

Introduction

This past summer I spent two weeks as a tourist in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Although I didn't stay at a hostel or hotel, I did the "typical" tourist activities of Rio – the Christ the Redeemer statue, the Lapa arches, Sugar Loaf Mountain, and Copacabana. Not unexpectedly, during my stint as a tourist I felt isolated from Cariocas (Rio natives), by more than just my shaky Portuguese. I was staying with a soccer coach near Flamengo beach and I met some Brazilians through soccer, yet I spent my time in the middle and upper class neighborhoods of Rio. The favelas scattering the hillsides existed solely as a backdrop. Then, lo and behold, as an answer to my feeling of class and tourist isolation – a Favela Tour! The favela tours are touted as "not voyeuristic at all," a chance for tourists to get to know the *real* Rio beyond the Corcovado and Copacabana. While this might have offered a broader experience (and for the purposes of this thesis I really wish I had gone on one), learning about these tours initially added to my sense of isolation from the "real" Brazil. I already felt like enough of a voyeur traveling across Latin America, with money to spend and a *Lonely Planet* guidebook in hand. I knew I would be uncomfortable on a bus winding through the favela streets snapping pictures, insensitively placing my ability of mobility above the visible problems of poverty, education and infrastructure that favela residents experience every day. Yet, the more I investigated, the more I began to see two sides to favela tourism. Tours are often run by people from the favela and advertising explains that revenue generated is "put back into the community" through donations to schools or arts programs. Looking into favela tourism, I began to see that in the favelas themselves, a long and complicated marginalization comes together with a celebration of life and culture. These contrasts of economic desperation and cultural energy offer a perhaps particularly Brazilian vision of poverty. However, marketed to tourists with money to "help," the favela tours

themselves depend on the continued poverty of the community. Favela tours can also be seen as representative of poverty tourism in general, such as slum tours in South Africa, Thailand, India, or post-Katrina New Orleans (or really anywhere where poverty exists and people want to view or photograph it). Poverty tourism can both recognize inequality and confront it, serving as a means for development, all the while confirming class divisions. My complicated reactions to Brazilian favela tourism sparked an interest in tourism and poverty, and the ways in which the development and marketing of an image of a culture and country through different mediations -- specifically for tourist consumption -- shapes the way people see and experience Brazil.

I call these depictions of Brazilian culture developed and marketed for the sake of tourism “Destination Brazil,” a collection of representations formed by different media in the context of evolving and unequal national and international economic and political relations. These media take three critical (and at times overlapping) forms -- film and music, travel literature, and the favela tour. I distinguish Brazil and “Destination Brazil” from many other representations of Brazil in social, cultural, economic, and political discourse, all of them making, in their own way, claims on the “real.” Often, Destination Brazil intersects with other scientific or popular representations of “real” Brazil as issues of poverty and inequality are addressed through different discourses developed through their own historical precedents and reflecting their own stereotypes. I place the word “real” in quotations because there are many ways to interpret and represent a country and claim the “real.” The specific representation of Destination Brazil is one that has been manufactured for export and the promotion of Brazilian culture and tourism to specific audiences in certain historical contexts. Popular representations of Brazil during the United States / Latin America Good Neighbor Policy period of the 1930s and 40s to the present era of globalization and emerging Brazilian economy illustrate the shift

towards constructing a “real” representation while maintaining a marketed Destination Brazil. The ways people travel to Brazil as represented by guidebooks and online forums demonstrates viewpoints that are most attractive to the tourist – including where the tourist originates and what they are interested in seeing, increasingly moving towards a more “real,” cultural heritage view of travel. In this sense, perspective applies not only to the physical viewpoints that travelers “see” from, but also their subject position as traveler. This position posits leisure time and money (status) and situates the reader for which guidebooks are written. In this shift towards “reality,” the favela emerges as a mediated trademark increasingly marketed abroad as a true cultural center. The favela tour holds all of these contradictions and constructions -- as a place where a history of economic inequalities, marginalization, cultural creation and now tourism all collide. I analyze widely disseminated popular culture representations of Brazil as part of the discourse that specifically attracts the tourist. Despite contextual changes, certain aspects of Destination Brazil remain stable -- an exotic land of wild flora and fauna, colorful people, parties, and at times, extreme poverty. The most iconic site of Destination Brazil is Rio de Janeiro, a city that captures these contradictions.

A look at Travel and Power in Brazil

To better understand the importance of tourism in Brazil’s economy as well as how tourism can subtly influence international relations and power structures, and sometimes serve as a development tool, a brief description of tourism practices and statistics is necessary. Not surprisingly, contradictory representations of Brazil, its features and natural resources, influence the types of tourism popular in the country. Due in part to the attraction of Destination Brazil, tourism is a major industry for the country, employing over 1.87 million people (Bureau of

Labor Statistics) and influencing international relations and Brazil's growing status as a world power. Tourism can serve as an engine of economic growth and modernization, especially in the next few years as Brazil will host the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympics. Tourism can take a variety of forms: there is the resort stay, fully guided, isolationist tourism and increasingly popular are ecotourism, adventure travel, backpacking, heritage tourism and what can qualify as "dark tourism." Rio is the most important destination for international tourists to Brazil with 31.5% of visitors to Brazil traveling to the city (UNWTO). Tourism in the country is steadily growing as an industry, increasing from 3.9 billion USD in 2005 to 4.9 billion USD in 2007. Tourism also accounted for 7% of direct and indirect employment in the country (UNWTO). As such a large industry for the country, tourist consumption of Brazil is extremely important and only expected to grow.

In the case of Brazil, tourism frequently involves the first world touching the third, at times a subtle contact, at times a clash emphasizing differences, as Dennis Merrill, scholar of modern Latin America, globalization, and International Relations explains in his book *Negotiating Paradise: U.S. Empire in Twentieth-Century Latin America*. As an industry, tourism creates service jobs for nationals who become hotel workers, taxi drivers, tour guides, waiters etc. Most of these jobs facilitate the mobility of the traveler while the worker stays put and serves. Tourism incorporates a wide variety of industrial and cultural production, as well as international power relations.

Mass tourism also engaged U.S., Latin American, and transnational hoteliers, labor unions, publishers and publicists, transportation companies, advertising agencies, and banks and credit companies, among many others. Tourism in fact linked all of these millions of Americans, North and South, invigorated the empire's human encounters, and subtly influenced the hemispheric balance of power. (Merrill 5)

Tourist spending is a driver of economic opportunity that promotes the interests of North American or “first world” culture, emphasizing divisions between tourists and toured. The national middle and upper class often become the primary beneficiaries of mass tourism, as they hold the education and existing capital to invest or help run hotels and resorts often sponsored by the first world. As critic of colonialism Frantz Fanon explains in *The Wretched of the Earth*, “The national bourgeoisie organizes centers of rest and relaxation and pleasure resorts to meet the wishes of the Western bourgeoisie. Such activity is given the name of tourism, and for the occasion will be built up as a national industry” (84). While the “national bourgeoisie” can organize this tourism, it is the lower classes (in Brazil, often people who live in the favelas) who work to transport, feed and entertain the tourist.

Tourism can serve as a force to orient resources to its needs and build up infrastructure, improve facilities, public transportation, cleanliness and safety in a city with value for the way people live on a daily basis. As the authors of *Tourism and Responsibility: Perspectives from Latin America and the Caribbean*, Martin Mowforth, Clive Charlton and Ian Munt explain, “Tourism is becoming important in many cities, both for end-visits and as transit points in the transport system... Tourism, however, requires a well-ordered city, secure, clean, and healthy; that is to say, the quality of life in the city is fundamental to its capacity to earn income from tourism” (178). It is in a city’s best interest to have a reputation for safety or at least secure tourist areas in order to attract more tourists and hopefully improve the quality of life for locals. Thus, tourism can influence the way things are run – as with the attempts by Brazilian authorities to “clean up” favelas before the World Cup and Olympics and improve safety within Rio. However, there is a fine line between creating viable improvements for residents and further marginalizing poor populations, sweeping away unsightly aspects for the tourist’s gaze. In the

past, urban renewal in Brazil pushed people into favelas in the first place – creating zones where middle and upper classes (or tourists) could feel safe, without much regard for actual improvements.

Along with possible improvement of a destination city's infrastructure, tourism offers the visitor and the native opportunities to learn about another culture and thus potentially increase understanding and international relations on a micro level. On the other hand, tourist interaction can also create alienation and emphasize differences when cultural clashes occur. Lack of development works to both intrigue and discourage tourism while contributing to development.

Under-development is also something of a deterrent to the tourist. The majority of tourists don't travel to the LAC countries to be poor; but some of them travel there to see poor. The industry therefore has to provide facilities which are developed rather than under-developed, and this necessitates the intervention of First World supranational organizations, such as the World Bank and IMF, and the inward investment promoted by international private banks and TNCs, to provide the funding to install the physical and economic infrastructural development that the tourists and tourism industry depend on. (Mowforth and Charlton and Munt 21)

The capital needed to improve infrastructure sufficiently to allow tourism often comes from the same outside sources that are promoting the tourism industry. This creates added dependence on "First World supranational organizations" which allow countries to develop the tourism industry while still maintaining a level of poverty or Otherness that can attract visitors who want to experience a different way of life but only for a daylong tour.

