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Favela Law and *City of God*

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Abstract

In this paper, I explore how law is expressed in a Brazilian film about one community's transformation over three decades. I argue that through its use of cinematography and narrative strategies, *Cidade de Deus* (trans. *City of God*) reflects problematic assumptions about the people who live in favelas and the norms that guide their behaviour and relationships. The film depicts a favela marred by the hyper-presence and simultaneous absence of formal and official law. In contrast to that view, I highlight other representations, many produced by favela inhabitants themselves, which provide a more productive and relational understanding of the norms that exist and are constituted in these Brazilian communities.

Keywords: poverty; race; cinema; Brazil; representations

Introduction

Favelas are neighbourhoods in Brazil made up of low-income housing.[2] Fernando Meirelles and Kátia Lund depict life in one of

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[2] Favela inhabitants are not necessarily poor, and many middle-class individuals and families live in these diverse neighbourhoods. Consequently, there is no fixed definition of a favela. However, a census from the Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE), or the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, defined "*aglomerado subnormal*" (trans. "subnormal agglomerates") as neighbourhoods with at least 51 housing units occupied by people other than the land owners that largely lack essential public services. Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística. (2010). *Aglomerados subnormais: Informações territoriais* (trans. *Subnormal agglomerates: Territorial information*). Retrieved from https://ww2.ibge.gov.br/english/estatistica/populacao/censo2010/aglomerados_subnormais_informacoes_territoriais/default_informacoes_territoriais.shtm. The IBGE found that 22.03 percent of the 6,323,037 residents of Rio de Janeiro live in irregular housing communities (favelas): Hurrell, F. (2011, December 23). *Rio favela population largest in Brazil: Daily*. Retrieved from http://riotimesonline.com/brazil-news/rio-politics/rios-favela-population-largest-in-brazil/. Gonçalves, R.S. & Pilo, F. (2017). From *Favela* to *communidade*, and beyond. The taming of

Rio de Janeiro's favelas in *City of God* (2002).[3] I argue that through its use of cinematographic and narrative strategies, the film makes normative claims about law. Building on the critical scholarship of law-film studies, I explore how *City of God* may foster a tacit acceptance of dominant and often decontextualized stories about the people who inhabit favelas and the rule-governed interactions that guide their behaviour.

Exploring the Law-Film Relation: A Brief Review of Existing Scholarship

Law-film studies has emerged as a diverse field generally concerned with the doctrinal, pedagogical, and jurisprudential relevance of film *to* law[4] and, at times, though exceptionally, of law *to* film.[5] There are

Rio de Janeiro. In R. Harris & C. Vorms (Eds.), *What's in a name? Talking about urban peripheries* (173–191). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

[3] Ribeiro, A.B. & Ramos, M.A. (Producers) & Meirelles F. & Lund, K. (Directors). (2002). *Cidade de Deus* (trans. *City of God*) [Motion picture]. Brazil: Alliance Atlantic.

[4] For an introduction to the field: Sarat, A. (2000). Imagining the law of the father: Loss, dread, and mourning in "The Sweet Hereafter." *Law and Society Review, 34*(1), 3–46 (a call to study law in action on the screen); Sherwin, R.K. (2000). *When law goes pop: The vanishing line between law and popular culture*. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press (on some of the dangers possible when 'image-based' modes of performing justice dispense with 'actual facts and applicable case law'); Silbey, J.M. (2006). Filmmaking in the precinct house and the genre of documentary film. *Columbia Journal of Law & the Arts, 29*(2) 107–180 (weaving together evidentiary doctrine and film theory to examine the shift from traditional testimony to the use of video and film technology based on such assumptions); Kamir, O. (2006). *Framed: Women in law and film*. Durham: Duke University Press (arguing that some films mirror legal proceedings that enact honour-based judgments of women while others position female protagonists as subjects rendering dignity-based judgments); Buchanan, R. & Johnson, R. (2009). Strange encounters: Exploring law and film in the affective register. *Studies in Law, Politics, and Society, 46*, 33–60 (deploying film to puzzle over the affective life of law, its corporeality, and its symbolic force); Bouclin, S. (2014). Women's suffrage: A cinematic study. *Revue Lisa e-Journal, 12*(7). Retrieved from https://lisa.revues.org (how films can express and complicate feminist legal methodologies); Greenhill, P. & Kohm, S. (2010). "Little red riding hood" crime films: Themes and critical variations. *Annual Review of Interdisciplinary Justice Research, 1* (Fall 2010), 77–93 (how Little Red Riding Hood reflects shifting political and criminological discourses around violence and predatory behavior); and Robson, P. & Silbey, J. (Eds.). (2012). *Law and justice on the small screen*. Oxford & Portland: Hart Publishing (a collection of essays on how television programs circulate meanings about law).

