Review
Reviewed Work(s): Intimate Ironies: Modernity and the Making of Middle-Class Lives in Brazil by Brian Owensby
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As the author acknowledges, this book's subject matter and its perspective owe a great deal to the pioneering work of French historian Maurice Agulhon. Agulhon turned political sociability into a novel subject of research, strategically linking problem-oriented history and cultural history. Françoise Furet's ideas about the political importance of "relational" practices and Jürgen Habermas's research concerning the emergence of a public sphere of civil society also influenced the author's sociocultural approach to politics, earlier pioneered in the field of Latin American history by Françoise-Xavier Guerra.

In spite of the fact that the book is purported to be almost identical to the original doctoral dissertation the author defended at the Sorbonne in early 1992 under the direction of none other than Professor Guerra himself, its narrative style, organization, and arguments are neat and polished. Not only because of this significant book, but also due to the series of excellent articles she has published on related subjects, Pilar González ought to be considered one of the leading exponents of an innovative and refreshing cultural approach to the study of political history. Her work is a major addition to a limited list of comparable studies by François-Xavier Guerra and several other of his disciples and followers, including Marie-Danielle Demélas-Bohy, Christián Gazmuri, Veronique Hebrard, Georges Lomné, and Renán Silva. It also complements related works on the history of early modern Argentina by José Carlos Chiaramonte, Nicholas Shumway, Mark Szuchman, and Tulio Halperín Donghi, among others. I highly recommend it.

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Intimate Ironies: Modernity and the Making of Middle-Class Lives in Brazil. By Brian Owensby. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999. Pp. ix, 332. Bibliography. Index. $45.00 cloth.

In the late 1950s, proponents of modernization theory optimistically touted the middle classes as the protagonists of Brazil's grand exit from "backwardness." In scholarly and popular literature, Brazilian and foreign academics, capitalists, and policymakers argued that the democratic impulses, individualism, and consumer needs of the middle classes would make modernity a Brazilian reality. Imported notions of modernity and middleness were undoubtedly essential to the imagination of a modernizing Brazilian middle class. However, the middle class's role in the modernization of Brazil's urban centers, industrial parks, and corporate headquarters after 1945 was a powerful indicator that the middle could help conquer economic development, participatory democracy, and public morality.

When the Brazilian middle classes "failed" to follow the proscriptions of the theorists, allying themselves with a non-democratic regime change in 1964, living beyond their means, and maintaining certain "traditional" values that did not cultivate puritanical individualism and moral rectitude, they quickly passed from agents of modernity to its lackeys. In the 1970s, the authoritarian right and the revolution-

ary left contested the mantle of modernity. By the "lost decade" of the 1980s, the middle class—or what was left of it—had been rendered the tragic victim of modernity. Adding insult to injury, the middle classes had long ceased to be central to historical research on Brazilian modernization.

Following a recent historiographic tendency to reexamine the middle classes in twentieth-century Latin America, Brian Owensby seeks to make sense of middleness in modern Brazil. Offering neither an out-of-hand rejection of the original hopes of modernization theorists, nor apologies for the middle's political and economic choices which proved to be counter-productive to class and national interests, Owensby's study asks "how the ambiguities of everyday middle-class lives have put meaning of modernity at issue in Latin America and elsewhere" (p. 7).

The early chapters traces how a middle "class" came into being amidst structural and cultural changes of the late nineteenth century. According to Owensby, the patterns of occupational differentiation and consumerism which accompany expanded market relations are essential preconditions for middleness in a period in which the "traditional" axes of social differentiation—limited access to wealth, patron-client relations, slavery, and political disenfranchisement—weaken. The remainder of the book looks at the meaning of middleness, especially in the realm of associational life, consumer habits, reading tastes, and electoral politics.

One of the primary problems in a study such as this is identifying the structural conditions of middleness. Income, residential patterns, racial and ethnic background, and educational levels are essential determinants, but they do not automatically distinguish the narrow middle from the rest of society. Identifying a middle is especially troubling for the early decades of the study, when an emerging urban middle enjoyed few economic differences from the underclass, and had limited access to the cultural and social capital of elites. Even after 1920, when market relations, census data, and market surveys create the statistical categories of middleness, the actual lived middle is elusive.

For Owensby, the story of the early twentieth century is one in which men and women with pretensions to middleness gradually disassociate themselves from the working classes by appropriating an elite abhorrence for manual labor. The dilemma was that the middle did not possess the financial means necessary to truly live off the labors of others. Moreover, many of the occupations associated with middleness (e.g., shopkeepers) continued to require some physical exertion. Precariously close to manual labor, the urban middle sectors of Rio and São Paulo (where the majority of a self-aware middle class resided) sought out salaried employment in government and the private sector. These highly gendered jobs (described as collar-and-tie to denote their maleness) helped middle class families secure an income necessary for basic necessities and rising consumer desires, while distancing themselves from physical labor. Even when the monthly income and working conditions experienced by the accounting assistant and the skilled ironworker were minimal, the lack of physical exertion afforded the former the right to middleness. Possession of con-

sumer goods such as floor waxers and area rugs (typically purchased by middle class females who became shoppers at department stores like Mappin and Mesbla) combined with voracious appetite for print media, visual culture, and sporting activities which fell outside of working and popular class culture, reinforced the central division between the nonmanual and the manual laborer.

