

*They don't wear black-tie:
intellectuals and workers in São Paulo,
Brazil, 1958–1981*



Montagem

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ABSTRACT

*In 1979, film-maker Leon Hirszman (1937–1987) collaborated with playwright Gianfrancesco Guarnieri on a film adaptation of Guarnieri's famous play about Brazilian working-class life, *They Don't Wear Black-Tie*.¹ The resulting film, released in 1981, reconfigured the politics and content of the 1958 play to fit the new era of the late 1970s when dramatic metalworkers' strikes placed São Paulo on the front lines in the fight against the Brazilian military dictatorship. Using biography and the dramatic and cinematic texts, this article traces the political and aesthetic challenges facing these two important cultural figures and their generation of radical intellectuals. In particular, the article will explain why an image of "workers" proved so central in the making of modern Brazilian theater and film since the late 1950s, while exploring the changing configuration of intellectual and *povo* (common people) between the late Populist Republic and the remaking of the Brazilian working class during the late 1970s. Throughout, it will ask: What is the cultural, political, and historical substance or significance of the presentation of workers in *Black-Tie*? Does it represent an expression of social reality? And if so, what reality, and whose vision?*



A lifelong resident of Rio de Janeiro, the leftist film-maker Leon Hirszman (1937–1987) was drawn to the city of São Paulo in 1979 by something old and something new. In part, the demands of his profession drove the forty-two-year-old *cinéaste* to move to Brazil's industrial and financial capital, a megalopolis of thirteen million residents. Hirszman was to collaborate with playwright Gianfrancesco Guarnieri, an old friend, on a film adaptation of Guarnieri's famous 1958 play about working-class life *Eles Não Usam Black-Tie* (*They Don't Wear Black-Tie*). Yet the decision to film *Black-Tie* was not prompted solely by middle-aged nostalgia for a golden youth, when each had first made their respective reputations. Rather their decision to rewrite the play was directly linked to dramatic new labor struggles that had placed São Paulo on the front lines of the fight against a military dictatorship that had ruled the country since 1964. After inplant stoppages in May 1978, 125,000 workers in March 1979 struck the auto-mobile assembly plants in the heavily industrialized ABC region on the outskirts of São Paulo (named after the municípios of Santo André, São Bernardo do Campo, and São Caetano do Sul).

This wave of industrial militancy in ABC, which originated among the country's most highly paid manual workers, quickly spread to millions of

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other Brazilian workers over the next three years. As the first mass strikes since 1964, the work stoppages in ABC captured the Brazilian imagination precisely because they were so dramatic and unexpected. The region's foreign auto assembly plants, established during the previous twenty years, were closely associated with a period of intensified economic growth in the 1950s followed by a spectacular boom from 1968 to 1974 (the Brazilian "economic miracle"). If anything, the autoworkers were viewed—even by the few sociologists who had studied them—as a privileged aristocracy within the working class. Thus the autoworkers' strikes upended established expectations and seized the foreground during a period that pitted an increasingly assertive opposition against a military regime engaged, in fits and starts, in a process of negotiated liberalization known as the *abertura* or political "opening."

Under such circumstances, Hirszman's and Guarnieri's decision to transform *They Don't Wear Black-Tie* into film was directly linked to the contemporary anti-dictatorial struggle. Indeed, the censors' nationwide ban on the play *Black-Tie*, which dated from 1968, was only ended in 1977 while restrictions on basic civil liberties and freedom of expression would only be loosened in September 1979. Interviewed in April of that year, Hirszman explained that the original *Black-Tie* was set in Rio de Janeiro and "dealt with a strike situation, with class consciousness and solidarity, [and] that we are going to adapt it based on the experiences of the recent strikes" in São Paulo and ABC.² With funding from the government's film agency Embrafilme, Hirszman and Guarnieri worked for six months to complete the film script in January 1980. In their preliminary discussions, they had toyed with basing the film on a group of amateur actors in São Paulo who were staging *Black-Tie* during the strikes of 1978.³ Yet the trajectory of the adaptation altered, as Hirszman explained in early 1979, when, upon his arrival in São Paulo, he "encountered an immense strike of crossed arms and stopped machines" among ABC's metalworkers.⁴ Putting the scriptwriting to one side, Hirszman quickly put together a film-making cooperative that set out to document the strike as it unfolded in São Bernardo. The didactic purpose of the sixteen-millimeter color documentary was evident in its title, *O ABC da Greve (The ABC of the Strike)*, while the three months proved useful in adapting the theatrical text.⁵ Yet the feature film *Black-Tie*, he insisted, was to be "an original cinematographic work [filled] with the same emotion" as the play, written by Guarnieri in 1955 as a twenty-one-year-old communist student activist.⁶

Whether discussing the documentary or *Black-Tie*, Hirszman came back to the question that had been central to his own personal and political biography as a long-time member of the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB): the relationship between radical intellectuals and the *povo*. The literal meaning of *povo* in English (the "people," i.e., the inhabitants or citizens of a given country) does not accurately capture the specificity of the Brazilian expression, which posits a dichotomy between the *povo* (a globalizing category encompassing the working people of the city and countryside, the poor, the illiterate) and the *não-povo* (the dominant classes, the elites, the educated). In a country characterized by a vast abyss between the top and the bottom, it is not by chance that one refers to "Zé [José] Povo" meaning "Joe Nobody." Hirszman had posed the question with crystal clarity in two of his earliest documentaries from 1964: what should be the relationship

¹ *They Don't Wear Black-Tie* is available in the United States, with English subtitles, from New Yorker Films, www.newyorkerfilms.com.

² Leon Hirszman, "O Espião de Deus [Interview of 3 April 1979]," in *ABC da Greve: Documentário Inédito de Leon Hirszman sobre a Origem do Moderno Sindicalismo Brasileiro* (São Paulo, 1979), 5.

³ Helena Salem, *Leon Hirszman. O Navegador das Estrelas* (Rio de Janeiro, 1997), 255–56.

⁴ Leon Hirszman and Alex Vianny, "Leon Hirszman: Entrevista realizada por Alex Vianny en septiembre de 1982. [X Festival Internacional del Nuevo Cine Latinoamericano, Havana Cuba]," (1988), 19.

⁵ Hirszman, "O Espião," 6, 13; Salem, *Hirszman*, 256.

⁶ Leon Hirszman, "La Respuesta es sí. Entrevista a Gerardo Chijona," *Cine Cubano* 102 (1982):157, cited in Salem, *Hirszman*, 256.

⁷ Hirszman, "O Espião," 10; Salem, *Hirszman*, 314–315.

⁸ Hirszman, "O Espião," 11.

⁹ Leon Hirszman, Randal Johnson, and Robert Stam, "Recovering Popular Emotion: An Interview with Leon Hirszman," *Cinéaste* 13 (1984):23.

¹⁰ Jean-Claude Bernardet, *Cineastas e Imagens do Povo* (São Paulo, 1985), 6.

¹¹ Robert Anderson III, *Realism, Allegory, and the Strangled Cry. Theatrical Semiosis in the Drama of Gnafrancesco Guarnieri* (Valencia, 1998), 17.

¹² Augusto Boal, *Hamlet e o Filho do Padeiro: Memórias Imaginadas* (São Paulo, 1999),

between the "Absolute Minority" of university-educated individuals, an estimated one percent of the Brazilian population, and the "Absolute Majority"⁷ composed of largely illiterate or barely literate peasants or recent migrants from the impoverished countryside to big cities like São Paulo?