In *Plazas and Barrios* Joseph Scarpaci, scholar of Latin American studies and international and social marketing, examines heritage tourism where the traveler incorporates

historical or cultural learning into their tourist experience through going to museums, touring the historic districts of a town, etc. (10). In developing their tourist industries, many countries have turned to sometimes-controversial preservation projects to attract more tourist revenue and also restore or increase a sense of national historical precedence. “Heritage means using the past as an economic resource for the present. Historic districts and monuments allow countries to create national identity, forge ideologies, and “ground” abstract notions of history and heritage in tangible forms. The wish to preserve relics of past environments is often tied to an influential elite” (18). The creation of a strong national identity through a shared history that can be presented to outsiders in the relatively neat package of a museum or historical monument attracts tourists who seek some understanding of the culture or country that they are visiting. It also serves to attract national tourists who want to identify with a unifying nationalism. The ties to an ‘influential elite’ recognize that the national population who have the means to participate in heritage or in heritage tourism are often the more educated, wealthy sector of the population.

Cultural heritage can be divided into ‘high’ and ‘low’ depending on the destination. ‘High’ cultural capital refers to the more obvious historical or major public buildings that attract First World tourists to the Third world and “proffer postcard backdrops of unique places” (Scarpaci 21). ‘Low’ cultural capital refers to an “urban core” of smaller houses and buildings that remain un-renovated. It can also include recognized parts of historic districts, but ones that are not well maintained, or not part of the typical tourist visit (Scarpaci 21). Heritage sites are a definitive attraction and part of the tourist experience, but these ‘high’ and ‘low’ values again place the elite, wealthy parts of the city as readily available for outsider consumption and a packaging of history. The ‘low’ forms however, are increasingly gaining popularity – forming part of a ‘dark tourism.’

One of the more morbid ways that people travel (actually not necessarily a recent phenomenon) is dark tourism, described as “the act of travel and visitation to sites, attractions and exhibitions which have real or recreated death, suffering or the seemingly macabre as a main theme” (Kendle). It’s basic human nature to look over when there’s something going wrong, to be curious or inquisitive about the car crash on the corner. Dark tourism invites the visitor to distance him or herself, to value and appreciate their relative wealth or security in contrast with what they are seeing.

The recent growth in favela tourism can be seen as both a form of dark tourism and heritage tourism. On the one hand, visitors are looking in on a population’s poverty, while on the other hand they are attempting to learn or benefit from an “alternative” experience from the usual tourist circuit and gain some cultural insight. By becoming increasingly mainstream, even dark tourism can at times serve as an engine of economic change, and a way to improve or build-up infrastructure, while also dependent on a certain level of enticing or exotic poverty or Otherness.

Poverty and the favela in Brazilian Cultural Marketing

The distinctions between colonizer and native, slave and slaveholder, rich and poor, and high and low, have been a part of Brazil since the times of Portuguese colonization. Great wealth alongside abject poverty make up the cities in Brazil while rural poverty pushes people to immigrate to the cities in the first place. However, the poverty that has been tied to international representations of Brazil and to tourism is urban poverty, particularly the favela.

Favelas formed outside of Rio before the city became densely populated and some were originally formed as quilombos, or runaway slave societies. Before gaining the name “favela” the marginalized hillside communities were called bairros Africanos, or African neighborhoods

(Skidmore 82). The conflict in Canudos in the Northeast in 1897 also brought 20,000 veteran soldiers into Rio and left them without any place to live (Pino 41). In the 1902 election of President Rodrigues Alves, a commitment to rebuilding the Rio downtown became a priority in order to expand Brazil's reputation as a point of trade (Skidmore 81). The downtown of Rio was remodeled in a more European fashion – including wide boulevards and a new library and opera house – in the process demolishing 590 buildings, many of them tenements housing working class families. “Whether intending to or not, the political elite was turning Rio into a “rabble free” zone that would impress the foreigner and keep the “dangerous classes” at a distance” (Skidmore 82). Instead of improving the infrastructure of buildings where poor, working class, and often black families resided, the government sought to create an illusion of cleanliness, free of “rabble” or dangerous poor people. This pushed the lower classes further from their work in the city in order to impress a foreign audience and foster the wealth of the business owners who profited from tourism. Along with these renovations came a public health campaign and an overall idea of “Rio civilizing itself” through becoming more anglicized, or more like Europe (Skidmore 82). In a positive feedback loop, this self-civilization works to attract more tourists to Rio, to view these “Europeanized,” but still “third world” buildings. Despite being swept aside, the favelas continued to grow, creating the enormous urban sprawl they are today. The introduction of cocaine to the favelas in the 1970's significantly increased favela violence and gang activity.

In recent years, multiple projects have sprung up to renovate the favelas, attempting to lift Brazilians out of poverty and eradicate infrastructural problems within the hillside shantytowns (yet often reminiscent of a creation of “rabble free zones”). The Favela-Bairro Project, for example, started in 1994, provided impoverished communities with over US\$180 million in

funding for access to better sanitation, health clinics and public transportation (St Regis 31). Extremely popular President Luis Inácio Lula da Silva, a self-made “man of the people” who came to power with the Worker’s Party in 2003 focused on poorer populations and issues of poverty within the favela. A variety of programs including Rio Cidade and Lula’s 2007 implementation of Programa Aceleração do Crecimento (PAC) – a four year plan of urban development with the objective of speeding up economic growth through improvements in infrastructure, credit and finance or public health, Lula’s Bolsa Familia (Family Allowance) welfare program and Fome Zero (Zero Hunger), have helped to lift millions of Brazilians out of poverty. But while these initiatives have made some positive progress, the favelas remain literally and physically marginalized from the rest of the city.

The statistics of education and unemployment in the favela, especially for young people, illustrate the lack of opportunity and continuing cycle of poverty and help explain the appeal of drug and gang violence. “Statistics from Rio de Janeiro's 53 favelas show that 62% of young people have not completed primary schooling; barely 1% have finished high school; 51% have jobs or are looking for work, and the unemployment rate is 18.6%” (Jailson). The lack of education in the favelas isolates the part of the population that can even find employment in low sector service jobs such as housekeeping and cleaning for the wealthier populations (including tourists) in the Zona Sul of Rio. Despite discernible progress through Lula’s welfare programs, the lack of opportunity and education in the favelas has led to more police involvement and governmental action.

In November 2010 reports of massive drug overhauls and favela cleanups flooded media outlets. In an article by the BBC about drug seizures, the anticipated tourist infiltration and media attraction to Brazil before the 2014 World Cup and 2016 Olympics is listed as a primary

motive for stabilizing conditions in the favelas. However, in these cleanups, little is done to actually improve infrastructure and the quality of life for residents, and widespread violence remains common.

Human rights activists have accused Brazil of being too heavy-handed in its approach.

"The police so far this week in operations in other communities have killed over 50 people, including in a tragic accident a 14-year-old girl," said Patrick Wilcken, Amnesty's Brazil researcher. "And one has to remember that this community has a long history of these very militarized campaigns by the police, and in 2007 the police did a huge operation, stormed the community and shot dead 19 people, and then left," he said. (BBC News -- Brazilian Forces Seize Large Drugs Haul in Rio Favela)

The long history of violence in the favelas makes “cleaning them up” or “civilizing” them a difficult task reminiscent of a need to create “rabble free zones.” Furthermore, the continuity of these police campaigns illustrates the inadequacy of a cosmetic approach that fails to grapple with the underlying economic conditions. Today, the favelas have come to represent Brazil at its finest and worst simultaneously – exalted culturally for their “racial democracy,” and music and dance, yet marginalized for their problems of lack of infrastructure and frequent violence. Rio’s image as a sparkling ecological paradise of exotic, sexy people is coupled with its dark side as popular portrayals in recent years illustrate the contradictory nature of Destination Brazil.

Brazilian Film and Music Goes International

As Brazilian favelas were growing, Destination Brazil initially avoided the favela or poverty entirely. In recent years, however, cultural representations have increasingly incorporated the favela and “reality” based portrayals. To set some historical precedent and help explain the shift towards more reality-based representations (and tourism), a look back at popular mediations of Brazil is needed.

The most significant economic partner to Latin America and Brazil during the 1930s and ‘40s was the United States. The terms of economic and political relations between Latin America and the United States were established with the Good Neighbor Policy under President Franklin D. Roosevelt. During World War II, the U.S. increasingly turned its attention to Latin America, and especially Brazil (due in part to their trade and resources as well as Brazil’s physical location – a point jutting out into the Atlantic, strategically closer to Europe) (Merrill 87). As Darlene Sadlier, scholar of Portuguese language and Brazilian culture explains in her book *Brazil Imagined: 1500 to the present*, the U.S. government shelled out the money to manufacture a Brazilian culture for consumption. Orson Welles, American filmmaker, producer, and actor, encouraged by the U.S. government, used his radio show, *Hello Americans*, to promote peaceful, neighborly relations with Latin America, and Brazil in particular, during World War II (Sadlier 201). Corporate images included imported bombshells like Carmen Miranda, the Disney adventuring parrot, Ze Carioca, and the sounds of samba and bossa nova.

