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Book Reviews

Touring Poverty. *Bianca Freire-Medeiros*. London and New York: Routledge, 2013. 224 pp.

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Why do gringos tour *favelas* while visiting Rio de Janeiro, a city known worldwide for its beautiful beaches, the Sugarloaf Mountain, and the iconic Christ the Redeemer statue? And what do favela residents think of these tours? Do they feel that they are trapped in a human zoo, being gazed at as exotic attractions? These are some of the difficult questions that Bianca Freire-Medeiros addresses in *Touring Poverty*, the first single-authored book to comprehensively analyze the controversial practice of "poverty tourism." Rejecting the simplistic binary assertions that poverty tours are either socially exploitative of, or a form of economic rescue for, impoverished neighborhoods and their inhabitants, Freire-Medeiros grapples with the complexity of a phenomenon that juxtaposes misery and leisure, contemplation and interaction, and inequality and solidarity.

Although the fascination with the poor is not in itself a novelty, as evidenced by the practice of "slumming" in late nineteenth century London, poverty as an international tourist attraction has recently reached unprecedented proportions. Freire-Medeiros argues that the contemporary phenomenon of poverty tourism results from two seemingly divergent processes that can be traced back to the early 1990s: the commodification of poverty and the worldwide expansion of reality tours. The first process refers to the production and dissemination of alluring representations of poor places and peoples, which have contributed to resignify poverty as an object of rational consumption. The second process refers to the emergence of new forms of tourism aimed at raising social awareness among tourists and fostering global networks of solidarity between the haves and the have-nots of the world.

At the center of these processes lies what Freire-Medeiros insightfully calls "the traveling favela," or the dissemination of a series of media representations of the favela as simultaneously hip, cool, excitingly dangerous, and colorfully exotic. Despite their distinct portrayals, the movies *City of God*, *Elite Squad*, and *Rio*, have all contributed to globally circulate glamorous images of the favela. These images were further disseminated in different parts of the globe via events, such as the Favelité exhibition in Paris as part of "Brazil's Year in France" in 2005, and venues, such as the dance-club Favela Chic and its multiple locations in Paris, London, and Miami. Additionally, objects

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associated with poverty, such as flip-flops, have become fashionable, as exemplified by the worldwide consumption of the Brazilian brand, Havaianas.

The concept of the traveling favela is inspired by the new mobilities paradigm, a theory that examines the interdependent movements of people, information, images and objects, and the social and material realities that such interdependence creates. The proliferation of travel and communication technologies has strengthened previously distant and intermittent social connections. Although the new mobilities paradigm could have been explained in more detail in this book, especially for the benefit of students with less exposure to theory, it was a suitable choice for this study. Furthermore, *Touring Poverty* engages critically with important theorizations of tourism and poverty studies, providing future researchers with a series of potential theoretical entry points. *Touring Poverty* also contributes to shift the geopolitics of knowledge as the book draws on key studies about the favela produced by Brazilian social scientists, making them accessible to non-Portuguese readers.

The research that generated this book combined a range of methods, including ethnography, qualitative in-depth interviews with tourists, tour guides, travel agents, and residents, and the analysis of textual and visual sources, especially photography. The latter method confirmed the existence of a hermeneutic circle where tourists mostly reproduce, in the pictures they take, the dominant images of the places to which they had already been exposed before traveling. The hermeneutic circle was reiterated, for example, during the *momento laje*, or the "rooftop moment," when the tourists are brought to a favela rooftop to photograph the panoramic view and the striking contrast between the favela and the *asfalto* (asphalt), the middle- and upper-class neighborhoods of Rio. Other examples of the hermeneutic circle include the tourists' tendency to photograph the garbage on the streets and the bundles of electric wires, and to zoom in on the shacks while ignoring the more prosperous houses in the favela. While most of the ethnography was carried out in Rio's Rocinha favela between 2005 and 2007, Freire-Medeiros also traveled as a tourist/researcher to Cape Flats and Soweto in South Africa, and to the Dharavi slum in India. These trips allowed her to develop important comparisons of these different destinations.

Touring Poverty is a definite page-turner. Not only is the topic absorbing and of great relevance; the text is tremendously vivid. While the first part of the book offers an aerial view (i.e., a historical summary and a global mapping) of poverty tourism, the second part presents an ant's view of the phenomenon as it takes the reader on walking tours of the Brazilian favela, the South African township, and the Indian slum. The analysis of the geopolitical conditions that favor poverty tourism could have been brought more to the forefront of the book, although it is certainly in the background. A more explicit geopolitical analysis would have explained why global Northerners travel to the global South to tour poverty when tent camps and other signs of destitution are becoming increasingly visible in their own countries. At the same time, one of the book's greatest contributions is that it challenges the commonsensical view that poverty tours are merely an expression of a middle-class romanticization of the poor, and it does so on undisputable empirical grounds. The

last chapter, aptly titled "Favelado Ain't No Sucker," carefully listens to the residents' impressions of the touristic favela. Although opinions vary, most of the residents are favorable to the favela tours since they see this practice as potentially working to counter the stigmatization of the favelas and their dwellers by the Brazilian dominant classes. Sometimes, only the gaze of a gringo can work such magic.

Housing and Belonging in Latin America. Christien Klaufus and Arij Ouweneel, eds. New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2015. 330 pp.

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Latin American cities are unfortunately known by the inevitably negative characteristics of their slums. Academic and nonacademic literature is abundant on the issues surrounding these widespread urban developments. A variety of past and present studies analyze the insecurity, violence, poverty, and lack of infrastructure that affect people in these low-income areas, particularly those living in the megacities. Yet, Latin American cities and their range of shantytowns—*favelas, ranchos, barrios, conjuntos urbanos, villas miseria*—deserve more sensitive analyses of not only their negative characteristics, but also of their positive ones. A balanced and critical approach to urban development is what characterizes the collection of essays compiled in *Housing and Belonging in Latin America.* In this volume, Christien Klaufus and Arij Ouweneel successfully bring together different approaches to understanding the historical and cultural relationship between housing, living, and belonging in Latin American urban societies. While the thirteen contributors to this volume come from a variety of disciplines, the essays are linked together by the common concern of how "housing" and "belonging to a city" are connected. One of the major contributions of this book is the richness in the variety of approaches and analyses of both concepts. The book compiles a balanced selection of thirteen essays divided into five sections ranging from mainly theoretical and academic chapters to descriptive and analytical vignettes that cover several cities and case studies across Latin America.

Klaufus opens with a concise but detailed analysis of the urban design principles that have guided the processes of urbanization since the first half of the twentieth century through the present day. Her work advocates for the development of theories that would deconstruct the "dystopian" characterization of contemporary Latin America by drawing our attention to the "spatialization of behavior" (11) as a tool to analyze relations of power in urban macro- and micro-levels.

The first part of the book sets the stage by discussing notions of urban organization, social cohesion, and belonging. Bryan Roberts shows that disorganization in some cases has been a "source of reorganization" that promotes social cohesion, that is, neighbors working together to demand public services or gangs protecting and keeping order in a neighborhood. His essay expands beyond the traditional idea that disorganization is an impediment to social cohesion. Gerard and Marijke Martin reflect on the "historical dynamics of belonging" in Medellín, Colombia. They argue that Medellín's social urbanism success is based on the rationality and formality of a model that respects the city's