[5] Gaines is one of the few scholars to engage with the reproducibility of film and its implications *for* law: Gaines, J. (1991). *Contested culture: The image, the voice and the law*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

many ways to explore the points of contact between these disciplines and socio-cultural processes. Building on the work of other law-film scholars, I have argued elsewhere that there are at least four ways to do so: "film's law" (the ways in which film production is governed through a matrix of explicit, implicit, formal, and informal normative orders); "law *in* film" (films are a legal text that can be mined for legal themes); "law *and* film" (film and law are mutually constitutive socio-cultural fields); and "cinematic law" (thinking through the cinematic dimensions of formal and informal legal processes).[6] Each of these modes of engaging the law-film relation points to some of the multiple and competing normative orders in any film. These include the regulatory frameworks in which the film is produced; the norms of the constructed world described and lived in the film's diegesis;[7] the fixed order of sounds and images; the rules of genre that constitute systems of knowledge through associations; the individual viewer's own law and how she positions herself within these normative orders; and for my purposes in this research, the ideologies and normative commitments that might inform the strategic choices of a director. Any of these can be used to discuss the favela law that constitutes or is expressed through *City of God*, insofar as it is a mode of imagining rule-governed behaviour within and beyond the actual favela it represents. In this article, however, I focus on certain aspects of the film—specifically the use of cinematography and the deployment of particular narrative strategies—to argue that Fernando Meirelles' strategic choices suggest something about his normative commitments towards favela inhabitants and his expectations of how they govern and are governed. Before doing so, I briefly explore the emergence of favelas in Rio de Janeiro.

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[6] Bouclin, S. (2011). *Street law's sites, sights and media* (Unpublished PhD thesis). McGill University, Montreal. See especially Chapter III.

[7] I use the term "diegesis" as it has functioned in literary and film studies (the universe in which a story takes place), rather than Plato's use of the term to develop an account of narrative as a linguistic activity.

The Emergence of Favelas

Favelas are housing conglomerations, usually situated on land with little or no speculative value. While some scholars point to the origin of the favela as the settlement by Bahian government soldiers in temporary shelters on the hills bordering Rio, the housing developments in urban Brazil as they are known today emerged when the country shifted from an agricultural economy to an industrial one.[8] Through the 1920s and 1930s, corporate monopolies bought out most affordable land and housing, which led migrant workers and other urban poor to build irregular settlements on unused urban space that was near public transportation and industry. While developers competed for the valuable centralized real estate, a housing crisis in the 1940s led city governments to implement mass expulsion programs directed at migrant workers, often Black, Indigenous, or otherwise racialized groups, who had occupied these irregular settlements.[9] This migration was exacerbated when flooding forced the urban poor out of the city and into government housing at its periphery.[10] By the 1970s, the favelas expanded well beyond Rio's metropolitan area and into its urban borders and outskirts. These neighbourhoods lacked basic infrastructure and services such as electricity, running water, garbage collection, public transportation, or sanitation.[11] They have since become a permanent fixture of the

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[8] For a more comprehensive history see: Perlman, J.E. (1976). *The myth of marginality: Urban poverty and politics in Rio de Janeiro*. Berkeley: University of California Press; Vaz, L. (1994). Dos cortiços às favelas e aos edifícios de apartamentos—a modernização da moradia no Rio de Janeiro. *Análise Social, 29*(127), 581–597; Gay, R. (1994). *Popular organization and democracy in Rio de Janeiro: A tale of two favelas*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press; and Pino, J.C. (1997). *Family and favela: The reproduction of poverty in Rio de Janeiro*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

[9] Governor Carlos Lacerda designed and implemented the massive relocation plan in 1947 through a Commission charged with the eradication of favelas: Nelson, J.M. (1979). *Access to power: Politics and the urban poor in developing nations*. Princeton: Princeton University Press at 268.

[10] Direct military rule began with the coup in April 1964 and ended with the civilian administration's inauguration in March 1985. Between 1968 and 1975, some 60 favelas were destroyed and approximately 100,000 people were forced into government housing projects. See generally: Perlman (1976), *supra* note 8.

[11] Fraser, B. (2011). Growing up in Rio's favelas. *The Lancet, 377*(9779), 1735–1736.

Brazilian landscape.[12] While people who inhabit any of Rio's over 600 favelas are heterogeneous, the vast majority (about 70 percent) are Black descendants of the slaves brought by the Spanish and Portuguese, or Indigenous peoples displaced as part of the racist colonial and imperialist policies.[13] It is within this context that in December of 1964, to the west of Rio, between Largo da Freguesia and Barra da Tijuca, construction for a new housing project began; it would eventually become Cidade de Deus, the subject of the film *City of God*.