Speaking with enthusiasm during the filming of *O ABC da Greve*, Hirszman invoked his early experience as a key participant in the Popular Culture Center (Centro de Cultura Popular or CPC) of the National Union of Students (União Nacional de Estudantes or UNE) from 1961 to 1964. Describing the CPC as his generation's attempt to establish a "tie between the intellectual and the *povo*," Hirszman drew a contrast with what he was experiencing in 1979: "But here in São Paulo, it is different. It is not the intellectual that wants this, it is the masses that demand [this linkage], as part of their process of organization. The difference is enormous. In a certain sense, we had already been made aware [earlier] that a new dramaturgy was necessary, a new type of relationship between the intellectual and the *povo*."⁸ Yet Hirszman explained that he no longer made films "by the left for the left, by and for people who already think alike . . . Our task is much broader. We have to create a new vision of workers, of the political process, of the relationship between men and women, of Latin America."⁹ Yet what does the vision offered by Hirszman consist of? What is the cultural, political, and historical substance or significance of the presentation of workers in *Black-Tie*? Does the film represent an expression of social reality? And if so, what reality, and whose vision? These questions are fundamental because, as the distinguished Brazilian film critic Jean-Claude Bernardet has observed, "the cinematographic images of the *povo* cannot be considered to be their expression, but rather are a manifestation of the relationship that is established in the films between film makers and the *povo*."¹⁰ If true, then Guarnieri's and Hirszman's shared Marxist politics must play some role in shaping the workers' images presented in the play and film. Or perhaps these representations are to be explained, at least in part, as the expression of a middle-class desire for identification with the class "other."

Such issues gain importance precisely because neither Guarnieri nor Hirszman are or were marginal figures in Brazilian intellectual and cultural life. The fairy-tale success of the Arena Theater in São Paulo, after its staging of *Black-Tie* in 1958, became a political reference point for an emerging generation of radical students. Bringing "theater-in-the-round" to South America, the Arena "spearheaded resistance to the 1964 coup" and nurtured the careers of Guarnieri, "one of Brazil's most popular contemporary playwrights."¹¹ Hirszman was a preeminent figure among the young Brazilian film-makers who came to be known in the early 1960s as the Cinema Novo, a politically-committed but aesthetically pluralistic movement that quickly gained international recognition and acclaim. Thus Hirszman's 1981 film represents a reencounter with a workingclass thematic, but this time on new historical terrain. Using biography and the dramatic and cinematic texts, this article traces the political and aesthetic challenges facing them as they grappled with an eternal dilemma: *cadê o povo* (where is the *povo*), and how does one speak of them, to them, or for them? In its examination of the play, the article works from the proposition, as stated by Arena's Augusto Boal, that "theater is not a reproduction of reality. It is its representation, and as such, it is made from some point of view."¹² Thus, it seeks to explain why an image of "workers" proved central in the making of modern Bra-

zilian theater and film since the late 1950s while exploring the changing configuration of intellectual and *povo* between the late Populist Republic and the remaking of the Brazilian working class during the late 1970s. The argument throughout is based on Jean-Paul Sartre's observation that the intellectual and "his 'object' [of study or action] form a couple, each one of which is to be interpreted by the other; [and] the relationship between them must be itself interpreted as a moment of history."¹³

Who are "We" and who are "They"?: *Black Tie* and the Teatro Arena

*Our love is more delightful
Our yearning (saudade) lasts longer
Our embrace is tighter
We don't wear "bleque-tais" (bow-ties).*

From the recurring title samba by local resident Juvêncio.

Movie-goers unfamiliar with *Black-Tie's* prior history are likely to be puzzled by the peculiar distance between its title and the story being told about workingclass life in São Paulo. This remains true even after they recognize its derivation because samba is most closely associated with the setting of the original play, Rio de Janeiro's *favelas* (shanty towns). Moreover, the song's lyrics merely affirmed the lives and loves of the popular classes, mildly contrasted with their social superiors, and say nothing about strikes, popular collective struggle, or class betrayal. Yet the most significant point about the title, as Robert Anderson has pointed out, is the transformation of the song's refrain, "We don't wear 'blequetais,'" into "They Don't Wear Black-Tie," while simultaneously correcting its grammatical errors and anglicizing the spelling of "Black-Tie."¹⁴ The use of the third person emphasizes a we/they dichotomy that draws attention to the social distance between them (the *povo*) and the author, the actors, and the audience (the *não-povo*).

Although *black-tie* sounded dated in 1981, Guarnieri's choice of the word reflects the anti-elitist discursive constructs of the 1950s that punctured the pretentiousness of the rich, the educated, and the well born through reference to their foreign mannerisms and dress. Thus the Brazilian upper classes, the *grãfinos* (snobs or aristocrats), could just as easily be referred to as the *cartolas* (the top-hat crowd) or those who wear *black-tie*. In his comments in the original playbill, Guarnieri exploited the inherent flexibility of these markers of status and distinction with a title chosen to vent his personal criticism of the "supervalorization of the *high-society* scene, of the exaggerated importance given to the *black-tie* *grã-fin*os."¹⁵ The title was a direct criticism of São Paulo's theater establishment, with "its chic elites who *this time* are not on stage or in the audience."¹⁶ As a rebellion against the theatrical status quo, the creators of the Arena Theater proclaimed themselves part of the *povo*; like the workers on stage in their play, they don't wear *black-tie* either.

The Teatro Arena originated six years before *Black-Tie* when graduates of the new drama school in São Paulo formed their own company and acquired a modest theater in 1955, a year in which it merged with the Paulista Student Theater, a group of communist student activists led by Guarnieri and Oduvaldo Vianna Filho (1936–1974), known as Vianinha.

¹³ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Search for a Method* (New York, 1968), 72.

¹⁴ Anderson, *Realism*, 115–7.

¹⁵ Quoted from the playbill in Cláudia de Arruda Campos, *Zumbi, Tiradentes e Outras Histórias Contadas pelo Teatro de Arena de São Paulo* (São Paulo, 1988), 42–3.

¹⁶ Edélcio Mostaço, *Teatro Político: Arena, Oficina, e Opinião* (São Paulo, 1982), 33; quoted in Catarina Sant-Anna, *Meta-linguagem e Teatro* (Salvador, 1997), 44.

¹⁷ Gianfrancesco Guarnieri and Jalusa Barcellos, "Gianfrancesco Guarnieri [undated interview circa 1993]," in *CPC da UNE. Uma História de Paixão e Consciência*, ed. Barcellos (Rio de Janeiro, 1994), 225.

¹⁸ Gianfrancesco Guarnieri and Fernando Peixoto (interviewers), "Entrevista com Gianfrancesco Guarnieri [first published in July 1978]," in Peixoto, *Teatro em Movimento* (São Paulo, 1989), 45–46.

¹⁹ Vianinha in Fernando Peixoto, *Vianinha. Teatro, Televisão, e Política* (São Paulo, 1983), 27; Guarnieri and Barcellos in *CPC da UNE*, 236.

²⁰ Peixoto, *Vianinha*, 46, 24.

²¹ Peixoto, *Vianinha*, 28; Lélia Abramo, *Vida e Arte: Memórias de Lélia Abramo* (São Paulo/Campinas, n.d. [c. 1999]), 148, 151, 153, 155.

²² Boal, *Hamlet*, 159.

²³ Abramo, *Vida*, 153.

²⁴ Guarnieri and Barcellos in *CPC da UNE*, 236.

²⁵ Guarnieri and Barcellos in *CPC da UNE*, 234; Guarnieri and Peixoto in Peixoto, *Teatro em Movimento*, 51.

²⁶ Joaquim Ferreira dos Santos, *Feliz 1958. O Ano Que Não Devia Terminar* (Rio de Janeiro, 1997).

²⁷ John D. French, *The Brazilian Workers' ABC: Class Conflicts and Alliances in Modern São Paulo* (Chapel Hill, 1992).