More than a study of occupational stratification, this is an investigation into the moral economy of the Brazilian middle class. The portrait is not especially optimistic, as Owensby traces how the men and women of the middle lived in a moral economy of anxiety, in which respectability, material possessions, and rising electoral clout produced neither the internal satisfaction of achievement nor the external affirmation of a class in full possession its faculties. Advertisements for such quintessential middle class services as life insurance demonstrate parental anxieties about child-rearing. Debates over the survival of the *pistolão* indicate middle class job-seekers' ambivalence towards the unrealized promises of civil services examinations and the known evils of patronage. Their inability to wrest control of any major political party between 1945 and 1964 reflects a nagging anxiety over making alliances with the better-organized working classes.

Owensby indicates that the 1930s and 1940s were an unusual opportunity for the Brazilian middle class to harness these anxieties, where the middle might have taken control of the reformist tendencies of the Revolution of 1930 through expanding educational and employment opportunities and a valuation of a merit-based social order. But caught between their newness as a nonmanual "working" class, the constant threat of downward social mobility through inflationary pressures and overextended credit, and the desultory experiences with the radical right and left, the middle class instead internalized its anxieties, making them a fundamental part of the everyday, and, according to Owensby, weakening a more decisive presence role in public sphere. The argument of a middle-class "apolitical politics" post-1945 is not entirely convincing, given the decisive role that the middle class plays in the political culture of the Kubitschek and Quadros administrations, but the argument about anxiety is very compelling.

Owensby's use of sources is exciting. Print advertising, popular magazines (e.g., *Vida Doméstica* or *O Cruzeiro*), and market surveys conducted by IBOPE illuminate facets of everyday life unknown to earlier studies of the middle class. The use of middle class novels—read in the everyday about the everyday—gets to the heart of the double sense of the everyday and the middle. However, the incomplete presentation of these sources undermines their effectiveness, especially in the way in which plot summaries appear well after the novel has been mentioned on several occasions. The failure to include illustrative samples of the visual materials under consideration weakens the discussion of such rich materials.

The single greatest shortcoming lies in the oblique connections made between the intricacies of middle-class family life and the ambiguities of modernity. Owensby's study is clearly focused upon middle class families, but it is the absence

of a close consideration of the daily interactions of middle class family life which undermines the author's intention to understand the middle class in relationship to its everyday existence. A promising work in this direction is Eric Zolov's *Refried Elvis*, a study of the rock music and countercultural politics in Mexico which demonstrates how the interfamilial negotiations of cultural consumerism can be tied to the largest problems in modernity, politics, and nation in Latin America.

Owensby's book is, nonetheless, a valuable contribution to recent Brazilian historiography, especially in its ability to revitalize the research agenda into middleness which faced a premature demise in the 1970s.

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Rhythms of Resistance: African Musical Heritage in Brazil. By Peter Fryer. [Middletown, Conn.]: Wesleyan University Press; Hanover: University Press of New England, 2000. Pp. xiii, 267. Illustrations. Appendices. Discography. Notes. Index. $55.00 cloth; $19.96 paper.

The impact of Africa on the formation of Brazilian culture has long been recognized as fundamental. In the introduction to his rich and interesting analysis of the African heritage in Brazilian music and dance, Peter Fryer recalls the words of the seventeenth-century Jesuit priest Antonio Vieira, who wrote: "Brazil has its body in America and its soul in Africa" (p. 9). This sentiment would be echoed some 300 hundred years later in Brazilian anthropologist Gilberto Freyre's classic work, *The Masters and the Slaves*: "Every Brazilian, even the light-skinned fair-haired one, carries with him in his soul . . . the influence of the African, either direct or vague and remote." One of the chief contributions of Fryer's clearly written volume is to show just how direct and wide-ranging that influence has been.

The author begins his analysis by arguing that although the foundational Brazilian tradition of "challenge-singing" or *desafio* has a triple ancestry—African, Arab, and Portuguese—it is the African contribution that is the "prominent and essential strand" in Brazil's popular music and dance (p. 8). In order to demonstrate this formative role, he focuses his book on what John Storm Roberts has called the "neo-African" element: a cultural layer "with elements still totally or very largely African," in which "European influence is either absent or negligible," and which continues to be a "living tradition in Brazil" (pp. 8-9).

Fryer's basic thesis is that the African heritage in Brazilian music and dance can be analyzed in terms of five different types and functions of this "neo-African" tradition, each of which is examined in a separate chapter. Chapter one discusses the first type, the music associated with syncretic, Afro-Brazilian religious ceremonies such as candomble, umbanda, macumba, and "Africanised" carnival rituals. Of mixed West African derivation, with singing in the Yoruba or Fon languages, this type was originally a music of resistance intended to keep African deities and tradi-