The people who live in favelas such as Cidade de Deus have long been the subjects of popular representations in literature and film.[14]

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[12] Serapião, F. (2016). Linking the formal and informal: Favela urbanization and social housing in São Paulo. *Architectural Design*, 86(3), 70–79; Ventura, Z. (1994). *Cidade partida*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras.

[13] Klein, H.S. (1986). *African slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean*. New York: Oxford University Press. See also: Catalytic Communities. *Rio favela facts*. Retrieved from http://catcomm.org/favela-facts/

[14] Perhaps the earliest film specifically about favelas is *Favela dos meus amores*: Mauro, H. (Director). (1935). *Favela dos meus amores* [Motion picture]. Brazil: Alhambra. By the 1960s, they became a recurring trope in Cinema Novo; however, unlike more recent cinematic explorations, these experimental and political films had, as Beatriz Jaguaribe puts it, "scant repercussion among popular cinema viewers": Jaguaribe, B. (2004). Favelas and the aesthetics of realism: Representations in film and literature. *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies, 13*(3), 327–342 at 331. Social-realist fictional films and documentaries were produced in the 1990s, with various degrees of popular and critical acclaim—see, e.g., Salles, W. & Thomas, D. (Directors). (1999). *O primeiro dia* (trans. *Midnight*) [Motion picture]. Brazil: VideoFilmes; Diegues, C. (Director). (1999). *Orfeu* [Motion picture]. Brazil: Warner Brothers; and Salles, J.M. & Lund, K. (Directors). (1998). *Notícias de uma guerra particular* (trans. *News from a personal war*) [Motion picture]. Brazil: VideoFilmes. Without a doubt, *City of God* (2002) has attracted the most international attention, even though more complex depictions of favela life were produced around the same time—see, e.g., Ratton, H. (Director). (2002). *Uma onda na ar* (trans. *Something in the air*) [Motion picture]. Brazil: Quimera Filmes, which explores Brazil's first community radio station, which was used both to warn community members of police raids and as a mechanism for keeping youth out of the drug business. The romantic comedy *Era uma Vez* is about the possibility of love across social, economic, and spatial boundaries: Silveira, B. (Director). (2008). *Era uma vez* (trans. *Once upon a time in Rio*) [Motion picture]. Brazil: Columbia Pictures. Since then, there has been an effort to produce similarly nuanced depictions of the favela—see, e.g., Zimbalist, J. & Mochary, M. (Directors). (2005). *Favela rising* [Documentary film]. United States: HBO, which chronicles the rise of a non-profit organization that provides composition and production workshops to young Brazilians who could not otherwise afford music lessons. One of the few films to grapple with experiences of young women in favelas, though limited to how they navigate the sex industry, is Werneck, S. (Director). (2008). *Sonhos roubados* (trans. *Stolen Dreams*) [Motion picture]. Brazil: Europa

As cultural theorist Kátia da Costa Bezerra has found, in many cases, these representations reflect stereotypes that "disseminate a culture of fear."[15] I argue that *City of God*'s imagined favela is a dystopia where gang command has displaced the rule of law and enhances these negative stereotypes. Given the national and international acclaim the film received and the fact that it was a financial success, the imagined favela in *City of God* is likely the one that confirms local and global audiences' normative assumptions about life in these communities.[16] In contrast to the worldview presented in *City of God,* however, there exists a diverse and rich body of film through which favela inhabitants reclaim the cultural production of their image and present more complex, collaborative, and pluralist visions of governance within their communities.

City of God: *A Synopsis*

City of God traces the gradual decline of a favela through the experiences of its male youth. Rocket (Alexandre Rodrigues) is the

Filmes. *Tudo Que Aprendemos Juntos* explores how poor urban youth have used classical music as an outlet and escape from violence and crime: Machado, S. (Director). (2015). *Tudo que aprendemos juntos* (trans. *The Violin Teacher*) [Motion picture]. Brazil: Fox Filmes. The American cable and satellite streaming network Home Box Office (HBO) also produced a documentary called *Witness: Rio*, which chronicles how clashes between police and gangs intensified before the FIFA World Cup and the Summer Olympics in 2014 and 2016, respectively: Mann, M. & Frankham, D. (Directors). (2012). *Witness: Rio* [Documentary film]. United States: HBO.

[15] Bezerra, K. (2017). *Postcards from Rio: Favelas and the contested geographies of citizenship*. New York: Fordham University Press at 13.