For these young rebels, the aesthetics, politics, and composition of *paulista* theater "corresponded to the cultural and artistic necessities of the paulista bourgeoisie" who contracted foreign professionals to guarantee a European level of quality staging and performance.¹⁷ The dramaturgy was harshly criticized by Arena as "a copy and almost an imposition of what was being done abroad,"¹⁸ a prime example of a "cultural colonialism" that made it impossible for theater folk to imagine achieving success with a Brazilian dramaturgy.¹⁹ "Plays are put on in Brazil," Vianinha noted, "but they don't put on what happens in Brazil." What young people demanded, he wrote in 1958, was an authentic Brazilian *national* theater "with roots in our life and our culture."²⁰

Staged at a moment when Arena teetered on the edge of bankruptcy, *Black-Tie* proved a critical and popular success that launched the project of a politically committed "New Theater." In its first year, the play was presented 512 times, including an adventurous tour of dozens of small interior cities as well as performances in union halls.²¹ "Black-Tie was a gigantic step," Arena director Boal recalls, "empathy through total identification, not just analogy as with foreign plays."²² The play's "very Brazilian and contemporary preoccupations," recalled the actress who played the mother Romana, aroused an "illuminating curiosity in the population, especially among young amateur actors," who saw it as "a genuinely local expression . . . disconnected from the [dominant theater] aesthetic of foreign origin."²³ Looking back at its premiere in which he played the son Tião, Guarnieri insisted that *Black-Tie* was successful because it represented "what Brazilian society was wanting," with "its urban thematic, its protagonists, its affirmation [*resgate*] of the working class, for assuming the point of view of the oppressed, [and] its absence of manicheanism"²⁴ The play addressed "urgent perplexities" at a moment "of discussion, of generosity, and, yes, of confidence in the future."²⁵

The year 1958 was the high point of the generalized ferment and exuberant optimism associated with the "developmentalist" boom under President Juscelino Kubitschek (1955–1960) or JK.²⁶ JK took office after a period of political crisis, including the 1954 suicide of President Getúlio Vargas, and presided over a dynamic interlude of political depolarization linked to a fantastic vision of achieving "fifty years of progress in five." JK's drive was capped in 1960 with the inauguration of an entirely new national capital, Brasília, marked by the striking architecture and urban planning of Oscar Niemeyer and Lúcio Costa. Located in the largely uninhabited central highlands, Brasília's daringly modern architecture seemed to symbolize a country on the move, alive, vibrant, attuned to all that was most advanced (including the "100% national" automobiles that began to pour out of ABC's newly established foreign-owned factories). For the urban population, including an exploding middle class and the young, Brazil was finally escaping from all that was irremediably decrepit, backward, and retrograde. It was a new day in the age of the automobile and Sputnik.

Kubitschek's nimble centrist government also pursued a more open approach to politics that included a heightened level of tolerance for the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB), the dominant leftist group, which had been bitterly persecuted after its brief postwar heyday of legality and electoral success from 1945–1947.²⁷ After ten years in clandestinity, the Brazilian Communist Party's leader, Luis Carlos Prestes, a youthful military rebel

of the 1920s, was allowed to resurface, although his activities remained constrained by the continued illegality of the “extinct” PCB. It was in this period, recalled Arena’s Boal, a non-PCBer, that many theater people and artists “became members of or sympathized [with the Communist Party]; or, at a distance, were skeptical of it. Some said they were PSB [Brazilian Socialist Party members] and the *comunas* joked: ‘A socialist is a communist who doesn’t get imprisoned or beaten up by the police.’”²⁸ Whether motivated by sympathy or open-mindedness, an increasingly vocal sector of the educated middle class rejected the violent anticommunism they identified with the stifling conformity and provincialism of the conservative upper classes. The *cause célèbre* in this fight for toleration occurred in 1955 when Colonel Geraldo de Menezes Cortes, of the federal police, banned the first feature of a then unknown film-maker, Nelson Pereira dos Santos, at the time a member of the PCB, who would later be known as the “Pope” of the Cinema Novo. Influenced by Italian neorealism, *Rio 40 Graus* depicted Rio’s *povo* through the lives of five young black peanut peddlers. During the controversy, it seemed that every time Colonel Cortes opened his mouth, he merely changed feet in an embarrassing display of arrogance and ignorance that drew the attention of a student named Leon Hirszman. The film was only released after the colonel was ousted from office as the result of the 1955 military coup that preempted any threat to the inauguration of the newly elected President JK, an intervention that was seen as an encouraging sign of a new democratic era.²⁹

By 1958, this increasingly independent-minded intelligentsia, especially the young, had twice found a rallying cry in film and theater that spoke to their aspirations for progress and national affirmation. As part of their critical positioning vis-à-vis the “conservative classes,” it was essential that the *culito* (the educated)³⁰ affirm a more democratic and socially conscious stance vis-à-vis the *povo*, the masses still largely unknown to them. As the familial and patronage ties between *os doutores* (those with bachelors degrees) and the dominant classes weakened, a larger middle-class minority than in the past took up the enduring challenge facing intellectuals in an authoritarian society marked by deeply entrenched hierarchies of birth, education, culture, color, and money. In confronting this chasm, Nelson Pereira dos Santos and Guarnieri built upon the sympathetic and politically charged portrayals of the popular classes that had appeared in the Brazilian regionalist literature of the 1930s.³¹ Both *Rio 40 Graus* and *Black-Tie* sought to represent the reality of Rio’s *favelas*, but there was a clear distinction in terms of their focus. The former film highlighted petty street commerce, while *Black-Tie* dealt with a working-class family whose men worked in the metalworking industry. While the film’s commercial success was modest, the enthusiastic response to the play (a different marketplace) reflected the increasingly broad diffusion of the idea that the factory (and even those who worked in them) represented economic modernization. To speak of the industrial working-class *povo* as opposed to the poor was to address the future foundations of national progress.

Having gained a bully pulpit, Guarnieri and his Arena colleagues like Vianinha were quick to preach to their newly won audience. A veteran militant, Guarnieri had been president of the high school student association in Rio de Janeiro before his move to São Paulo and Vianinha had campaigned, at the age of nine, for his father, a playwright, when he ran

²⁸ Boal, *Hamlet*, 164.

²⁹ Inimá Simões, *Roteiro da Intolerância: A Censura Cinematográfica no Brasil* (São Paulo, 1999), 45–49; Helena Salem, *Nelson Pereira dos Santos: O Sonho Possível do Cinema Brasileiro* (Rio de Janeiro, 1996), 114–128; Mariarosaria Fabris, *Nelson Pereira dos Santos: Um Olhar Neo-realista?* (São Paulo, 1994); Salem, *Hirszman*, 90–91.

³⁰ On the cultural politics of the *culito* in the 1930s and 1940s, see Brian Owensby, *Intimate Ironies: Modernity and the Making of Middle-Class Lives in Brazil* (Stanford, 1999).

³¹ Peixoto, *Vianinha*, 50; Fabris, *Nelson*, 110.

³² Peixoto, *Vianinha*, 13; Guarnieri and Peixoto in Peixoto, *Teatro em Movimento*, 45–6, 51; Guarnieri and Barcellos in *CPC da UNE*, 227.

³³ Guarnieri and Peixoto in Peixoto, *Teatro em Movimento*, 52.

³⁴ Gianfrancesco Guarnieri, "O Teatro como Expressão da Realidade Nacional," *Revista Brasileira* 25 (1959):126, as quoted in Campos, *Zumbi*, 49; Peixoto, *Vianinha*, 30.

³⁵ Campos, *Zumbi*, 44.

³⁶ Peixoto, *Vianinha*, 37.

³⁷ Jorge Amado, *Os Subterrâneos da Liberdade*. Volume 1: *Os Ásperos Tempos*. Volume 2: *Agonia da Noite*. Volume 3: *A Luz no Túnel*, 31st reprint of 1954 ed. (Rio de Janeiro, 1980).

for deputy on the PCB ticket.³² They spoke with confidence about the role that theater could play in "the liberation of the Brazilian *povo*," but only if it was "totally preoccupied with the class struggle."³³ Their ideological and political polemics were conducted with more than their share of youthful sectarianism, as in Guarnieri's 1959 manifesto that demanded that theater take the side "of the exploited masses . . . [based on] dialectical-marxist analysis of phenomenon."³⁴

So what was theater at the service of the class struggle? In artistic terms, both Guarnieri and Vianinha's first plays in 1958–1959 adhered to "the most orthodox canon of a leftist aesthetic, . . . [that is,] realist drama that sought the expression of the social and political through the development of a specific concrete situation, refusing the abstract, the allegorical, the generalizing, the fragmentary."³⁵ Subordinating form to content, their theater was a political weapon that aimed to raise "consciousness" while capturing "our [Brazilian] reality, our way of talking, our mannerisms."³⁶ The impression of a dramaturgy linked to the most inflexible norms of the socialist realism of the communist tradition is strengthened by a brief summary of *Black-Tie*'s plot, which explores the domestic life of a veteran communist metalworker named Otávio, his wife Romana, and their children and neighbors in a Rio shanty town. In the course of preparing for a strike at his factory, Otávio confronts a familial crisis caused by the influence of petty bourgeois ideology on his son Sebatião (Tião), also a worker at the same factory, who had been raised as a child by non-working-class relatives during a period when Otávio was in jail. In the climax of the play, Tião betrays the strike, is expelled from the family, and loses his pregnant fiancé who stays loyal to her class. Throughout, the play vividly portrays the workers' oppression through the pithy words of the salt-of-the-earth Romana, while the class conscious leadership of Otávio and his black comrade Bráulio point the way to a new future through collective struggle. The strike is a success; the revolution cannot be far behind; perhaps the only element missing was a reference to the providential leadership of Luis Carlos Prestes.

