KEYWORDS

Carnival

Paris

Rio de Janeiro

Nice

domestication

bourgeoisie

1. Roberto DaMatta, *Carnivals, Rogues, and Heroes: An Interpretation of the Brazilian Dilemma* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991). The quote is from another text on Carnival by DaMatta: Roberto Da Matta, "An Interpretation of *Carnaval*," trans.

REVIEW

Ferreira, Felipe. *L'Invention du carnaval au XIXe siècle: Paris, Nice, Rio de Janeiro*. Translated from Portuguese by Patricia A. Ramos Reuillard and Pascal Reuillard. Geography and Culture series. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2014. 276 pp. EUR 28.50 (paperback), ISBN 978-2-343-04313-5

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The literature on Carioca carnival (and Brazilian carnival in general) is copious, as the bibliography located at the end of this volume reminds us. The originality of historian Felipe Ferreira's contribution lies in its reliance on transatlantic comparison to analyze the festival's evolution from 1840 to 1930. Admittedly, cross-cultural comparison has long been favored by scholars working on festivities. However, it has often served to reinforce more than to challenge the accepted boundaries between cities, regions, nations, and cultures. In his well-known *Carnivals, Rogues, and Heroes: An Interpretation of the Brazilian Dilemma* (1991), anthropologist Roberto DaMatta thus used New Orleans carnival as a foil for Rio carnival, leading him to gloss over aspects that did not fit his conclusion that "in New Orleans, carnival permits the creation of a hierarchy and a gradation among normally equal spaces, while in Rio de Janeiro, a city in which domains are normally arranged hierarchically, carnival makes fragmentation of these domains possible, creating an opening so that the entire city becomes filled with carnivalesque possibilities."¹ Unlike DaMatta, Ferreira takes the three carnivals that he studies—Paris, Nice, and Rio de Janeiro—seriously, devoting an extensively researched chapter to each.² Rather than merely contrasting them, he points out the many ways they influenced one another, or more exactly, how Carioca carnival cherry-picked elements from both in order to devise a distinctive festive form rooted in the particular geography and history of the city. In other words, his approach is resonant with connected history more than with comparative history.

The guiding thread of the book is the process of *embourgeoisement* undergone by carnival on both sides of the Atlantic in the 1840–1930 period. More precisely, Ferreira is interested in how the (re-)“invention” of tradition advocated by the Nice, Paris, and Rio bourgeoisies affected both the meaning of the celebrations and the residents’ “sense of place.”

In chapter 1, Ferreira builds on historians Yves-Marie Bercé's, Peter Burke's, and Alain Faure's excellent studies of French/European carnival practices during the early modern and modern periods to show how the popular elements of Parisian carnival came to be domesticated through the action of the new urban elites. While Burke argued that the “Triumph of Lent” proceeded in two phases of reform, the first from 1500 to 1650, the second from 1650 to 1800, Ferreira seems to side with Faure who claimed that it was not until the second half of the nineteenth century that Parisian festivities were taken over and made “respectable.”³ Ferreira chronicles the growing cultural influence of the Parisian middle class and the way the rowdy street celebrations dating from the medieval period were pushed outside the official boundaries of the city, beyond the *barrières* (toll gates) of Montparnasse, Clichy, Montmartre, and Belleville, where alcohol

Ray Green, *SubStance* 11–12, nos. 4–1, Issue 37–38: A Special Issue from the Center for Twentieth Century Studies (1982–83): 166.

2. The chapter on Rio Carnival is by far the longest, however (120 pages, in contrast to the 32 pages and 35 pages respectively devoted to Paris and Nice pre-Lenten celebrations).

3. Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), 207–43; and Alain Faure, *Paris Carême-Prenant: Du Carnaval à Paris au XIXe siècle, 1800–1914* (Paris: Hachette, 1978), 167. See also Yves-Marie Bercé, *Fête et révolte: Des mentalités populaires du XVIe au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Hachette, 1974).