As seen in Welles’ “Brazilian Alphabet,” the allure of Brazil consisted of esthetic viewpoints (or colonial “seers”), primary, natural resources, and tourist attractions: “C – coffee, cacao, cotton, cachaças, carioca, Copacabana, choro, casinos, Corcovado and Cabral, who first saw it” (Welles 200). Increasingly, attractions were developed around an idea of Rio. Rio came

to metonymically represent Brazil as a whole – a city with the natural beauty of the Amazon and parts of the interior, with the added bonus of beaches and a thriving metropolis, full of a sexy mixed race population. During the Good Neighbor period, Brazilian nationalism was linked to general hemispheric nationalism (sponsored mainly by the U.S.) – posing a united Western Hemisphere front against the rest of the world. Welles addressed this idea during the radio programs that he broadcast both from New York City and during his trip to Latin America, from Rio (Sadlier).

Along with Welle's radio broadcast showcasing cultural similarities and tourist draws to Brazil, (and lack of poverty or overt differences) during this period, Carmen Miranda became famous in the United States. Her flamboyant, over-sexualized and exotic image as a caricatured woman with fruits on her head contained a duality of recycled Brazilian identity, marketing both bananas and Brazilian culture. Her trademark head wrapped fruit hat held the promise of Brazil's natural resources while her swaying hips and flirty demeanor played up the sexualized image imported from Brazil. "However, by repeatedly playing that role, she became another kind of stereotype – a hybrid created by Hollywood of its image of Latin America on the order of the indigenous, exotic Other depicted in colonial texts" (Sadlier 258). She remains an exotic Other – (although white and Portuguese-born) whose exoticism is reminiscent of the beautiful "nearly hairless woman"¹ once met by colonial travelers. However, rather than actually being an Indigenous woman ready for conversion or domination, Miranda was marketed as an exotic Latin American who could win over any North American crowd by flaunting her culture –

¹ As recounted by Pero Vaz de Caminha in his famous letters back to King Manuel I of Portugal during the initial "discovery" of Brazil in 1500 (Ley).

converting or convincing uptight North Americans to try things the “South American Way.”² Miranda’s consistent role as a dancing, singing, and sexy good will ambassador ready and excited to show off a packaged ideal of Brazilian culture prominently played into the image of Brazil created for global consumption by the outside (for political purposes). Ironically, Miranda also wears a head wrap common of Bahianas from the center of African Brazil, Bahia, in the Northeast. As a white, Portuguese woman, with a head wrap from African-influenced Brazil and the bountiful fruits of a nation, her persona embodies Brazil for the outside in an easy to swallow shell. Today in Rio the Carmen Miranda museum remains a popular tourist attraction.



Carmen Miranda, wearing her trademark headdress

² One of Carmen Miranda’s most famous songs, sung in a mixture of Portuguese and English, exalting the virtues of living life like a South American (“Have you ever danced in the tropics?/With that hazy lazy/Kind of crazy/South American Way”) (Miranda).

In these symbolic representations, not only are there no class relations demonstrated but race is also pushed aside. Ze Carioca – a green parrot carrying a huge cigar and ready to party at the drop of a [his] hat serves as a metonym for Brazil as a whole. The representations have a distinct cultural difference that is meant to represent “Latin” or “South American,” as different enough to be exotic, but not *too* different, with Afro-Latin Americans and African cultural origins mainly invisible. By 1945 and the start of the Cold War, the Good Neighbor Policy was abandoned and popular representations of Brazil to the outside began to shift – slowly moving beyond the postcard vision of Rio (Sadler).



Ze Carioca with his trademark cigar and hat

This shift towards “reality” is demonstrated by the increasing amount of popular portrayal and attention from the outside towards the favela, or the less glamorous parts of Brazil. Although often looked down upon or shoved aside by the middle and upper classes, favelas are also heralded as the true and authentic center of Brazilian culture and art. Samba and Carnival

were born in the favelas and two of the most critically and internationally acclaimed Brazilian movies are based on life in the favelas.³ *Orfeu Negro* (1959), portrays a life in the favelas as simplistically happy, with everyone dancing, united in community through music, and celebration of Carnival. For the characters in *Orfeu Negro*, the only threat to their happiness is fate or death, as they are trapped in a Greek myth. The movie won an Oscar for best foreign language film in 1960 and was widely circulated internationally (Black Orpheus (1959) – IMDb). The film was made as a co-production between companies in France, Italy and Brazil and the movie's soundtrack helped popularize Brazilian bossa nova. *Orfeu Negro* contains the same Hollywood, postcard perfect picture of Good Neighbor Rio, yet instead of glossing over race and class like the Good Neighbor sponsored representations of Brazil, *Orfeu Negro* takes place in a favela and shows a completely mixed race and sometimes entirely Afro-Brazilian population. However, this representation shows an exotic poverty – poverty without any real threats or consequences, where unemployment means having more time to sing, dance and celebrate Carnival.

Another more recent version of the film, *Orfeu*, follows the same storyline yet the characters are set in 1999 with a much grittier, realistic portrayal of a favela. Still grounded in celebrations of Carnival and Brazilian music, but dealing with a harsh reality of drug and gang life, the film reflects actual changes in the favelas. Like *Orfeu*, *City of God* shows the dangerous Cidade de Deus favela in the 1970s. Throughout the film, Rocket, the protagonist, struggles to live an “honest” lifestyle and make his way out of the favela through photography. Everyone around him is involved in the drug wars and constant violence, with the threat seeming to be life more than death or fate like in *Orfeu Negro*. Life in the favela is terrifyingly violent, not valued

³ (*Orfeu Negro* (1959) and *City of God* (2002))

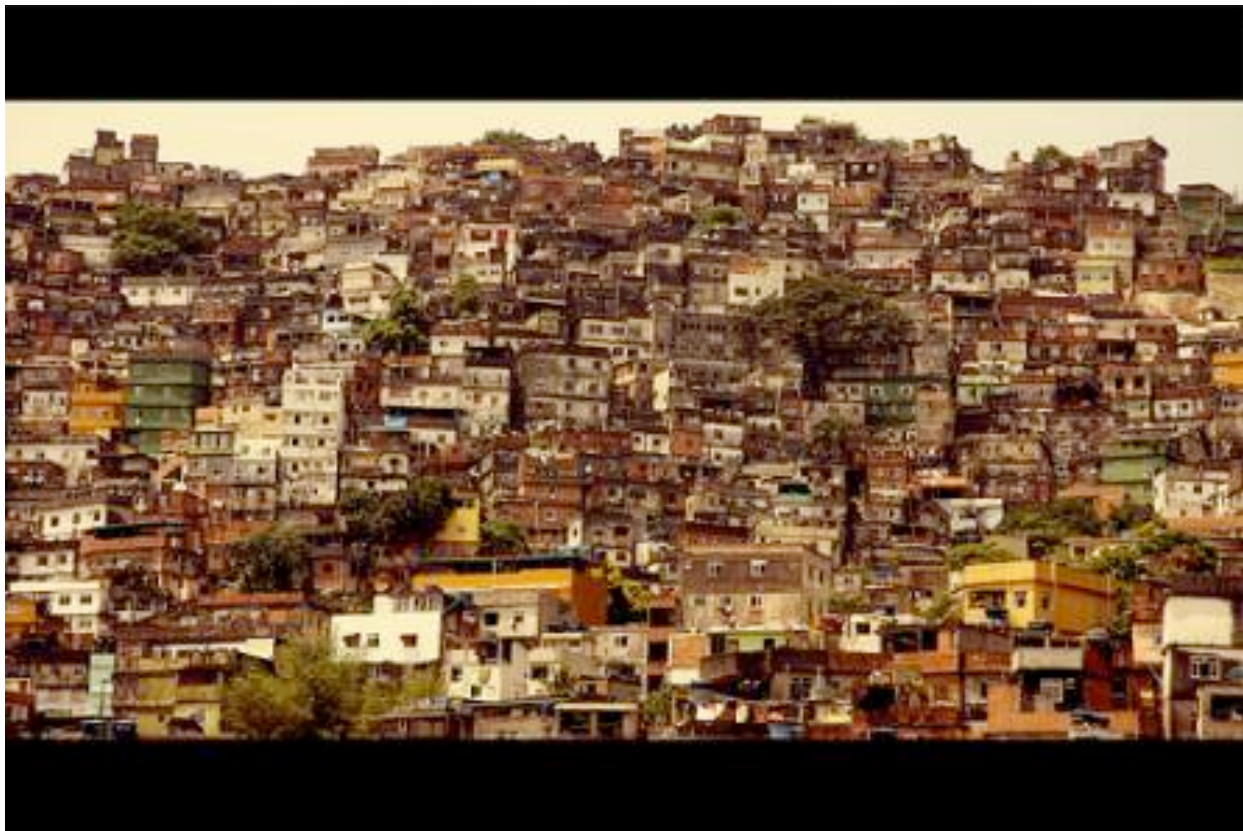
and the only way out is through art. The film is based on the semi-autobiographical novel by Paulo Lins, adding to its “reality” based appeal. The film illustrates the fear, violence and real life threat of favelas while also showing their place at the heart of Brazilian popular culture and artistic production. Through artistic means Rocket can escape a tough life, and through their music and dance the characters in *Orfeu Negro* can forget their poverty.