In sympathetically portraying a rank-and-file communist worker, *Black-Tie* shared common terrain with the militant socialist realism of Jorge Amado's 1954 trilogy, *Os Subterrâneos da Liberdade* (*The Freedom Underground*).³⁷ Written at the height of the Cold War repression, it offered a gallery of party militants, from various social milieus, united in clandestine revolutionary activism during the Estado Novo dictatorship (1937–1945). Although competently written, the story-telling in *Os Subterrâneos* suffered from its underlying hagiographical and teleological bent. The trilogy, which assigned clear and none-too-subtle meanings to each of the individual characters, was easily perceived by readers as propagandistic: communist politics by declamation and illustration. As a contemporary noncommunist might have said, *Os Subterrâneos* was "that heavyhanded Communist thing" that Amado would himself abandon, along with the Communist Party, in 1957. Yet despite Guarnieri's adherence in 1955 to the same Marxist-Leninist ideology, *Black-Tie* was marked by a lightness of touch, politics by allusion, in a work that was more meditative than hortatory. Like Amado, the play refers to the external barriers to the advance of the working class, such as police repression, but the prime focus is on the texture and rhythms of everyday life. An intimate domestic drama, *Black-Tie* embodies a class prob-

lematic in the individual characters on stage, who are treated as complex and conflicted moral beings.³⁸

Black-Tie's most remarkable accomplishment, and the key to its power, as Rob Anderson demonstrates, was the author's ability to draw the audience into an identification with the son Tião, and not the father Otávio. In the opening scene, Tião faces a moral choice when his girlfriend Maria reveals that she is pregnant. Announcing their engagement, Tião wrestles with the difficulties of growing up and of becoming a man. In his interactions with Maria, Romana, Otávio, and his friend Jesuíno (who will also bet on the strike's failure), Tião comes to terms with his new responsibilities while refusing to bow down to the realities that threaten his dreams. Although Tião will be proven wrong about the prospects of the strike, we can understand his pragmatic conclusion that the only path forward for the weak is to curry the favor of those with power. Yet most importantly, Tião is admirable in his refusal to flee the consequences of his own actions. Once his fate is sealed by the strike's success, he refuses an offer of reconciliation and, in talking with his father, neither begs nor makes excuses but explains that it was not for lack of courage (which outrages Otávio even more).

Despite the apparent simplicity of its story, *Black-Tie* follows the dramatic structure of classical tragedy. The play positively values Tião's overall character and emphasizes that he "comes into conflict with the community, not for his motives, but because he seeks to act unilaterally . . . The tragic conflict [also] motivates the often one-dimensional characterization of Otávio . . . [and] the pivotal role of Romana as mediator. Tião's downfall is devastating" because he had never expected that Maria might choose loyalty to her community over her bond to him.³⁹ For most of the action, as Boal suggests, the play leaves open the question: "[W]ho is the hero: the petty bourgeois Tião or the proletarian Otávio?"⁴⁰ In setting father against son, as Décio Prado wrote, *Black-Tie* showed an admirable disinterestedness in balancing "the two sides of the scale. Only in the end does the author intervene, making the fiancé abandon the worker [Tião] who, betraying the strike, has betrayed his friends and companions." Although the father's position is vindicated, Otávio is an insensitive father, which is not unrelated to his political sectarianism.⁴¹ In terms of the play's overall dynamics, as Prado observed, the father's "somewhat dreamy and naive optimism" is sharply contrasted "to the realism without illusions of the mother [Romana] . . . [whose] direct and blunt observations, frank, bold-faced, and caustic, call the men back to reality, neutralizing, with a lightly acidic note, the false sentimentalism into which many scenes threaten to fall."⁴²

In many ways, *Black-Tie* was the perfect artistic expression of the Brazilian Communist Party's new, more moderate political line that discarded many of the political shibboleths of its Cold War Stalinist past. With the March 1958 Declaration, the PCB committed itself to broader political alliances with other popular forces and lessened its leaders' tendency towards "arbitrariness and disrespect in the handling of intellectuals and artists" (which had led Nelson Pereira dos Santos to quietly forsake the party in 1957).⁴³ Although this new dispensation postdated the writing of *Black-Tie*, the shift broadened the possibilities for recruitment among students and intellectuals who could not help but be impressed by the play's non-manichean depiction of the social dynamics of strikes. As *New York Times* film critic Vincent Canby would later say about the film, the process by which

³⁸ Décio de Almeida Prado's contemporary review is in Guarnieri, *Black-Tie*, 9.

³⁹ Anderson, *Realism*, 104.

⁴⁰ Anderson, *Realism*, 104.

⁴¹ In the play's only reference to the PCB, a veiled one, Otávio attacks "those useless intellectuals who spend their time discussing whether the old man [i.e., Josef Stalin] was a son of a bitch, or not, if his mustache made a mess of things or not. And here everything continues to increase [in price], people can't live, and they're discussing if the old man was personalist or not. They should take a bath!" (Guarnieri, *Black-Tie*, 38). Vianinha also refers to "Otávio's sectarianism" in Peixoto, *Vianinha*, 77.

⁴² Prado, as quoted in Guarnieri, *Black-Tie*, 9.

⁴³ Marcelo Ridenti, *Em Busca do Povo Brasileiro—Artistas da Revolução, do CPC à era da TV* (São Paulo, 2000), 67.

⁴⁴ Vincent Canby, "Brazil's Passionate Cinema Novo Delivers a Fine Movie," *The New York Times*, June 12, 1983.

⁴⁵ Luiz Fernando, "O Sentido da Arte em Guarnieri," *Novos Rumos* 9–13 (1959):4.

⁴⁶ Guarnieri and Peixoto in Peixoto, *Teatro em Movimento*, 53–4.

the viewer, especially the non-working-class viewer, comes to identify with Tião's opportunism serves, in an insidious fashion, to persuade us to see its "truth not by forcing old agitprop role-models on us [Otávio or Bráulio] but by making us squirm through identification with the wrong character."⁴⁴

For its youthful audience in 1958, *Black-Tie's* persuasiveness derived precisely from the ease with which Tião's personal dilemma could be transposed into their own lives. Given their middle-class origins, Guarnieri observed in a 1959 interview, Brazilian intellectuals are obliged "to associate themselves with the bourgeoisie" in order to pursue their professional development and selfexpression. "To guarantee their subsistence," they "put their talents at the service of those who can pay," which places them "in an unstable and even subservient position."⁴⁵ The relevance of *Black-Tie's* central problematic is clear: collective struggle versus the individual solution embraced by Tião, his friend Jesuíno, and most middle-class people. Like Otávio with his son, Arena was asking its audience to choose a struggle whose feasibility was uncertain while giving up tried and proven ways of getting ahead. In Tião's case, the rejection of his father involves looking upward for a future, not horizontally. The generational rebellion of *Black-Tie's* youthful middle-class audience, by contrast, was to embark on an adventure involving a future to be made jointly with a *povo*, below them, that they barely knew. If they were to opt against the powerful, as increasing numbers would do over the next decade, they would need to believe that there was something solid underneath their feet.