4. Faure called this in-between landscape—part country, part city—a “topsy-turvy” city (*ville à l’envers*). Faure, *Paris Carême-Prenant*, 16.

5. Antonio Arantes, “The War of Places: Symbolic Boundaries and Liminalities in Urban Space,” *Theory Culture Society* 13, no. 4 (1996): 81–92. Of these, *cordões* were regarded with the most hostility by the authorities and actually disappeared by 1911, only to be replaced by the *ranchos* (groups that paraded to the sound of Carnival marches played by

was notoriously cheaper.⁴ He describes how the Parisian elite increasingly controlled its festive environment by organizing exclusive balls (which did not prevent male youths from occasionally “slumming it” at popular riverbank dance halls called *guinguettes*) and by reviving dignified parades like the Boeuf Gras procession, which traced its path along the newly built boulevards designed by Georges-Eugène Haussmann. After Belleville and other *faubourgs* (suburbs) were annexed to Paris in 1860, popular festive traditions declined quickly and the triumph of bourgeois carnival became complete. This victory was short-lived, however, as Parisian carnival soon lost its allure due to a combination of factors: the turbulent history of the city in the 1870s, declining interest in what came to be seen as “folklore,” and the emergence of Nice as the new French capital of carnival.

Chapter 2 focuses on Rio de Janeiro and describes how mid-nineteenth-century Parisian carnival gradually displaced the Portuguese festive model among Brazilian elites. In its most recent bourgeois form, Paris carnival was thought to embody the values of civility and refinement which post-independence Brazil intended to exemplify. By contrast, the raucous street celebrations known as *Entrudo*, in which revelers performed pranks like throwing lime-scented wax balls or foul-smelling fluids at the faces of passing pedestrians, came to be seen as an embarrassing reminder of colonial “primitiveness.” In 1851, the first carnival association of the upper classes was founded. By 1855, not only were private masked balls an essential part of carnival merry-making but the upper class itself also organized a parade through the streets of Rio de Janeiro. The procession of the *Sumidades Carnavalescas* (Carnival Experts) gathered a large crowd, and in the following decades the *Grandes Sociedades* (Great Societies), such as the famous *Tenetes do Diabo* (The Devil’s Lieutenants), *Os Democraticos* (The Democrats), and *Os Fenianos* (The Fenians), organized enormous parades of allegorical floats.

Unlike what happened in Paris, however, bourgeois carnival never became hegemonic in Rio during the 1850–1930 period. Instead, a century-long “war of places” took place between the bourgeoisie and the popular classes, who returned every year as *blocos* (groups of people who paraded in a semi-organized way), *cucumbi* (groups of black revelers playing instruments of African origin), and *cordões* (groups of young men dressed as devils, kings, Indians, bats, or old men who danced in line—and sometimes clashed—to the sounds of percussion).⁵ In the absence of historical photographs, the maps provided by Ferreira help the reader visualize the spatial stakes of this battle, that is, control of streets like Ouvidor, Violas, Ourives, do Hospicio, or Rosario, and later Avenida Central (today’s Avenida Rio Branco), the major thoroughfare built during the tenure of Mayor Francisco Franco Pereira Passos (1902–6). Paradoxically, by focusing on controlling the city center through well-organized allegorical parades, the elites allowed popular carnival practices (which continued to be called *Entrudo* until the late nineteenth century) to subsist in surrounding areas. Rejecting the “hegemony and decadence” model that he uses when discussing Parisian carnival, Ferreira concludes that the meaning of Carioca carnival was constantly contested throughout the 1850–1930 period and that, due to the diversity of Rio’s elites and popular classes, some kind of accommodation had to be found. This lay the groundwork for another reframing of carnival in the 1910s–30s, this time as the symbol of a multiethnic, socially diverse Brazilian society.

In chapter 3, Ferreira delineates the history of Nice carnival, which came to supersede Parisian carnival in notoriety in the late nineteenth century. Initially modeled on Turin carnival and

wind instruments and percussion), which gave way to the samba schools in the 1920s.