These films make an interesting comparison with samba -- music and dance that emerged from the favelas during the 1930s, '40s and 50s and was widely exported and representative of Brazil abroad. Samba exaltação, a popular, state sponsored, patriotic, variety of samba music emphasized ideals of Brazilian racial democracy and Afro-Brazilian culture as a source of national identity. It became widely successful internationally. Like *Orfeu Negro*, samba exaltação heralded the happiness that marginalized, impoverished people could supposedly have through the embrace of culture and music. While this music came from the favelas, it found an international audience and wide acclaim, an acclaim that ignored problems of inequality. In the 1940s and '50s, Geraldo Pereira helped pioneer a new type of samba – the critical samba. Afro-Brazilian and of a poor background, Pereira along with Wilson Batista created a samba that instead of blindly exalting the virtues of nationalism, began to question and move beyond the surface, acknowledging failures of equality in Brazilian culture. “In particular, the new critical samba explored the gap between samba- exaltação’s depiction of happy and productive Afro-Brazilians, rejoicing in their role as the nation’s cultural stewards, and the messy reality of the economically marginalized favelas” (McCann 78). Samba exaltação’s portrayal of Afro-Brazilians is much like their portrayal in *Orfeu Negro* – showing a racially integrated society full of happy, dancing people. In contrast, reality-based portrayals build upon the danger and violence in the favelas to create a stylized “reality.”

In another example of stylized reality -- in the year 2000, when a street kid took over a public city bus, holding riders hostage for hours, issues of homelessness, class, race based violence, and problems with infrastructure and the prison system, came to a head and a documentary film was made using real footage. The 2002 documentary *Onibus 174* about the incidents of that day portrays the inadequacy of training of police forces in Rio coupled with a failing and hellish prison system and the continued violence in the poverty stricken favelas. The film uses real news footage from the day and demonstrates the issues of violence in Rio and class stratification. The assailant, Sandro, lived on the streets and was in and out of the prison system for years. Sandro had also been on the streets during the Candelária massacre in 1993. This event occurred when police massacred eight young street children, friends of Sandro, who sought shelter at the famous Candelária Roman Catholic church (what would be considered a culturally 'high' heritage tourism spot). As Sandro holds mainly middle class white women hostage he repeatedly invokes his outrage at this event, telling the police that they are now meeting their justice.

The events of the documentary highlight issues that are still in the forefront in Brazil -- especially with increasing efforts to "clean up" favelas and clear the streets of violence. After Sandro finally leaves the bus (killing one hostage) he is taken into police custody and suffocated. The interviews in the film include many mixed reactions, but the police responsible for the killing were found not guilty at trial. The escalating violence shown in this film as well as the media swarm that surrounded the incident is echoed almost daily in international news outlets that report on the violence in favelas in Brazil and the constant efforts to subdue, control and restore peace to these areas. Critically acclaimed both in Brazil and abroad, this documentary won multiple awards and an Emmy (Bus 174 (2002) -- IMDb). *Onibus 174* along with *City of*

God show the world a less exotically enticing Brazil than the popular images of Good Neighbor policy media and films like *Orfeu Negro* – letting the viewer in on some of the problems in the country, away from the postcard image of Rio. However, the poverty and death portrayed in these real or reality-based films can also be seen as draws to the country – darkly exotic, sexy and cinematic.



Cinematic view of the City of God favela (still taken from the movie)

Today, representations and mediations of Brazil abound, as the country is seen as a rising economic world power, and host of the upcoming Olympics and World Cup. In April 2011 Fox will premier a new film – *Rio*. The film is about an animated blue macaw from Minnesota who gets called to Brazil to mate and retain its' species. The preview promotes the popular images of Brazil as an exotic land full of scenic viewpoints, possibly dangerous kidnappers, soccer mania,

and half-naked women. Although an animated cartoon and meant for a younger audience, *Rio* looks to recycle these same, tired images of Brazil before the country is genuinely thrust into the international spotlight. Reminiscent of *Ze Carioca* (see above), the birds and animals in *Rio* attempt to show a domesticated North American parrot how to “walk on the wild side” and experience the exotic Otherness of Rio. The preview and accompanying website include all the scenic, exotic beauty of Rio with pulsating samba and “party” music in the background and even a “sexy” Brazilian macaw as the love interest for the “domesticated” North American macaw. However, in this film, the issues of danger are also present. Local animal smugglers kidnap the macaws and the main conflict comes from their attempt to escape.



Rio Movie Poster

The Brazil characterized through film and other mediations –in particular the portrayal of the favela– represent an exotic Otherness that is at once appealing and problematic for visitors and viewers. With Carmen Miranda and Orson Welles during the Good Neighbor Policy, the favela or poverty in general lack representation whereas in *Orfeu Negro* the favela is home to culture and a love story. In the case of *Omnibus 174*, violence is real -- palpable and terrifying -- stemming from the favela. In *City of God* the favela is home to this same violence and corruption but is also portrayed as exciting and even sexy. These mediations reflect their historical time

periods with the new movie *Rio* holding both the danger and appeal of an exotically enticing Rio de Janeiro. These portrayals help construct “Destination Brazil,” subtly but necessarily engaging with tourism – drawing visitors in by defining views of Brazil for the outside.

Travel Literature: Viewpoints and Views from different sites/sights

Along with (or because of) popular mediations in movies and music, once someone decides to travel to Brazil, the most popular form of information is travel literature, which also subtly influences and reinforces stereotypes. While traveling through South America (and in Destination Brazil), my friends and I would jokingly place ourselves inside of what we deemed the “Lonely Planet Bubble.” This bubble was the sub-reality vision of the countries we were visiting that was created through following *Lonely Planet* and other guidebooks tips and suggestions. We would often show up at a restaurant, excited to try local, authentic “real” cuisine, only to find a host of other tourists with their *Lonely Planets* open on the table, mapping out the next step in their adventures. Without a guide of any sort, does the experience of traveling somehow become more real or authentic? Do you automatically begin to know a culture through trial and error (and much more error is liable to occur without the friendly advice of a guide or *Lonely Planet*). As college students, our Destination Brazil was the *Lonely Planet* bubble– the writers are people around our age looking to shy away from the “beaten path” and the suggestions generally steered us right. Other guidebooks and travel literature make up their own bubble. The more high-brow *Fodors* or *Frommers* as well as internet travel sites such as TripAdvisor, traveltip.org, and the ever growing number of trip advising blogs and websites aimed towards helping people figure out where to go, what to do, and how to do it, create

individualized bubbles all within the greater traveler umbrella. Often, these bubbles converge – especially when visiting the “beaten path” tourist attractions or in the case of Brazil, on the beach – touted by many as the great class, race and nationality equalizer. Travel literature includes stories on postcards, passed-along tips and pictures that construct a bubble of comfort for the traveler in a distant land. This bubble serves to convert the automatic Other (the traveler in a foreign country) into a “culturally initiated” observer of the landscape – looking in on the Others whom they are visiting. In travel, different viewpoints are what the visitor often seeks – this view can apply not just to historical or cultural sites and literal sights but to the visitors’ own subject position – their role in their own class and power position as a tourist.

Fodors, Frommers, Lonely Planet, Culture Smart! and the like make up an industry of culture for consumption, much like popular portrayals in film and music, but that specifically guide the tourist into a realm of calm – a “comfort zone” – of understandability. According to John Hutnyk, professor of Cultural Studies at Goldsmiths University of London and author of *The Rumour of Calcutta: Tourism, Charity and the Poverty of Representation*, in the act of acclimating or initiating the tourist into local culture through a friendly discourse about local customs and routine, guidebooks help tourists feel like less of an outsider, becoming seemingly culturally initiated, yet still on the outside – or within their bubble (91). The success of guidebooks such as *Lonely Planet* is based on this style. Thus, travel literature has become the replacement for, or initiator of, cultural reference. “The success of the *Lonely Planet* guidebook series comes from the documentation of this kind of traveler talk in its ‘chatty’ style – the fact that few visitors to India now come without this Survival Kit is testimony to the importance of such talk, and the idea or ‘ordeals’ of survival in what for many is a difficult country” (Hutnyk 63). The way travel is written about or constructed and the experiences of friends and relatives abroad shapes the

way travel occurs for each individual. Helpful tips from a friend or from *Lonely Planet* allow travelers to gain a sense of being “insiders” who can then pass on the next wave of tips, especially in “difficult countries” such as India (or Brazil). This “chatty” or friendly, approachable style of writing and storytelling about travel limits “ordeals” or culture shock for the traveler, breaching their Other-ed status, and reinforcing the new, foreign culture as the Other.

In looking at different guidebooks friendly introductory treatment of Rio de Janeiro, the image they paint demonstrates the different audiences they are intended for as well as the types of tourism to which these different class and age ranges are more attracted. *Fodor’s*, designed for “choice travel experiences,” targets an older, wealthier traveler who might visit Rio for its landscape or because of an interest in samba.