When *Black-Tie* was first performed in February 1958, the credibility of Otávio's path did not seem entirely theoretical to its *paulista* audience. Less than four months earlier, the industrial districts of metropolitan São Paulo had been filled with tens of thousands of roaming pickets during what came to be known as the "Strike of the 400,000." Brazilian newspapers had published thousands of articles about the country's largest-ever strike movement while mass circulation magazines like *O Cruzeiro*, with its half million readers, published sensationalist photographs of picketing workers, clashes with the police, and broken windows at the factory gates. While the press largely depicted the movement as the work of communists and rioters (*baderneiros*), the strike raised urgent questions for some who made their lives far from the factory districts. In this regard, *Black-Tie* seemed to provide the story behind the current newspaper headlines as well as insight into their own existential dilemmas. As Guarnieri would recall, "we began to discover the power of the *povo*" during the late Populist Republic, and the course of political events through 1964 "created a certain sensation of euphoria, the feeling of walking down a road with obstacles, but obstacles that it was up to us to sweep away."⁴⁶

Yet what relationship, if any, did *Black-Tie* have to the workers who occupied the front lines of the class struggle in rapidly industrializing São Paulo? By combining his political experience and feel for theatrical forms, Guarnieri had produced a "working class" that stood in stark contrast to party orthodoxy and sloganeering. Guarnieri's workers are clearly not an idealized "mass," a token on the chessboard of class struggle, but consist instead of particular families and specific individuals, engaged in real-life dramas. In depicting workers in their full humanity, Guarnieri's play would have made sense to the PCB's real-world Otávios like Marcos Andreotti (1910–1984), a communist worker-activist in the ABC region with whom I

conducted fifty hours of interviews in 1982. During a lifetime of party and union militancy going back to 1925, Andreotti had founded and served as first president of the local metalworkers union in the 1930s, a position to which he would be reelected again in 1958 serving through 1964. Having lived the clandestinity and prison chronicled in *Os Subterrâneos*, Andreotti would have recognized the troubled relationship between Tião and Otávio as part of the price of class militancy and, like Otávio, his militancy would have been unsustainable without his own Romana. His wife Dona Angelina, a former textile worker who was not herself a PCB member, was the dominating figure who held the family together in the daily struggle for survival. Like Romana, she, too, could figure out how to get food when her husband was fired (once again) and could be expected to go into action to get “her man” out of jail when he was arrested (again). Given the high price paid by such families, it is by no means surprising that neither of Andreotti’s children would chose the path of struggle (Tião’s resentments are not unique even if his actions are beyond the pale). Throughout it all, Dona Angelina would explain her life through the dominant tropes of male/female relations: loyalty to her husband as the font of female obligation.⁴⁷

Black-Tie’s greatest weakness as social portrayal and a dramatic text is to be found in the character of Maria, a seamstress whose engagement to Tião is announced early in the play. While richly portraying the larger-than-life mother figure Romana, the play tells us nothing about Maria, pregnant with Tião’s child, that would lead us to expect her blunt refusal to accompany him in his exile from the community. In their final scene, the play largely depends upon Maria’s convulsive crying to justify a decision that not only violates the prevailing gender norms but leaves her an unmarried single mother. As Décio Prado suggests, this unexpected plot twist may lack credibility in terms of “female psychology,” but it originates in Guarnieri’s need for a *deus ex machina*. It is not a question “of psychology but of morality: the author needs to make his position clear in some fashion, to say in the end on which side he stands.”⁴⁸ Thus, Maria’s words in their closing dialogue serve merely as the pretext for Tião’s moment of selfunderstanding: Yes, “the strike [did] made me fearful. A different fear! Not fear of the strike! Fear of being a worker!” To this, the author unconvincingly juxtaposes a sentimental declaration by Maria: “I [only] want to leave the *morro* [hill, i.e., the shanty town] with everyone,” that is, all of us together, not alone, just with you.⁴⁹

Black-Tie, as Guarnieri would later observe, “departs without a doubt from a romantic vision of the world,” depicted as a place of “basic, immutable, values” where things will turn out okay in the end: “Even [with] the probable ‘traitor.’ All know that he is being pushed by society.”⁵⁰ In assuring his audience that the *povo* was a reliable ally, Guarnieri depicted an “un-alienated” working-class community in which Otávio’s values reign supreme and unchallenged.⁵¹ While this might work for those who wrote plays or party manifestos, a rank-and-file communist organizer like Andreotti couldn’t afford to cultivate illusions about those he sought to lead. Doubling in number every two or three years during the 1950s, São Paulo’s industrial workers were characterized by neither a deeply entrenched sense of *working-class* identity nor a high degree of political and trade union militancy. As a generalizing observation, Andreotti always emphasized the average workers’ *immediatismo*, their overarching concern

⁴⁷ On the prevailing gender ideology among *paulista* workers, see Theresa Veccia, “‘My Duty as a Woman’: Gender Ideology, Work, and Working Class Women’s Lives in São Paulo, Brazil 1900–1950,” and John D. French and Mary Lynn Pedersen Cluff, “Women and Working Class Mobilization in Postwar São Paulo, 1945–1948,” in *The Gendered Worlds of Latin American Women Workers*, ed. John D. French and Daniel James (Durham, 1997), 100–146, 177–179.

⁴⁸ Prado in Guarnieri, *Black-Tie*, 9.

⁴⁹ Guarnieri, *Black-Tie*, 108–109.

⁵⁰ Quoted in Guarnieri, *Black-Tie*, 6; Guarnieri and Barcellos in *CPC da UNE*, 234.

⁵¹ See Vianinha’s sharp critical observations in Peixoto, *Vianinha*, 77, 50–51.

⁵² See John D. French, *The Metalworkers of ABC, 1950–1980: Linking Consciousness and Mobilization in Brazil* (forthcoming) as well as the discussion of the 1961 diary kept by Andreotti's fellow union leader Philadelpho Braz in John D. French, "Drowning in Laws but Starving (for Justice?): Brazilian Labor Law and the Workers' Quest to Realize the Imaginary," *Political Power and Social Theory* 12 (1998):203–206.

⁵³ Juarez Rubens Brandão Lopes, "O Ajustamento do Trabalhador à Indústria: Mobilidade Social e Motivação," in *Mobilidade e Trabalho*, ed. Bertram Hutchinson (Rio de Janeiro, 1960), 360–440.

⁵⁴ Interview with Marcos Andreotti, November 24, 1982, Santo André.

with their most direct and concrete *personal* needs and grievances (as with Tião's focus on the monetary demands of marriage and fatherhood). The first academic sociologists to study *paulista* workers tended to conceptualize this disposition as "individualistic" and believed that it contradicted the collectivist orientation they expected to characterize workers' behavior. Andreotti, by contrast, based his organizing precisely on these immediate needs that had to be woven, individual by individual, into his project of class organization and mobilization.⁵² He was well aware of the continued pull exerted by the workers' search for individual solutions to their own problems. Although identifying a common obstacle to the mobilization of both working- and middle-class people, the politically motivated idealization in *Black-Tie* obscured the fact that workers were, on the whole, closer in their behavior to Tião and Jesuíno (his two-faced fellow strike-breaking friend) than Otávio.

