

that “most” urban experts believe that the “demolition of squatter settlements is the first decisive step toward the eradication of urban poverty” (p. 162). No citations are provided. Moreover, the study’s findings are not entirely new, and they lend strong support to Janice Perlman’s claim in *The Myth of Marginality* (Berkeley, 1973) that far from being marginal to the city, *favelados* are in fact integrated into the urban milieu, albeit on unfavorable terms.

MAXINE L. MARGOLIS, University of Florida

Ponto de vida: cidadania de mulheres faveladas. By ANDREA PAULA DOS SANTOS. São Paulo: Edições Loyola, 1996. Bibliography. Paper.

Ponto de vida is a slim volume containing six oral histories. The author undertook these interviews with six women living in a slum in the state of São Paulo while a student and in the context of a larger oral history project organized by Professor José Carlos Sebe Bom Meihy, of the University of São Paulo, and Professor Robert Levine, of the University of Miami. The women interviewed had organized a neighborhood association named after Carolina Maria de Jesus (author of the best-selling *Quarto de despejo*, published in English as *Child of the Dark*).

The book’s subtitle—*Citizenship of Slum Women*—indicates dos Santos’s main theme: the women’s coming-to-consciousness and growing activism as manifest in their participation in the association, in a favela on the outskirts of Guarujá. Not surprisingly, perhaps, most of the stories are schematic in their personal details and in conveying subjectivity; they focus instead on the women’s involvement with the organization. The last story, which is also the longest, deviates from this pattern: it is an interesting and unusual account by a woman in her seventies who speaks at length about her adventures around the world in her youth. Dos Santos’s own selection of activist community-oriented themes is evident in the very little she has to say (in her conclusions) about this story and this narrator, who clearly does not fit well into the generalizations dos Santos presents.

The first five stories, on the other hand, do perfectly exemplify the themes and issues that dos Santos wishes to underscore: suffering, the difficulty in making one’s way through life, consciousness raising, activism, and community. All exemplify more or less heroic narratives in which commitment and group work play a prominent role. As a result, the stories tend to be rather repetitive, and this, in turn, raises some intriguing questions (not taken up by dos Santos, however) about the extent to which these women are collaborating on a script. Is the association as central to these women’s lives as dos Santos believes, or was this a presupposition of her research that marked her interviews? Given the nature of the material she gathered, there seems to be no way to answer this question, for these interviews, with rare exceptions, are not “life histories.” Rather, most are topical oral histories, centered precisely on the association.

The uniformity of the stories cries out for investigation of the women’s narratives

not as political but as rhetorical performances. What exactly, for example, does *sofrimento*—the term used again and again by these women—mean to them? Where does this vocabulary come from? What do they mean by *consciência* and by the oft-repeated phrase *fazer alguma coisa*? The book does not begin to answer these questions; rather, it takes as self-evident the meanings of these terms and the women's constant recourse to them.

A further problem is that dos Santos says little about the circumstances in which the interviews were done, and about her own editorial interventions. North American students of oral history are likely to want to know more about these and other methodological issues. Dos Santos's introduction, with its discussion and justification of oral history methodology, its critique of "official" history, its comments on the role of the scholar, will be largely superfluous to North American readers who have access to a substantial literature on oral history, a research methodology thoroughly theorized by now.

Dos Santos's conclusion highlights key words in the narratives, but the assumption that this unproblematically leads to a collective vision seems to me weak. Particularly with Marlene's story (last chapter), the uncomfortable fit is apparent. In addition, this technique tends to efface differences and idiosyncracies, which are often very illuminating. For example, some of these women's politically incorrect comments are among the most revealing things they say, and more interesting than comments that seem programmed and predictable. Still, dos Santos's book is an interesting contribution to the growing body of oral history work being done in Brazil.

DAPHNE PATAI, University of Massachusetts at Amherst

A Forced Agreement: Press Acquiescence to Censorship in Brazil. By ANNE-MARIE SMITH. Pitt Latin American Series. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997. Figures. Notes. Bibliography. Index. vii, 231 pp. Cloth, \$45.00. Paper, \$19.95.

In this well-crafted study, Anne-Marie Smith examines why the Brazilian press acquiesced to censorship during military rule in the 1960s and 1970s. She convincingly argues that the press's virtually complete compliance with censorship was not the result of fear, nor an indication of its support for the regime. Rather, the powerlessness of the press was the result of an "anonymous, routinized, all-encompassing system—and not the raw coercive power of the regime" (p. 6).

Starting from the perspective that censorship flows from what she terms "everyday forms of quiescence," Smith looks at "how repression was exercised and . . . the impact of repressive state practices in generating press responses" (p. 6). To do this, she divides her study into three major sections. The first, "The Context of Censorship in Brazil," provides a nice overview of the history of press-state relations. It is followed by a chapter on the tension between the authoritarian nature of the military regime and its pursuit of legitimacy. A third chapter in this section proceeds to outline the "mainstream" and "alternative" press under military rule.