Welcome to the Cidade Maravilhosa, or the Marvelous City, as Rio is known in Brazil. Synonymous with the girl from Ipanema, the dramatic view from the Pão de Açúcar (Sugar Loaf), and famous Carnival celebrations, Rio is also a city of stunning architecture, good museums, and marvelous food. Rio is also home to 23 beaches, an almost continuous 73-km (45-mi) ribbon of sand.” (Rio De Janeiro Travel Guide | Fodor’s Travel Guides)

In declaring that Rio is synonymous with the “Girl From Ipanema” (a bossa nova song that won a Grammy in 1965), the audience is immediately someone older, versed in the cultural sounds and possible sights of Brazil and excited to see the amazing views offered from Sugar Loaf. Rio is also seen as synonymous with ecological beauty. This audience might be surprised to find that Rio does hold some cultural appeal – that it has a more European charm – museums, food and architecture. The beach is added last, as an afterthought after the more culturally and historically based heritage tourism attractions of the city.

Frommers, the more midrange of these three guidebooks, encourages through their slogan to “start exploring,” and offers a mixture of the *Fodors* guide information along with the same sex appeal of the *Lonely Planet* guide.

Say "Rio" and mental images explode: sparkling costumes of Carnival; the mountaintop statue of Christ the Redeemer, arms outspread; white-sand beaches crowded with fit women in minuscule bikinis; the granite grandeur of the Sugarloaf; and sultry samba rhythms. Fortunately, there's much beyond the festive glitter and grimy *favelas* (shanty towns): historic neighborhoods, compelling architecture, exhilarating nature and, above all, the passionate, welcoming Cariocas who make this a truly *cidade maravilhosa* (marvelous city).” (Blore 12)

Rio becomes immediately sexy, explosive, exotic and enticing. Beautiful women in scant clothing flock the beaches that resound with “sultry,” sexual music. But beyond just this attractive sex appeal and most importantly beyond the “grimy” favelas, the tourist can experience again a more European appeal of history and architecture. The bottom line for *Frommers*, however, is the residents, the Cariocas, who make Rio such a “marvelous” city. This suggests a cultural initiation, or ability to bond with locals through following their tips. In leading with the over-sexualized image of women and of Rio in general, these welcoming Cariocas who are excited to host the tourist suggest that they may be excited for more than just hosting.

Lonely Planet, which encourages readers to “get the adventure started,” also plays into the sex appeal of Rio while emphasizing eco-tourism and without even mentioning the old world appeal.

At once both a cinematic cityscape and a grimy urban front line, Rio de Janeiro, known as the *cidade maravilhosa* (marvelous city), is nothing if not exhilarating. Flanked by

gorgeous mountains, white-sand beaches and verdant rainforests fronting deep blue sea, Rio occupies one of the most spectacular settings of any metropolis in the world. Tack on one of the sexiest populations on the planet and you have an intoxicating tropical cocktail that leaves visitors punch-drunk on paradise.” (St. Regis 20)

In Rio all the adventure and appeal of a dark and dangerous “grimy urban front line” (in other words, favelas), combined with the “sexiest population on the planet” leaves the traveler “punch drunk.” This of course appeals to a younger, active, party-going population looking to see some amazing natural sites, hang out on the beach, drink and have sex. This appeals to the backpacking, ecotourism, and budget traveler.

In the “about” section for *Lonely Planet* authors, the guidebook company emphasizes their involvement with a local, authentic version of a country. The authors travel “off the beaten track” to give readers a more “real” experience. However, in the mere act of writing a widely published guide the un-beaten track becomes a part of the *Lonely Planet* Bubble, essentially becoming beaten. “They speak with dozens of locals every day to make sure you get the kind of insider knowledge only a local could tell you. They take pride in getting all the details right, and in telling it how it is” (St Regis 19). *Lonely Planet* authors speak with locals so that readers don’t have to, roughing it so the next generation of travelers can “get it right” without suffering any ventures too far out of a recognizable “comfort zone” or tourist bubble – too far outside of Destination Brazil.

These three archetypal guidebooks, all intended for a first-world, generally middle-to upper-class traveler, provide advice catered to specific types of travelers, all of whom, through the mere ability to have the leisure time and capital to travel are automatically within their own

bubble and version of Destination Brazil. In recent years, with blogs and travel advising sites growing in number and importance, up-to-the-instant reviews greatly shape the traveler's experience and add to the creation of friendly, guiding tips and a traveler's bubble. Instead of the tailored "insider" knowledge gained from guidebooks, travel-advising websites offer a space for debate and immediate reviews.

Websites such as TripAdvisor (the world's largest travel site)⁴ take the place of a travel expert friend to another level – giving real traveler feedback for hotels, restaurants, sites, and tours. TripAdvisor offers traveler's reviews and their photos to allow for "insider" tips and the ability to rate different experiences on a scale of one to five. This would seem to solve the bubble problem created by guidebooks intended for specific audiences by creating a democratic space for debate about travel. It also helps to ensure that hotels and attractions are kept up to certain standards for fear of a bad review. TripAdvisor's introduction to Rio combines all of the elements of the other guidebooks' introductions, in a very neutral tone, appealing to every audience.

From its bustling beaches to the outrageous February festival, Rio de Janeiro is a city that knows how to entertain, day or night. Travel through Tijuca National Park to Corcovado Mountain's iconic Christ the Redeemer statue. Take the cable car up Sugar Loaf for more views. Explore Brazilian history at the Municipal Theatre, Praca Quinze and former presidential residence, Catete Palace. Try hang gliding, surfing or a game at Maracana Soccer Stadium. Or just chill with a caipirinha on the sand. (Rio De Janeiro Vacations,

⁴ (About TripAdvisor® Media Group)

Tourism and Rio De Janeiro, Brazil Travel Reviews - TripAdvisor)

Again, Rio's esthetic viewpoints are emphasized – the usual Christ and Sugar Loaf – Brazilian history, beaches and Carnival are all part of the Rio experience as well. This description sweeps across almost every tourist attraction – from the classic viewpoints to historical appeals to eco and adventure attractions and eventually back to the beach.

According to TripAdvisor's "about" section, they provide "unbiased reviews, articles, recommendations and opinions" on vacations. This would seem to ring true as viewers of the site can post specific questions about attractions, and receive answers from "travel experts" (really anyone who wants to respond, although TripAdvisor states that reviews and responses are screened and checked for accuracy). People can become "members" on the site, or design their trip based on "trip type" (which includes "business, luxury and family travel"). Anyone can look at reviews, but by signing up as a member (for free) you can post reviews, pictures, and interact with other members, gaining the insider ("real" Brazil) tips that a traveler is hungry for. In an email welcoming new members, the founder of TripAdvisor, Steve Kaufer, encourages members to write new reviews and explains that he started TripAdvisor to "create a community where they [travelers] could connect and share their opinions," so that travelers can get a "real scoop" on where they are going and not have to "rely on glossy marketing brochures and outdated guidebooks" (Kaufer 1). In directly distinguishing itself from guidebooks and welcoming new members to contribute, TripAdvisor attempts to lay out this democratic space for travelers to represent their trips according to their personal experience. Rather than directly tailored-for-particular-audience guidebooks, TripAdvisor can include *your* advice, too – initiating you into an international travel community with a bubble of tips. They also host their site in a variety of

different languages, with (according to the site) over 40 million “trusted traveler reviews and opinions” (About TripAdvisor® Media Group). However, in order to post a review, all that is needed is to check a small box stating that there is “no personal or business affiliation with this establishment” and that the writer has not been offered any compensation for writing the review (TripAdvisor). Instantly, a review that can include pictures, a star rating and any specific advice, is posted. Thus, anything can be published – although the space is given for other travelers to agree with or refute opinions and experiences.

For example, under the “Before you go” section for Rio, to inform the prospective traveler about Brazilian culture and customs, a reviewer has written a warning specifically geared for North American (“particularly the USA”) visitors. While its intentions are to help the tourist remain or become culturally sensitive, it demonstrates fears of American cultural misunderstandings and berates Brazilians as “simple” people who cannot be expected to have the education to be sophisticated, but who are well versed in class separation.

Nevertheless, the average man on the street, that is, the cop, bus driver, taxi driver, clerk, waiter etc. is not likely to speak English or be very sophisticated. Do not expect otherwise. Be prepared to deal with simple people who want to be well mannered and are generally deferential when dealing with people of obviously better social/financial strata. Be patient. (Rio De Janeiro: Culture - TripAdvisor)

The highlighted lack of English speaking ability demonstrates the preconception of all visitors from the United States automatically expecting everyone to speak English (a notion I would generally agree with). Visitors should be ready to deal with “simple” people whose simplicity

can be seen through their lack of education, blue collar or lower jobs and inability to speak English. These people “want” to be well mannered, even if they cannot always achieve this, they are (thankfully) accustomed to dealing with people of a higher class than them. This loaded statement shows the class boundaries for the traveler – they are obviously of a higher social/financial strata, but their patience will be required when dealing with “simple” people. However, even the most “simple” Brazilian will know how to stay well mannered and treat their “betters” as such.