Yet Andreotti, unlike the sociologists, knew that the absence of an explicit *working-class* consciousness coexisted with an elemental solidarity among these new workers, mostly migrants, who perceived the world as divided into the poor and the rich, or the sharks (*tubarões*) and their prey (the latter one of the most common popular terminologies). This horizontal division between the *povo* and the *não-povo* formed the basis upon which demands for loyalty to each other could be made, although potentially to quite different ends. On some occasions, this localized group feeling might well pull workers through the gate and into the factory during a strike or it might make them go out the factory gate and into the streets.⁵³ Andreotti's general comments confirmed the fickleness on the part of many workers who "joined" such mass strikes. "Conflicts between pickets and those who came to work rarely happened," he recalled, because "the guy would see the picket and didn't enter." But the same worker, he went on, would come "back the next day and go to work then if there were no pickets on hand." In such a case, he concluded, the worker could be said to adhere to the strike only "at that moment, consciously or unconsciously," after which he tried to go back to work once again.⁵⁴

Andreotti's matter-of-fact observations about *imediatismo* and "unconscious adhesions" also explains why attitudes towards nonstrikers in São Paulo were anything but vehement or condemnatory. Rather than viewing them in absolute moral terms, communist militants like Marcos Andreotti were convinced, as Otávio says to Romana about Tião, that such "less conscious workers" would change once they had seen and understood more of life. It is suggestive that no word for strikebreaker in Brazil carries anything like the emotional weight of hatred and betrayal suggested by the North American term *scab*, while even the Brazilian term for those who fail to honor a strike is more descriptive and less active: to puncture a strike (*fura-greve*), not to break a strike (*quebra-greve*). A similar working-class reaction was recalled by Arena actress Vera Gertel, a red diaper baby who married Vianinha, when they asked workers who saw the play: "'Do you think the father was correct in expelling the son from the *morro* because he broke the strike [*furou a greve*]?' There were responses of the sort: 'No, it was wrong. Because he could have won his son for our fight; for example, he could have taken up a collection so his son could marry' — the women [sic], in the situation, was pregnant." In this regard, she concludes, *Black-Tie* was still romantic and moralistic and "not yet a participatory theater."⁵⁵

Making politics, making film: *They Don't Wear Black-Tie* 1981

During their 1979 collaboration, Hirszman and Guarnieri toyed with entitling the film *Segunda-feira, Greve Geral* (*Monday, General Strike*), which would have directly referred to the industrywide strike that serves as the dramatic pivot of the film as opposed to the play, where the strike occurs in a single factory.⁵⁶ Such a militant-sounding title would have also highlighted the film's more direct commentary on the politics of the 1978–1979 mass strikes in metropolitan São Paulo. Yet discarding the original title would have denied the biographical and political roots of this generational landmark while the explicit transposition of *Black-Tie* would force them—like mountain climbers (*alpinistas*) in Guarnieri's words⁵⁷—to make their original pre-1964 political and artistic project relevant to a new historical moment. Having entered politics through the PCB (although only Hirszman retained a formal tie), the new film would thus revive, revise, and extend the original propositions of the dominant sector of the pre-1964 Left.

Whether in 1964 or 1979, Leon Hirszman always sought the front lines of the struggle, recalled Nelson Pereira dos Santos, and had “a fantastic passion for politics. . . . Full of Marx, he would let his mind wander, he would fly, talking for hours, something beautiful.”⁵⁸ Opposition economist Maria Conceição Tavares also emphasized Hirszman's restless and relentless political and intellectual energy, driven by the sense that reality could be “captured,” understood, and changed. “He tried all paths, he would follow the scent, searching with his head and all of his senses,”⁵⁹ she went on, and it was this existential quest that made Hirszman the great organizer of the CPC, the Cinema Novo, and the opposition intelligentsia.⁶⁰ *Black-Tie's* cameraman Eduardo Scorel, who filmed a famous 1964 political rally for a never-to-be-completed Hirszman documentary, recalled the impact of 1979, “a rebirth of the political effervescence of the working class. The beginning, in a certain sense, of the end of the military regime. There, Leon [Hirszman] took up again the link that had been cut in 1964.”⁶¹

Helena Salem's biography lays out the family story behind Leon Hirszman's emotional and intellectual dedication to politics, above all Marxist politics. Born in 1937 in Rio de Janeiro, his parents were orthodox Polish Jews who had emigrated to Brazil in 1934–35 while his father's entire family, who refused to flee for religious reasons, was exterminated by the Nazis. While his mother was a larger-than-life figure, religiously orthodox and rigidly authoritarian, his father was “a happy, generous *bon vivant*, not at all authoritarian, an atheist, an inveterate gambler, [and a] passionate reader.” After starting out as a peddler, his father eventually established his own leather shop, but his real passions were playing poker, which he did professionally, and the communist politics he embraced in Brazil. His son Leon joined the Communist Youth at fourteen and went to Engineering School in 1956 to satisfy his mother although his time was spent doing politics and watching films in the PCB-linked cinema club movement.⁶² In 1960, Hirszman's trajectory became directly linked to the diaspora of the Teatro Arena when Vianinha invited Hirszman to compile a film collage for his new play entitled *O Mais-Valia Vai Acabar, Seu Edgar* (*Surplus Value is Going to End, Mr. Edgar*).

In December 1960, the twenty-four-year-old Hirszman joined Vianinha in founding the Popular Culture Center, which would become a ral-

⁵⁵ Ridenti, *Em Busca*, 106.

⁵⁶ Hirszman, “La Respuesta [1982],” 157; cited in Salem, *Hirszman*, 255.

⁵⁷ Salem, *Hirszman*, 256.

⁵⁸ Salem, *Hirszman*, 152–3; Ridenti, *Em Busca*, 69–70.

⁵⁹ Salem, *Hirszman*, 246–7.

⁶⁰ Salem, *Hirszman*, 71–2, 117, 245–6; Caca Diegues in Barcellos, ed., *CPC da UNE*, 41.

⁶¹ Salem, *Hirszman*, 249–50.

⁶² Salem, *Hirszman*, 23, 29, 32, 90.

⁶³ Randal Johnson and Robert Stam, *Brazilian Cinema* (New York, 1995), 32; Randal Johnson, *Cinema Novo x 5: Masters of Contemporary Brazilian Film* (Austin, 1984), 2; Salem, *Hirszman*, 114.

⁶⁴ Jean-Claude Bernardet, *Cineastas*, 190.

⁶⁵ Salem, *Hirszman*, 256.

⁶⁶ Hirszman, "Emotion," 21.

⁶⁷ Hirszman, "O Espião [1979]," 14, 10.

lying point for talented young playwrights, directors, actors, film-makers, poets, and musicians who were part of a larger revolution in aesthetics and politics. While serving as head of its film department, Hirszman produced his first documentaries and played a vital role in the networking that led to the Cinema Novo (New Cinema). Gaining international recognition, the movement has been defined in various ways: as a Brazilian fusion of Italian neorealism with the French *nouvelle vogue*; as a specifically Brazilian effort to establish an independent national(ist) cinema; as part of an international quest for a revolutionary, Third World, cinematic aesthetic and politics; or even simply as a cinema based on "a man with an idea and a camera in his hand" in a well-known aphorism from Glauber Rocha.⁶³ Like Arena, the CPC was riven by ideological polemics that were linked to the political whirlwind that seemed to mark the coming of the "Brazilian Revolution" (a term whose content was never very clearly delineated).

The newly radicalized student movement of which the CPC was a part would play an important role in the forward thrust of Brazilian politics in the early 1960s, which saw unexpected political crises, apparent leftist triumphs, and a political polarization that would end—unexpectedly for the Left—in a rightist coup in 1964 that placed the military in power until 1985. The 1964 military coup brought with it, in film critic Jean Claude Bernardet's words, "the collapse of that which would later appear to us to have been an illusion . . . the revolutionary and popular transformation of society that we believed was so near."⁶⁴ Yet this yawning gap between desire and reality, which would discredit an overly "reformist" PCB that failed to foresee the defeat, did not lead to the abandonment of the dream but rather to its intensification within a large sector of the youthful intellectual vanguard. With the cancellation of the political rights of thousands and the disarticulation of the labor and peasant movements, radical students (and ex-students) came to occupy the front lines in opposition to the military regime. The resulting crescendo of mass struggles was cut short in late 1968 by a radicalization of the military's "revolution" with the dismissal of Congress, the abolition of habeas corpus and civil liberties, and the massive resort to arrest, imprisonment, and torture. This repressive turn of events once again demolished the hopes of this generation of middle-class youth, especially tragically for the minority that embarked on the path of armed struggle against the regime, which would be wiped out by the early 1970s.

