

RESEÑAS

KÁTIA DA COSTA BEZERRA. *Postcards from Rio: Favelas and the Contested Geographies of Citizenship*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2017. 176 pp.

In her important study, Kátia da Costa Bezerra makes the compelling argument that favela-based cultural producers are nuancing the imaginary of the physical and economic landscapes of contemporary favelas, challenging the reductionist notion that these residential agglomerates are merely violent and cast-off urban places. At the heart of da Costa Bezerra's examination is a spatial analysis that approaches favelas from varying modes of representation, including photographs, videos, and literary production by local artists serving to challenge dominant discourses around participation and presence. Her artifacts are both symbolic and material in nature, including physical sites such as murals or cable car stations in the *Complexo do Alemão*, a group of favelas in the North Zone of Rio de Janeiro. The book gains strength in its interdisciplinary, multimedia approach to these cultural zones and argues for the emergence of new sociocultural actors in favelas who have been successful in rethinking and reshaping beliefs around citizenship and agency.

In the introduction, da Costa Bezerra lays the groundwork for her book by historically and economically contextualizing Brazilian favelas at large. She directly addresses some prominent stereotypes and misconceptions surrounding these residential and commercial spaces, dispelling the belief that favelas exist in isolation from rather than in direct dialogue with what she deems the "legal" city, or areas that lie within the purview of state-sanctioned infrastructure. Indeed, inhabitants of both zones regularly move between them in contemporary Brazilian cities, in wide ranging activities related to work and recreation. Promoting the flexibility and inclusion of favelas over their alienation and exclusion, da Costa Bezerra's chapters then go on to assess material and symbolic representations of space from a variety of vantage points.

In Chapter One, da Costa Bezerra looks at two photojournalistic projects organized by favela residents, contesting that these visual representations form part of an aesthetic that places into question the possibility of visibility *vis-à-vis* prevailing urban power hierarchies. Drawing upon Michel Foucault's conceptualization of heterotopias as sites for performing alternative social ordering, da Costa Bezerra proposes that the photographic exhibit and book emerging from these two projects challenge and juxtapose representations of this order. The following chapter examines three filmic accounts that treat the theme of childhood in

favelas in varying ways, relocating it into the imaginary of the city and defying dominant understandings of space and place, while problematizing the idea of a singular childhood identity.

In Chapter Three, da Costa Bezerra studies two key moments in the history of the development of Rio favelas through an analysis of the short story “Maria Déia,” by Lia Vieira, an eviction tale from 1950s favela residents, and the video ImpACTos, which examines the Growth Acceleration Program (PAC) in Rio. Focusing on personal narratives as vehicles for interrogating citizenship and identity, da Costa Bezerra analyzes urban spaces as sites of consumption and studies how personal narratives might aid in comprehending ongoing struggles. In the work’s final two chapters, the author returns to the material realm of favelas through two examinations that focus on physical spaces; in Chapter Four, she examines the cable car stations and their photographic representation in a Rio-based favela, and in Chapter Five, she looks at museums, historical areas and iconographic architecture in Rio as arenas for promoting urban identity and branding. Both chapters share an emphasis on the use of space as a symbolic tool for extending identity and reinventing the imaginary of the city.

This study will appeal to a range of scholars, from undergraduates to graduate students and faculty in Latin American Literary and Cultural Studies – particularly those interested in Brazil – as well as the Visual Arts and New Media Studies. The spatial analysis that the work undertakes has inevitable economic, social and anthropological dimensions that will be of interest to those working broadly on cityscapes. Given the study’s focus on Rio, scholars of the diverse metropolis will find new approaches in this book that take into consideration the rich cultural production arising from artists on the periphery. As a scholar of contemporary Brazil in its digital and analogue manifestations, I can recommend this work to colleagues and students across these disciplines, as it will certainly be a worthwhile addition to an academic library or course on related themes.

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JUAN PABLO DABOVE. *Bandit Narratives in Latin America: From Villa to Chávez*. Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press, 2017. xxv + 397 pp.

Bandit Narratives extends Juan Pablo Dabove’s first book – *Nightmares of the Lettered City: Banditry and Literature in Latin America, 1816-1929* (2007). Taken together, the two works encompass modern Latin American