Publishing basically unregulated (often unedited, complete with typos) commentary and articles from “real travelers” about how to travel, while democratic, is obviously problematic when it contains blatantly offensive, culturally insensitive information. It also demonstrates the different viewpoints inherent in tourism – the class status that the tourist supposedly automatically holds and that most Brazilians are already well aware of. However, many TripAdvisor comments offer extremely helpful information about how to get around the city and good places to eat and stay (and fortunately, I can comment on this article itself, in an attempt to amend some of its inaccuracies and insensitivities). This kind of biased information is unlikely to be published anywhere but an online forum and is interesting when compared with similar advice published in guides specifically meant to ease visitors into a new culture, such as *Culture Smart!* books.

All of these guidebooks seek to construct or reach different imagined readers, through slightly different views, priming them for a tailored touristic experience. The *Culture Smart!* guides are aimed at culturally initiating the visitor and rather than giving specific “what to do” tips, “how to interact with locals” is emphasized. In their introduction, the authors make sure to

highlight the diversity of Brazil and that in writing a cultural guide, generalization is inevitable (Branco 5). The aim is to give the reader a broad, sweeping view of a country and its people to instruct the traveler before their visit so they understand what they are experiencing. For example, *Culture Smart!*'s treatment of Brazilians' national identity or national pride echoes some of the ideas found in the TripAdvisor commentary, demonstrating class relations especially where the tourist is concerned.

The feeling of pride mixed with an inferiority complex seems to apply to the country as a whole. Brazilians are proud of their nationality and their country's size, resources, and beauty. However, they also feel disadvantaged when comparing themselves with First World nations (Branco 68).

This quote comes in a section entitled "Pride and Prejudice," which stresses some of the contradictions found in the Brazilian ideal of racial democracy. While Brazilians often pride themselves on being a land of racial harmony without having had some of the racial tensions and problems of the United States, racial prejudice and institutionalized advantages definitely exist (as seen in *Onibus 174* and *City of God*). The feeling of pride about this "racial democracy" and Brazil's resources as a whole comes partially through a comparison with First World nations, while the feeling of disadvantage is the double edge to the sword. Through this generalization, Destination Brazil is constructed as a place still uneasy with its status as a country with natural resources ready for the exploitation of the outside world –as a primary resource nation bearing the fruits atop Carmen Miranda's headdress.

The literature designed for the foreign (generally "First World") traveler in constructing

Destination Brazil versus literature for national Brazilian travelers to Rio shows the different experiences these nationalities are looking to gain. For a Brazilian traveling to Rio, the views, or esthetics are also extremely important – Sugar Loaf mountain and Christ the Redeemer rank among its first mentioned attractions. However, an emphasis is consistently placed on highbrow cultural centers – the Opera house, or any outsider-influenced attraction to the city, rather than on the beaches or beautiful women that tend to attract the foreign adventure seeker.

During your descent [into Rio], you will catch sight of Christ the Redeemer, pass by the side of Sugar Loaf mountain, fly over the various hills of the city and then, without even realizing it, the music of Airplane Samba, by Tom Jobim, will come to mind. Yes, Rio has cinematic landscapes (or better yet, literary). However, there is more to its charm. In 2010, the Municipal Theatre reopened its doors like on its inaugural day in 1909. New restaurants, like the Italian La Fiducia and the diverse Alameda, now have one star in the GUIA BRASIL. And there's plenty to see before the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympics... (Rio De Janeiro - Brasil - Destinos - Viajeaqui.com.br)⁵

This introduction, or call to the attractions of Rio for Brazilians, highlights the obvious

⁵ Original Portuguese: “Se chegar de avião, no Aeroporto Santos Dumont, escolha um assento na janelinha do lado direito e não durma. Durante a descida, você avista o Cristo Redentor, passa do ladinho do Pão de Açúcar, sobrevoa os vários morros da cidade e, assim, meio sem querer, a música Samba do Avião, de Tom Jobim, vem à cabeça. Sim, o Rio tem mesmo paisagens de cinema (ou melhor, de novela). E tem sabido renovar seus encantos. Em 2010, o Theatro Municipal reabriu as portas como no dia da inauguração, em 1909. Restaurantes novos, como o italiano La Fiducia e o variado Alameda, já chegam com uma estrela no GUIA BRASIL. E há muito por vir até a Copa de 2014 e as Olimpíadas de 2016: a hotelaria, em especial, deve se aquecer com a volta de medalhões como o hotel Glória e o antigo Le Méridien (futuro Windsor), já em reforma.” (Rio De Janeiro - Brasil - Destinos - Viajeaqui.com.br)

attractions of beautiful landscape. However, Rio again has undervalued charm – a re-opened opera house and highly rated foreign cuisine. By recalling the inaugural day of the Opera House, the guides are (perhaps unwittingly) calling back on Rio's heavily European influenced reconstruction at the turn of the century. Currently, with the upcoming World Cup and Olympics, a new wave of reconstruction brought about to gain prestige from the international community seems to be a bit of history repeating.

As demonstrated by these introductions to the city, for Rio, as well as many other travel destinations, the search for the perfect view is central to the tourist experience. This view, beyond just the literal, suggests a class position, demonstrated through the guidebook's intended audiences. Through a photographic lens the traveler's experience can be translated and better re-told back at home or through social media. As picture perfect proof of a trip, captured images while traveling work on a micro level to re-tell stories – like travel literature (what the traveler goes in with), photographs and souvenirs are what the traveler brings back (Hutnyk 151). On Riotur.com, the official Rio tourism website, the photo gallery shows the scenic, typical, postcard views of Rio that the tourist can garner through their visits to viewpoints throughout the city. These images make up the shell of the tourist bubble and Destination Brazil -- the reproductions of images through postcards and pictures just the same as the reproduction of stories and passed down tips.



View from the Corcovado

In Rio, the battle of the better view has ranged between the Pão de Açúcar (Sugar Loaf mountain) and the Cristo Redentor atop of Corcovado mountain (the Christ the Redeemer statue). The majestic landscape of Rio – a spectacular mash up of ocean, mountains, jungle and gigantic city in between – calls for getting a good view and tourists spend to get it. The most iconic and widely recognized symbol of Rio and Brazil in general is the Cristo Redentor statue. Built between 1922 and 1933 to commemorate Brazil's 100 years of independence with a religious monument, Cristo Redentor welcomes over 600,000 tourists per year (St Regis). This symbol is part of the post-card Rio and a must-see (actually seeing it merely requires looking up) where tourists gather to take pictures with their arms outstretched. The view from Corcovado mountain includes the other most iconic viewpoint of Rio, the more bay-centralized Pão de

Acuçar or Sugar Loaf mountain where visitors can go up two cable cars to gain a view of the sweeping cityscape (including the Cristo Redentor) and snap more photographs of a postcard Rio.



View from the top of Sugar Loaf mountain

The perfect esthetic viewpoint is especially important in Rio and when examining favela tourism. The favelas make up an integral part of the landscape of Rio, the backdrop behind the beach and big buildings. The favela tours also emphasize the amazing viewpoint that tourists can gain on a tour – allowing for photographic opportunities. The favela tours themselves can be pulled into the realm of taking the perfect picture (one that, ironically enough would not actually include the favela in the picturesque viewpoint pointed outwards) and thus justified. In an article by the BBC about cleanups of favelas and the favela tours themselves, this same esthetic viewpoint’s importance is emphasized in an interview with a favela resident:

“The government wants to make the favelas safer for tourists because the view up here is amazing,” she says, resting her arm on a salon chair. “Everyone here is focused on the World Cup and the Olympics.” As Rio gets ready to host the matches in the 2014 World Cup and the Olympics two years later, the city's hillside shantytowns are the target of a government clean-up that in turn is being used as a springboard to develop tourism in the favelas with special tours. Favela tours provide an exciting alternative to Rio's well-known tourism circuit of Sugarloaf Mountain, the Christ the Redeemer statue, and the beach. Built on steep hillside slopes, the favelas have breathtaking views of the city. (Stillman).

Thus, favelas become part of a national heritage, part of “Destination Brazil,” acknowledged for their cultural contributions by the outside, making them a heritage tourism site, a viewpoint and a more legitimized part of the landscape. The esthetic viewpoint from the Corcovado, Sugar Loaf Mountain and now the favela hillsides demonstrate the power of the tourist lens in creating a culture or taking a postcard picture image and Destination Brazil.

The way guidebooks introduce and frame a picture of Destination Brazil interprets a reality or bubble of “real” Brazil that, seen through a viewpoint both literal and metaphorical, combines to reinforce conditions of economic inequalities. This is especially apparent in view of favela tourism, where guidebooks promote and encourage visitors to capitalize on an opportunity to embrace “reality,” while still being able to achieve a view worthy of framing. These guidebooks make up bubbles of isolation and at times connection with Brazil – all the while feeding off of representations.



View from a favela tour –used on favela tour website to promote favela tours. This view contains both the Christ statue and Sugar Loaf mountain.