If Hirszman and Guarnieri had filmed *Black-Tie* in the dark days of 1974, when they first discussed the prospect, the end result would have seemed a tombstone commemorating an historical actor that seemed dead and buried. The film version released in 1981, by contrast, reflected the hopes of an *abertura* marked by a dramatic upsurge of the industrial working class. In 1979, the script's coauthors spent six months researching São Paulo's vibrant popular movements and consulting with social scientists and political and cultural activists.⁶⁵ In shifting "from the familial space of the play into the broader social space of the factory and the streets,"⁶⁶ Hirszman also drew on his experience filming the ABC autoworkers' strike of March 1979.⁶⁷ If the original *Black-Tie* had been an inspired family drama weakly grounded in social, geographical, and temporal terms, the film version would offer an empirically well-informed panorama of *paulista* working-class life.⁶⁸ The resulting film "communicates a feeling of knowledgeable intimacy with working class life"⁶⁹ that was missing

from the original theatrical production. Using a simplistic class analysis, for example, the young Guarnieri had depicted the Portuguese owner of the neighborhood *botequim* (bar/luncheonette) as alien to the community and its values.⁷⁰ But Alípio, the owner of the modest bar in the film, is treated sympathetically and his *botequim* stands at the center of the social life of the neighborhood's men. Alípio's success depends upon his actions as an attentive social facilitator and, although hardly rich, he is also a source of credit in a community whose members are short on cash and subject to unexpected reverses. When Andreotti was in prison during the Estado Novo, for example, his family survived on credit provided by a local merchant—a debt Andreotti paid off after his release. This idea of honor is also demonstrated by Maria's father, the unemployed Jurandir, who returns to Alípio's to pay off his debt after his first day back on the construction site.

The figure of Jurandir, which is new, offers the viewer insight into the internal stratification within the *paulista* working class. While Tião and his father work at the small-to-medium size Santa Marta metalworking plant, Jurandir is irregularly employed as a *pedreiro* (mason) in the construction industry. Given its huge demand for labor at low wages, the construction labor force was dominated by unskilled, often illiterate rural folk like Jurandir who had migrated to São Paulo. The alcoholic Jurandir's family lives in misery (*miséria*) with a sickly mother and a son too young to work (Bié). Although Maria's job at Santa Marta provides the family's support, she still faces the tyrannical behavior of her drunken and often abusive father, who is marked by self-pity and explosive anger. Acutely aware of a world stacked against him, he particularly resents *paulista* prejudice against migrants from the poor and darker northeastern region.⁷¹ Jurandir does experience a moment of respite with Maria's engagement and a friend's invitation to go back to work. That evening, having squared his debt, the drunken Jurandir is held up on his way home and shot in the back. (If you want money, he suggested humorously, you're talking to the wrong person.) While Alípio covers the funeral expenses, Tião doesn't flee his personal responsibilities and assures Maria that he will help care for Bié.⁷² Like the original play, the film makes room for the community's pre-adolescents like Bié and the local delinquent Tuca, who meets his end at the hands of the belligerent *Polícias Militares* or Military Police (PM, a militarized police force not linked to the army). Waving a revolver, he dashes into Alípio's bar with the PMs after him and runs out the back swearing that he will never surrender because of past police torture. Although he never fires his gun, Tuca is shot dead by the PMs who have surrounded him.⁷³

The senseless killings of Jurandir and Tuca speak to the film's darker and harsher vision about the violence underlying Brazilian society. Rather than treating violence solely as labor repression (as in the play), the film tackles the more intractable and invisible issues of routine police violence against the *povo* and the impunity of its perpetrators. This aspect of a profoundly hierarchical and unequal capitalist society remains unchanged: Between 1990 and 1997, for example, an average of 662 civilians a year were killed by the Military Police in the state of São Paulo, compared to twenty-four PMs. Film and life were eerily close in the case of the thirteen-year-old *favelado* Fernando Ramos da Silva who played Bié as well as the title role in Hector Babenco's graphic film *Pixote* about street kids. In *Black-Tie*,

⁶⁸ Given Guarnieri's role in writing both versions of "Black-Tie," the discussion of the film will be based on the unpublished script submitted to Embrafilme in January 1980. The film follows the script closely and deletions or improvised additions will be called to the reader's attention when relevant.

⁶⁹ Robert Stam, "Black Tie," 34.

⁷⁰ Guarnieri, *Black-Tie*, 57.

⁷¹ Guarnieri and Hirszman, *Roteiro*, 69, 13, 15–16, 30–31.

⁷² Guarnieri and Hirszman, *Roteiro*, 66, 73–74.

⁷³ Guarnieri and Hirszman, *Roteiro*, 27, 45–6.

⁷⁴ Guarnieri and Hirszman, *Roteiro*, 55; José Carlos Blat and Sérgio Saraiva, *O Caso da Favela Naval: Polícia Contra o Povo* (São Paulo, 2000), 43–44, 134–5.

⁷⁵ Stam, "Black Tie," 35.

⁷⁶ Guarnieri and Hirszman, *Roteiro*, 24, 50, 93–95.

⁷⁷ Anderson, *Realism*, 103.

⁷⁸ Guarnieri and Hirszman, *Roteiro*, 108–9.

⁷⁹ Stam, "Review," 34; Salem, *Hirszman*, 264.

⁸⁰ Guarnieri and Hirszman, *Roteiro*, 6, 42, 72.

⁸¹ Guarnieri and Hirszman, *Roteiro*, 72, 75, 86.

⁸² Guarnieri and Hirszman, *Roteiro*, 52, 86, 111.

Bié is seen acting out Tuca's heroic death; in real life, the unarmed Ramos would be murdered by police in 1987 (dragged out from under his bed in the *favela* to which he had returned). Although a jury would reject police claims of a shoot-out, neither of the two convicted police would serve a day in prison. As Bié had declared during their games: "Now I'm Tuca!"⁷⁴

Although maintaining the play's emotional core, the film shifts the balance between the central characters significantly. Playing Romana, the actress Fernanda Montenegro (an Oscar winner for her role in *Central Station*) gives a powerful performance as the archetypal mother who "makes love and solidarity palpable and real."⁷⁵ Yet the film's Romana now loses ground to a greatly strengthened Otávio, a warmly paternal figure who has lost much of his insensitivity and sectarianism. This tilts the viewers' against Tião, whose rivalry with his father is also far more sharply delineated. As in the play, Tião remains an individualist, but his actions are presented in a far more negative light. Tião's friend Jesuíno, for example, is a *dedo-duro* (literally a "hard finger" or informer) who openly discusses who he should denounce to management. On the day of the strike itself, Tião directly defies his shamed and enraged father caught up in the violent police repression outside the factory.⁷⁶ The sharpness of Tião's betrayal lays the groundwork for his final confrontation with Maria, played by Beth Mendes, a former student active in the armed struggle. Mendes gives a "strikingly steely portrayal" that contrasts with the original Maria's "shock, sadness, and disbelief."⁷⁷ She denounces Tião as a coward who lacks any ideals, breaks off the engagement, and tells him she will be ashamed to tell the child that he is Tião's son.⁷⁸

Is Maria's transformation poorly motivated and spurred perhaps by the authors' leftist political sympathies? Known for his "solidarity with women characters and sensitivity to women's issues,"⁷⁹ the filmmaker has prepared the viewer by revealing the tensions between Tião and Maria, which range from control of a woman's body (should she get an abortion?)⁸⁰ to the norm for acceptable male behavior (his ordering her around).⁸¹ These low-key exchanges show Maria's questioning of the patriarchal view of women as lesser beings subject to male authority (whether her father's or Tião's). Moreover, the film traces her gradual steps towards an active commitment which lead up to a climax on the first day of the strike. Accompanied by her friend Silene, a terrified Maria exhorts the other workers before being grabbed by police; talking back, the cop responds by calling her "a little whore" and violently kicking her in the stomach.⁸² Taken to a clinic because of bleeding from her womb (the baby is okay), Silene and Maria return to Otávio's house where they fall asleep together in Romana's bed.

