moved not just once but many times between Portugal and the state of Pará, many were workers with no possessions, facing the uncertainties of the journey and the negative stereotypes that were projected onto those who moved away from their counties and families of origin. The leading part played by women in immigration, which I have been stressing throughout this article, is here once again affirmed.

In the third part I analyzed the world of the workplace for immigrants, questioning the lack of recognition of women's activities as work that is part of the active economy, and also the dichotomy between productive and reproductive work, the public and the domestic. I showed that the sexual division of labor and the asymmetrical impositions of gender do not only gather female activities within the sphere of domestic work and care-giving, they also mischaracterize women as workers. The association between women, the family and the home had a direct impact on their invisibility as active immigrants who moved in search of resources and sustenance. The long-sustained image of women as companions and involuntary immigrants helps us to understand why, despite the data which shows

the global increase in women's immigration in the formation of modern Capitalism, studies on the theme did not consider the role of women. In contradistinction to these approaches, I showed how women are immigrants and workers, since "the work of care-giving and cleaning is indispensable and necessary to the functioning of racial and neoliberal Capitalism" (Vergès, 2020:17), even when it remains invisible and underpaid. Furthermore, the work is related to a racialized body which, in the case of Portuguese women, received a positive representation in eugenicist theories that, in an asymmetrical and prejudiced manner, contrasted white immigrants, associated with civilization, purity, and hygiene, to national and black women, stereotyped as dangerous libertines.

In the fourth and final part, I recomposed the many domestic arrangements of immigrant women, based on female single parenthood translated as co-residence between mothers and daughters, single sisters, and mothers, daughters and grandchildren, with women from the same origins living close by in the same street, estate or house. Single parenthood was a reality of these families which relied on women for feeding children of various generations, stressing the autonomy of their livelihood and the search for better living conditions. This shifts the association between women immigrants from their condition as dependents of kinspeople and spouses.

Taking these issues and experiences, I believe that this study can contribute to including Amazonia in research on the history of immigration to Brazil. This history should not take as its starting point the universal immigrant, but consider the experience of women not only as a descriptive tool, but through feminist approaches and studies of gender and sexuality that question ingrained assumptions. We can then rethink the very idea of immigration as being associated with men and so-called productive work; the racialization of women's bodies and the asymmetrical relation between national citizens and foreigners; and, finally, the experience of female single parenthood which challenges patterns of parenthood based on the nuclear family.

As I mentioned earlier, the migratory movement has now changed directions. It is Brazilian men and women who are migrating in large numbers to Portugal, and, in the context of an asymmetrical geopolitics, we find growing reports of xenophobia in relation to Brazilian women, expressed in stigmatization, racialization, and the sexualization of their bodies (França; Oliveira, 2021). As we go back in time and turn our gaze toward Portuguese immigrant women, we can understand how the migratory experiences of yesteryear and the present share similarities in what pertains to the feminization of poverty and the precarity of work, but also how representations of the white and European bodies of Portuguese women have long held a distinct hierarchical place in relation to black Brazilian women. We thus widen the range of studies of the migratory experiences of women, taking social markers of class, gender, sexuality, and race in their historicities and contexts, rather than in an essentialized manner (Kergoat, 2010; Brah, 2006).

Following the stories sketched here, it becomes difficult to continue to see women as passive immigrants, or as being towed by the decisions and pathways of their kinspeople or spouses. The feminization of migration challenges us to rethink how hierarchical differences and distinctions are constructed not only in immigration, but also in the academic output on the theme.

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