Favela Tours

The favela as a cultural center (a heritage destination) and an example of poverty and a “dark” side to Brazil also holds all of the contradictions of Destination Brazil for outside consumption. Tourism necessarily engages with representations – drawing people in, especially in the case of the favela – now a heralded trademark of urban Brazil⁶. The favela tours represent

⁶ “It is paradoxical that the favelas are also so strongly associated with a number of positive aspects of Brazil’s image, especially the samba and carnivals; and it is this mixture of images –

the new Destination Brazil – a search for a “real” experience. Several studies of favela tourism have been conducted in recent years, two of which I will examine in greater detail – Deborah Dwek’s⁷ research in Rocinha (the largest and most toured favela in Rio) in 2004 and Bianca Freire Medeiros’ research on behalf of the Getulio Vargas Association (also mainly in Rocinha) in 2008. While these studies help explain the impact on the toured community, what different guidebooks tell us about the tours gives a view on favela tourism for the tourist. For the favela tourist, a sense of exoticism intrigues – a supposedly safe and secure way for Westerners to see an “other-ed” image of poverty away from the “tourist bubble” sub-reality of the rest of their experience and allowing for a more authentic, gritty “reality” of life in Brazil. Freire-Medeiros found the favela tourist to be almost solely from Europe and the United States and between the age range of 25 and 55 (584). Favela tourism can be classified under heritage tourism (the ‘low’ version) or as dark tourism (coming to look in on someone else’s destitution). While favela tours are not what tourists generally travel to Rio specifically to see, they are increasing in popularity and hold many of the contradictions of Brazilian culture and identity.

The favela tours were started in 1992 by Marcelo Armstrong,⁸ and now more than seven companies offer favela tours of 3 to 6 hours. These tours capitalize on the sense of exciting, exotic danger and lack of voyeurism that can be had by going on a tour with someone supposedly from the favelas and with an economic return to these impoverished areas. The tour

fear and danger, yet excitement and sensation – which makes them an attraction to visitors” (Mowforth, Charlton and Munt 187).

⁷ Dwek’s research appears as a chapter within Mowforth, Charlton and Munt’s *Tourism and Responsibility: Perspectives from Latin America and the Caribbean*

⁸ Although generally acknowledged for creating or being the first to give organized tours, there has been some debate as to the legitimacy of this claim. (Freire-Medeiros 584)

guides interviewed by Freire-Medeiros all pointed to the popularity of the film *City of God* as being central to the rise in favela tourism, again demonstrating the importance of popular representation in tourism (582). The tours often allow visitors to meet and greet with people from the favela, along with opportunities to stop and take pictures, buy souvenirs and artisanal products as well as a guided “history” of the favelas themselves. Some tours are conducted by Jeep, others have tourists weave through the favelas on mopeds, and some are guided one-on-one walks through the community with an educated guide or a drive through by taxi (Freire-Medeiros 584). According to *Lonely Planet*, over 3,000 tourists a month take some kind of favela tour (St Regis 225). The cost is usually between US\$36 and \$80, depending on the length and type of tour. Nearly every tour claims to donate a portion of the proceeds back into the favela, whether it is in the form of after school programs, future tour guide training or deals with local vendors (Freire-Medeiros 584). However, there are other tours whose presence in the favela is apparently unrelated to the economy of the area but who claim to host tours to break the negative stigma attached to the favela.⁹ According to Dwek’s study, people living in the favela have often responded positively to the tours. She also concluded that the residents have their own ideas about how to use tourism to their advantage, yet have little voice or forum to express these ideas (189). Furthermore, she concluded that however voyeuristic tours may seem, they are effectively “breaking down social barriers and stigmas” (189).

⁹ In an interview with a tour agency owner, conducted by Freire-Medeiros, he summarized: “I’m not in charge of any social action. I’m not a social agent of the favela. That’s not my job. My job is to show what the favela really is, in order to erase that eventual, negative image tourists might have and to promote the city as well. It’s a job I look at from a patriotic and economic viewpoint, because it improves the image of Brazil outside the country, and it is an attraction for people to come more often” (Freire-Medeiros 585).

Demonstrative of this breakdown of barriers and stigmas, the majority of travel literature about favela tourism is almost universally positive (especially commentary from people who have participated in the tours). After setting up who their audience is in introductions to the city, the guidebooks' treatment of favela tours offers a variety of suggestions for and about favela tourism, for these same audiences in *Destination Brazil*. All of the guidebooks recommend the tours, although TripAdvisor's commentary has a slightly negative spin, whereas *Fodors*, *Frommers* and *Lonely Planet* all strongly recommend and encourage the tours.

Fodors, in particular, perhaps to encourage their readers away from their usual "beaten path," even give tips for entering favelas without a tour guide. They emphasize the imminent, exciting danger in detail, but stress the respect visitors will receive.

If you're feeling intrepid and want to explore Rocinha on foot without a guide, be aware of the following: Rocinha has been controlled by the drug faction Amigos dos Amigos (ADA) since 2006. The gang is heavily armed with handguns, automatic weapons, and grenades. They use these arms to protect the drug trade, which is a thriving, though illegal, business. It's clear who the gang members are, and drugs are sold in plain sight. The drug dealers don't hustle, they don't call out visitors or people on tours, and they will assume that foreigners are either on a tour or working for one of the many NGOs stationed inside Rocinha. Do not take pictures of the police or of armed men inside the favela. (Favelas | Rio De Janeiro Features | Fodor's Travel Guides)

For *Fodors*, the most high-end of the guidebooks, the danger of the favela is explicitly pointed out – yet this danger seems to hold the majority of the appeal of the favela. *Fodors* has an entire section devoted to the favela – with a short history and description of Rio's largest favelas. The

gangs, while dangerous, do not pose a threat to the tourist, and foreigners are now a common part of the favela scene. Ironically, although touring, visitors are encouraged not to take pictures of police or anyone who is armed – although pointing the camera outwards is presumably part of this touring experience. Like the “Girl from Ipanema,” or the “good museums and marvelous food,” described as introductory draws to Rio, the gang-controlled favelas become a part of the tourist friendly Rio experience. *Frommers*, on the other hand, mentions the favela tours in passing and directly warns against entering them without a tour or a guide. “Rio's hillside favelas, or shantytowns, are huge, complex, and fascinating -- a whole other world, in fact -- but as an outsider it's difficult (and dangerous) to navigate your way through this world” (Organized Tours in Rio De Janeiro at Frommer's). The favela fascination demonstrates its Otherness – its place as an entirely different world outside of the normal tourist experience and apart from the rest of Rio. For outsiders, this Other world can be difficult and requires a guide (beyond just the book).

Similar to *Fodors*, *Lonely Planet* offers a long description of the favela and its place in Brazilian culture and as part of Destination Brazil. They also acknowledge possible reservations from tourists about entering the favelas with a tour and in a section entitled “Should I stay or should I go?” the possible benefits and useful tips (choosing a guide, where the money from the tour is actually going, ideas for volunteering) are explained.

Favela tours are now among the most popular day tours you can book in the city, but many visitors wonder if it's little more than voyeurism to take a trip into the Rocinha ‘slums.’ In fact, there can be some positive things that come out of the experience. Local

residents, who feel marginalized by their own government, are often flattered that foreigners take such an interest in them. (St Regis 225)

Favela tours have become an acknowledged and common part of tourism, with Rocinha, the largest of Rio's favelas, becoming an official tourist attraction in September 2006 (Freire-Medeiros 583). In recognizing that some tourists may feel uncomfortable with the idea of gazing at the poor as a tour, "positive things" can grow from these experiences and residents are even flattered that foreigners care enough to visit. This generalized statement harkens back to the *Culture Smart!* guides, seeking to ease visitors into a culture while noting how views from the outside, or the tourist, can subtly influence interactions inside the favela community itself, creating connections between the marginalized, toured, Other, and the first world guidebook-reading-tourist.

TripAdvisor also includes an entire article devoted to issues around favela tourism. The article is very cautious in its feelings towards tourists entering the favela, suggesting that the author (a TripAdvisor member) is worried about the cultural interactions that these tours could create.

Visitors to Rio who want to take a 'favela' tour should seriously consider what their motives are as well as what they are likely to learn, what their presence contributes as well as the practical issue of personal safety...A brief tour of a slum is most unlikely to give much real insight into the lives of the moradores (residents). Unless someone taking such a tour has a reasonable grasp of Portuguese, they are likely to get a filtered view of life there anyway. If you research, some guides from their communities will offer a full day spent there to show more of the art, culture, food and music that exists in their favela." (Rio De Janeiro: Favela Tours - TripAdvisor)

Tourists are likely to get a tailor-made exhibition of life in the favela through tours (rather than the reality they are supposedly seeking out), especially without knowledge of Portuguese. The life shown to tourists will be “filtered,” although if the tourist does enough research they can perhaps gain a daylong walk-in-the-Others’-shoes experience of the cultural production coming out of the favela. Several people commented on the article who had been on favela tours. All of the commentary encouraged readers to go to the favelas, to not listen to the “negative” spin of the main article and that the tours were truly giving back to the community.

The most striking description by a travel company is the 4rodas (or 4 wheels) guide for Brazilians, by Brazilians. The guide gives the favela tour two out of five stars and a brief description of what the Brazilian tourist can expect. However, the emphasis, or the actual attraction of the favelas is their tie to American culture – the favela’s moment of glory of being in Michael Jackson’s music video.