Informed by Silene, a terrified Tião runs out of the factory gate, is beaten by strikers, and arrives after their discharge. His harsh exchange with Maria after his arrival home is interrupted by Otávio's return, beaten but warmly linked to those around him; "Mrs. Romana," he says with glee, "made a revolution at the police" to get him out. Asked if it is her first strike, Silene answers with humor: "We're more used to watching soap operas, but see, there's more emotion in the street!" Far from being implausible, the experience of Maria and Silene reflects the trajectories of the activist minority of the 80,000 women metalworkers in the *município* of São Paulo (a fifth of the total work force).⁸³ In 1978–79, sociologist Rosalina Leite in-

interviewed twenty-two female activists and showed how women, once they broke through the barriers of fear and gender roles, became “extremely combative and enter[ed] into the fight with passion, with an immediate involvement even greater than that of men.”⁸⁴ Such an engagement was most likely to occur during mass strikes, which confirms the generalization that “the greater the extent, depth, and intensity of working-class mobilization, the greater the involvement and visibility of working-class women, housewives as well as women workers.”⁸⁵

Although conceived as a political intervention, the 1958 *Black-Tie* was least satisfactory as a reflection upon the politics of the workers’ movement. Reflecting the author’s distance from the working-class *povo*, the play’s sophistication coexisted with an abstract vision of labor mobilization as flowing naturally from a working-class essence expressed through Otávio. Viewed in this timeless fashion, the act of striking was inherently good, necessary, and appropriate across the board. The 1981 film, by contrast, was infinitely more sophisticated in its exposition of the political, strategic, and tactical challenges facing the contemporary working-class Left and the labor movement. The result was a far more profoundly political film in which the working class, as Hirszman insisted, was not treated as “something static and dead,” but approached through “its contradictions, [and] the complexity of a time during which it [was] recovering its historical will and consciousness.”⁸⁶

The film *Black-Tie*, as Guarnieri’s noted, directly addressed the heated debates flowing from “the different [political] positions within the workers’ movement itself” in the late 1970s.⁸⁷ On one side was the old labor Left represented by the PCB and its union allies whose perspective was expressed in the pragmatic moderation of the film’s chastened communist Otávio and his black friend and fellow militant Bráulio (played by Milton Gonçalves on both occasions). The other more radical camp consisted of the new leftist party that had been founded in 1979 by Lula, the union leader who led the ABC metalworkers strikes, with the support of the Catholic Liberation Theology activists and other non-PCB leftists.⁸⁸ This viewpoint was expressed through the figure of the impatient young labor militant Sartini, so eager to strike back at the oppressors that he fails to gauge the balance of power or the degree of worker organization that will determine a strike’s success. The split within the activist core of the working class could even be familial (Lula’s brother Frei Chico was in the PCB), with each side finding its non-working-class counterparts among both the older and newer generation of radical intellectuals. Even the film’s cast reflected this leftist political pluralism. Director Hirszman was with the “reformist” PCB while two of the actresses were founders of the PT: the youthful Beth Mendes (later PT federal deputy) and Lélia Abramo, who had premiered the role of Romana in 1958 and who played Maria’s sickly mother in the film.

In Abramo’s memoirs, this one-time Trotskyist distant from the original Arena’s PCB core noted but by no means endorsed the hostile reception that *Black-Tie* received from some younger *PTistas*. “The film provoked a certain polemic,” this older PT intellectual observed, “in virtue of having altered its vision about a question of principle: the posture towards the strike.” In Sartini’s words, the PCBers had become soft, part of the defeatist “leave it be” crowd in terms of striking; Otávio and Bráulio replied by

⁸³ Arnaldo Nogueira, *A Modernização Conservadora do Sindicalismo Brasileiro: A Experiência do Sindicato dos Metalúrgicos de São Paulo* (São Paulo, 1997), 54, 58, 61, 63, 69.

⁸⁴ Rosalina de Santa Cruz Leite, *A Operária Metalúrgica: Estudo Sobre as Condições de Vida e Trabalho de Operárias Metalúrgicas na Cidade de São Paulo* (São Paulo, 1982), 130, 132,

⁸⁵ French and Cluff, “Women and Mobilization,” 177.

⁸⁶ Hirszman, “Popular Emotions,” 23.

⁸⁷ Salem, *Hirszman*, 256–57. For a balanced examination of this fight for political and union hegemony on the Left, see the excellent article by Marco Aurélio Santana, “Política e História em Disputa: O ‘Novo Sindicalismo’ e a Idéia da Ruptura com o Passado,” in *O Novo Sindicalismo Vinte Anos Depois*, ed. Iram Jácome Rodrigues (Petrópolis, 1999), 133–161.

⁸⁸ The active participation in labor struggles by Catholic priests and the church was acknowledged in the film: Guarnieri and Hirszman, *Roteiro*, 21–2.

⁸⁹ Guarnieri and Hirszman, *Roteiro*, 39–40, 78, 83–85.

⁹⁰ Hirszman, "Popular Emotion," 21; Guarnieri and Hirszman, *Roteiro*, 39–41, 83–84.

⁹¹ Abramo, *Vida*, 234.

⁹² Stam, "Black-Tie," 34; Guarnieri and Hirszman, *Roteiro*, 118.

⁹³ Stam, "Black Tie," 34, No-gueira, *Modernização*, 31.

⁹⁴ Salem, *Hirszman*, 268.

emphasizing that one strikes only when the time is right and the workers united and that one must avoid precipitate action that could lead to defeat.⁸⁹ In truth, as even Hirszman recognized, the "naive voluntarism" of Sartini and of the PT itself was far closer to the unconditional dare-all radicalism of the original Otávio than it was to the film's older Otávio. Now "more union activist than party militant," past defeats had led Otávio to conclude that it is better to err on the side of caution (although he courageously embraces the strike in the film, even though he knows it is doomed to defeat).⁹⁰ Knowing those of both political camps, Abramo ended with the noncommittal but respectful observation that "perhaps the twenty three years that had passed had altered the director and author's way of look[ing] at this question. But it turned out a pretty film" nonetheless, she insisted, as indeed it was.⁹¹

Written before the harshest moments of fratricidal leftist conflict in the early 1980s, the making of *Black-Tie* was still an opposition project that reflected the hard-earned unity on the Left achieved during the military regime. It is true, as film scholar Robert Stam noted, that the film could be criticized for failing to "accurately represent the current political situation," at least in terms of the shooting of Bráulio on the picket line. ("Get the black [*criolou* or creole]," says the undercover cop.)⁹² The assassination was drawn from the most dramatic moment in the 1979 general strike of São Paulo's metalworkers, when the black rank-and-file activist Santo Dias was killed while picketing the Sylvânia factory. Consciously intended as a tribute, *PTistas* disagreed with the political dishonesty involved with attributing nonmilitant PCB politics to Dias, an anti-PCB militant who had run as vice-president on the opposition slate in the 1978 union elections. By the film's release three years later, this stuck in their throats because the PCB, after the defeat of the 1979 strike depicted in the film, made a deal and entered into an alliance with the accommodated union leadership that they, too, had formerly opposed. Indeed, the logic of the film's script precisely reflects this trend towards a breaking apart of a common leftist union opposition. At the same time, as Stam himself recognizes, Hirszman stated his position and that of his party openly, with a slant, but still in a nonsectarian fashion. "Although the logic of the narrative clearly favors the moderate leftists who reject the adventurism of Sartini, the film also treats political adversaries with a certain generosity."⁹³

Whether the victim was the film's Bráulio or the real life Santo Dias, the police assassination of an important labor leader during São Paulo's bitterly repressed 1979 metalworkers strike became an important rallying cry for the democratic opposition to the military regime. The film would end with a dramatic street march of thousands accompanying Bráulio's burial. Not in the script, the scene was intended as Hirszman's tribute to the popular movement, and the crowd filmed included church activists, communists, noncommunists, and even a number of actors who had participated in the original Teatro Arena.⁹⁴ It was a film tribute to both past and present, with an eye on the future, and it united workers and nonworkers in a common fight that spoke to the concrete interests of each group. It fulfilled on film the dream of the actor, playwright, and organizer Vianinha who had proposed, recalled CPC participant Viva Viana, "a political alliance in which the artist of the middle class and the *povo* recognized each other as affected by the same set of contradictions and came together to

overcome them.”⁹⁵ As Otávio tells his son Chiquinho at the wake, “One day, Chiquinho, your children will study Bráulio in the History of Brazil.”⁹⁶ *A luta continua!* (The struggle continues!)



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⁹⁵ Barcellos, ed., *CPC da UNE*, 20.

⁹⁶ Guarnieri and Hirszman, *Roteiro*, 119.