6. On the concept of "place promotion," see for instance Stephen Ward, *Selling Places: The Marketing and Promotion of Towns and Cities, 1850–2000* (London: Routledge, 2005); and Waldemar Cudny, ed., *Urban Events, Place Branding and Promotion: Place Event Marketing* (New York: Routledge, 2019).

7. See David Waldstreicher, "Rites of Rebellion, Rites of Assent: Celebrations, Print Culture, and the Origins of American Nationalism," *Journal of American History* 82, no. 1 (June 1995): 37–61; and Aurélie Godet, "U.S. Festivities: An Introduction," *Revue française d'études américaines* 146 (2016): 3–25.

therefore Italian in style, the celebration was reinvented in 1873 by the municipality's Comité des fêtes (festivals committee) so as to entertain the cosmopolitan elite (bankers, consuls, and aristocrats) who resided in the city during the winter season. In the process, the popular festivities that existed among the local fishermen's community were circumscribed to the streets of old Nice before effectively disappearing. They resurfaced in the early twentieth century but only as a nostalgic backdrop in touristic material promoting Nice carnival to an international audience. In the "place promotion" contest that set Nice against its rivals (Paris, Menton, Cannes, etc.), Nice the Beautiful (Nissa la Bella) came out a clear winner by the 1900s.⁶ To the Rio urban elite, its flower parades became the "perfect" carnival, an elegant solution to the disruptions caused by the Entrudo. In the late 1900s, the municipality started sponsoring a fancy automotive promenade (*corso*) on the seaside Beira-Mar Avenue, during which the elite partied in their open cars, shouting and tossing handfuls of confetti to vehicles in the next lane. This adaptation of Nice's "battle of flowers" (established in 1876) reinforced the rigorous fragmentation of festive spaces started in the 1850s.

Taken together, these three case studies confirm what has been observed in other European and American locales over the course of the long nineteenth century. In the United States, for instance, several factors combined to blunt the disorderly dimension of colonial-era festive practices. Chief among these were a wave of patriotism (which led civic elites to transform rowdy parades into dignified events, "rites of assent" paradoxically inspired by British royal progress) and industrialization (which increased the gap between the rich and the poor, inspired the former to withdraw their patronage from traditional forms of popular leisure, and encouraged the emerging middle class to adopt the Victorian values shared by their social superiors).⁷

The fourth and final chapter of the book usefully incorporates the conclusions of the previous chapters into a theoretical discussion of the meaning of carnival and festivity in general. Ferreira provides an effective and wide-ranging review of the existing literature and rightly zeroes in on the lack of attention paid to the symbolic and physical geography of carnivalesque events. To him, the notions of space, place, and scale are crucial to escape the traditional generalizations about carnival in terms of inversion, *communitas* (temporary equality generated by a common experience, notably a rite of passage), or safety valve. His redefinition of carnival as "a power struggle over the ownership of festive space" is, however, problematic (pp. 235–36). First, it strips carnival of its semantic specificity, downplaying the differences between, say, religious processions and Mardi Gras masquerading. Second, it is oblivious to other dimensions of the carnivalesque phenomenon, such as the feelings of exhilaration and liberation it often generates among participants. Can a festivity without joy still be called a carnival? Finally, it minimizes the time constraints that bear on carnival: Carnival does not just involve a battle over space but also involves a battle over time, as festive organizations try to parade as close to Lent as possible or try to leave a durable imprint in the city's collective memory, for instance.

In conclusion, *L'invention du carnaval* is a stimulating volume that draws interesting connections between festivals that have rarely been studied together and adds to our understanding of the rise of bourgeois modernity on both sides of the Atlantic in the 1840–1930 period. Its unsatisfactory attempt at redefining carnival should not detract from its success as a historical and geographical exploration of festive practices in European and American urban modernity. If only for that reason, it deserves an English translation.

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