Tourists are taken by jeep to the top of the Santa Marta favela, close to Humaitá (there’s a stop with a viewpoint with Sugar Loaf mountain in its trajectory). From that point, you walk through the entire community accompanied by a guide who shows you the place where Michael Jackson filmed scenes from the “They don’t care about us” music video. At this spot there is a bronze statue and plaque signed by Romero Brito in honor of the deceased American pop star (Rio De Janeiro - Brasil - Destinos - Viajeaqui.com.br)¹⁰

¹⁰ Original Portuguese: “Os turistas são levados de jipe ao topo da favela de Santa Marta, próxima a Humaitá (há uma parada em mirante com vista para o Pão de Açúcar no trajeto). A partir desse ponto, eles caminham por toda a extensão da comunidade acompanhados de um guia e conhecem a laje onde Michael Jackson gravou cenas do clipe da música They don't care about us. Neste local, uma estátua de bronze e um painel assinado por Romero Brito homenageiam o falecido pop star americano” (Rio De Janeiro - Brasil - Destinos - Viajeaqui.com.br).

In this description of the tours there is no actual mention of a national cultural experience for the tourist – middle and upper class Brazilians would apparently be more interested in a plaque honoring Michael Jackson than viewing the favela itself. None of the guidebooks for an English language audience even mentioned the Michael Jackson tribute plaque as part of the tour (although some mentioned in passing the fact that this video was shot partly in favelas). On certain levels this makes perfect sense – why would middle and upper class Brazilians (those with leisure time and the ability to use it) who see the favelas and poverty every day (albeit from a distance) want to spend their leisure time touring them?¹¹ In a blog article about favela tourism on the same Brazilian website, a contributor notes the outsider’s fascination with the favela and puzzles over why it is such a draw for “gringos” (foreigners).

When we Brazilians travel abroad we also want to see what doesn’t exist in our country, something exotic. But, lets face it, outside misery is a lousy business. Brazil has an outstanding landscape, with marvelous beaches and an extremely rich culture. This is what should be the destination for foreign tourists. There is something wrong with tourists giving preference to Brazilian favelas.¹² (Zakabi 1)

The blogger acknowledges that in traveling, people seek something exotic, or different than what can be found at home – a destination -- (and an explanation as to why so few Brazilians go on

¹¹ And as mentioned previously (in Freire-Medeiros’ study), these tours are taken almost exclusively by North American and European tourists.

¹² Original Portuguese: “Quando nós, brasileiros, viajamos ao Exterior, também queremos ver o que não existe em nosso país, algo que é exótico para a gente. Mas, convenhamos: ficar conhecido lá fora pela miséria é um péssimo negócio. O Brasil tem uma paisagem fora de série, com praias maravilhosas e uma cultura riquíssima. É isso que deveria ser o chamariz para os turistas estrangeiros. Se tem gente dando preferência às favelas brasileiras, existe algo errado, aí.” (Zakabi 1)

favela tours), but for her, favelas do not count as part of heritage or heritage tourism – or even part of the otherwise “rich” culture. Tourists’ preference for favelas or the fascination of an exotic poverty is incomprehensible and almost reprehensible to a native Brazilian (and here I am, a North American tourist, fascinated with the favela tour, and writing a thesis on it).

Favela tourism can serve as a way for tourists to see a different side to life in Brazil, as well as an opportunity for people living in the favela to sell their products, however, these excursions can only exist, and are contingent upon, continued poverty. Thus, they are not sustainable – as soon as a favela ceases to exist so does this niche market for tourism. Furthermore, the majority of favela tours, while stressing their authenticity, are more often than not managed by outsiders, with a very small number of guides actually from the favela (which also attests to educational problems within the favela, and the need for English language education in order to act as a guide). With tours run by outsiders, the voyeuristic implications are heightened as the guides act as cultural interpreters of a culture they are not necessarily a part of. Although there are some slight economic returns to the community, “Dwek reports that a number of artists have developed a degree of dependence on the tours for selling their work and that their economic livelihood becomes precarious if the tours are cancelled. Despite the trickle-down of economic benefits to a few individuals, Dwek found that there were no returns to the community as a whole” (Mowforth, Charlton and Munt 187). Artists working in the favelas are becoming increasingly dependent on tours, and thus friendlier towards tourists – however, many guides charge a commission fee for bringing in these possible sources of capital, creating another unsustainable source of income. Many of the companies insist that a large portion of the money spent on tours goes directly back into the community, into schools or arts programs, yet what

happens to these jobs and programs as soon as the favelas improve enough to no longer be considered exotic and exciting from an outsider's perspective?

Keeping in course with history, the influence from the West or the world outside Brazil has prompted more clean-up initiatives of the favelas – particularly with the next World Cup and Olympics in Brazil. Favela tourism can be seen as part of this clean up initiative – as cities generally try to put their best, most cleanly face forward for tourist consumption, the rise in favela tours can go hand in hand with improvements. However, these improvements come from the prompting of outside sources, and many in the favelas fear for their even further marginalization. It remains to be seen if favela tourism can spur any “real” positive change within the favelas, (or whether it should be responsible for creating any change beyond just informing visitors of life within the favela) and while it definitely adds to some cultural understandings and an ability for tourists to see a different view of Rio – it will continue to be a debate as to whether it is ethical to engage in poverty tourism. The rise in popularity of favela tourism demonstrates the place of the favela as a trademark, along with the power of the tourist and tourist literature in creating or legitimizing a tourists' place within a country.

Conclusion

In an ideal world, we would all be culturally sensitive travelers who seek to gain a “real” vision of the countries we visit, or who enjoy our ‘escapes’ and vacations while at least being culturally aware of our surroundings. No one is a model of perfect cultural sensitivity – otherwise we would all be the same and there would be no reason to travel, grow or learn. The favela tours offer a way for travelers to access previously inaccessible areas and gain a greater understanding of how class, race and poverty interact in the most marginalized centers of Brazil.

How are we supposed to go places and learn new things without making mistakes or by being trapped in a bubble, unable to escape other tourists? This is why favela tourism is so attractive and still somewhat revolting – gazing at the poor, reproducing images of poverty or of a good view to take home without making any effective changes in a community. Yet, without at least visiting and acknowledging poverty and inequality how can we change it? Is it the duty of tourism in poorer areas to fix that poverty or improve life for residents in order to not be voyeuristic? Or is it enough just to acknowledge its existence? The favela tour or tourism of poverty in general calls into question issues of historical and present day representation which can be seen through guidebooks, internet blogs and travel websites as well as popular portrayals of a country, a city and a community.

The ways that a country is popularly portrayed directly links to the way people see the country and thus their interest in traveling there and the things that they want to see. This in turn structures the way travel is written about and how people develop and use tips and information passed down through guidebooks or other media. These cultural relations and different viewpoints also demonstrate power structure both within the country and internationally. As new and different mediations of culture occur and the world's connectivity increases, travel has become more accessible and a search for "reality" more attractive and increasingly less alternative.

As a perfect example of the international attention to the favela, in March of 2011, President Obama took his first in-office trip to Brazil to meet with the newly elected (and first female) president of Brazil, Dilma Rousseff. During this trip Obama and his family took a tour through the Cidade de Deus favela, playing soccer with children on the street and commenting on Brazil's emergence as a world power.

'More than half of this nation is now considered middle class. Millions have been

lifted from poverty,” Obama said. “For the first time, hope is returning to places where fear had long prevailed. I saw this today when I visited Cidade de Deus — the City of God. As one young resident said, “People have to look at favelas not with pity, but as a source of presidents, lawyers, doctors, artists, [and] people with solutions.
(Whitefield)

Once again demonstrating gringo’s fascination with the favela, Obama’s visit also marks the movement of the favela into the mainstream, onto the postcard and slowly away from a marginalized cultural center into the forefront of national and international debate and politics. The fact that a national head of state can enter an area where only a few years before any outsiders were unable to enter is a testament to the increasingly visibility and number of outsiders allowed to enter the favelas. The favela tour is a place where a history of economic inequalities, continued marginalization, cultural creation and exaltation and now tourism all collide.

As Obama notes in his speech, perhaps rather than looking to the outside or to tourism to confront issues of inequality, a build up of confidence, a shift away from looking pityingly or maintaining the favela as an exotic Other and towards recognizing them as the home and community of future success stories is needed. However, in order to create success stories, more than just a cosmetic “clean-up,” or sweep away of “rabble” is needed – investments in education, continuation of programs such as Bolsa Familia and health and safety initiatives need to be implemented successfully into the favela. Perhaps the first step towards achieving these measures is recognizing the favela as a legitimate part of the landscape – not just a stylized backdrop. This could be the role of favela tourism – letting tourists get to know a little bit more about the favela. However, life for the residents of the favela is not a “Destination Brazil,” mediated through an exported vision of Brazil in movies, music and guidebooks. An ability to

represent themselves and cease to be an exotic Other is needed and calls for a change within society beyond just recognizing the historical or cultural productions of the favela. This requires the creation of fundamental adjustments in the system that address inequality so that favela residents can also become actors on a world stage.

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