[16] According to the film's Wikipedia page, it has won 55 awards (including the Audience Award from the American Film Institute) and over 20 nominations (including Best Director from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences): https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/City_of_God_(2002_film). For qualitative research regarding how Westerners of non-Brazilian descent have developed their views about favelas from mainstream media, film, and television, see: Williamson, T. (2015). *Catalytic communities*. Retrieved from http://catcomm.org/perceptions. Fernando Meirelles has recently qualified his film as a tool for political change: "Lula [Brazil's president, Luiz Ignacio Lula da Silva] came to me and said that my film changed his policies of public security": Gonzalez, E. (Interviewer) & Meirelles, F (Interviewee). (2003). *Fernando Meirelles talks City of God* [Interview transcript]. Retrieved from https://www.slantmagazine.com/features/article/city-of-gods-an-interview-with-fernando-meirelles.

young Black protagonist/narrator who allows us entry into Cidade de Deus as it shifts over three decades. It will change from a refugee camp to a housing project with small-time drug production catering to local consumers to a war zone run by a sociopathic drug dealer.

The film opens to a black screen with the sound of a knife grating against stone. A hand-held camera follows an escaped chicken running through the city's labyrinthine corridors. In rapid jump cuts and canted angles, we are shown a chicken's neck. A knife. A beak. A knife again. Children recklessly chase after it while shooting rounds from their pistols. The entire sequence is set to a lively Samba score. The mood shifts dramatically when the music stops, and the camera closes in on Rocket, a young Black man with a camera around his neck. Two 180-degree turns expose the precarious situation in which he finds himself. To his front: a gang with their guns pointed directly at him. Behind him: an equal number of police officers doing the same. Through his first-person voiceover, the film's theme of survival at all costs is introduced: "In the City of God, if you run away they get you, and if you stay they get you too."

A revolving shot brings us back a decade to Rocket's arrival at the favela. The rest of the film unfolds chronologically as we encounter three different favelas: in Rocket's words, "paradise," "purgatory," and "hell." In each of these iterations, Rocket's ambivalence and his struggle to maneuver through the favela as it shifts over time is expressed through a mobile camera and self-conscious, jarring editing techniques. His ambivalence and struggle are given a realist aesthetic with location shooting and are made visceral through the choice of music that accompanies each chapter of the film.

After the opening sequence described above, the film loops back to the 1960s, and the film's tenor and chrome change dramatically. The favela is imagined as *Arcadia,* the paradise of ancient Greece. In a long tracking shot, the camera shows us rows of tiny, flat-roofed, single-family huts that have neither electricity nor running water. While there are a few cars, many people in the neighbourhood still

use horses and buggies. Rocket's narration/voiceover frames the story as one of resilience. He recounts how the inhabitants came to Cidade de Deus with hopes of better futures: "We came … to find paradise. Many families were homeless due to flooding and … arson in the slums." Rocket's brother Shaggy (Jonathan Haagensen) and his friends make up the "Tender Trio," who engage in poverty-related offences and redistribute the spoils of their crimes throughout the community. For instance, they heist a corporate gas truck to provide everyone with basic amenities. In return, the neighbourhood shelters them from generally unchecked police brutality. This unwritten code, which is organized around a shared sense of survival, family values, and spirituality, governs until the 1970s when a new form of authority emerges.

In the second chapter of the film, Li'l Dice (Douglas Silva), who had shadowed the Tender Trio, re-emerges as the sadistic and power-obsessed Li'l Zé (Leandro Firmino da Hora). He betrays and kills his mentors to become the favela's despot and quickly enacts the new law of the favela: "kill or be killed." His violence is senseless: he murders one of his mates for being "too annoying," then maims two of his initiates ("The Runts"), only to force another boy to choose which of the two to put out of their misery. Yet, in voiceover, Rocket explains that, "[h]ad dealing been legal, Zé would have been Man of the Year." As he has bribed the police, Zé's crimes go uninvestigated, and in any event, the community is uninclined to report him and tacitly condones his violence because, on the film's telling, half the favela is on his payroll. Meanwhile, his main competitor, Carrot (Matheus Nachtergaele), one of the few characters coded as white, takes out all the petty drug dealers in his neighbourhood, including his lover/mother figure Dona Zélia.[17]

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[17] Scholar Alba Zaluar has pointed out that the lack of white characters invites audiences to draw inaccurate parallels between favelas and poor urban African American neighbourhoods: Zaluar, A. (2002). A tese do queto nore americano. *Jornol do Brasil, Caderno B*, cited in Jaguaribe (2004), *supra* note 14 at 341, footnote 18.

In the film's final chapter, the favela is divided into two zones according to different drug syndicates and a rivalry between Zé and Carrot. What becomes clear is that despite their tyrannical authority over inhabitants and the monopoly they have over the circulation and sale of drugs in the favela, Zé and Carrot are insignificant compared to the wealthy drug lords and organized crime syndicates that are moving in. Yet they are impervious to this external threat, consumed as they are by the full-blown gang warfare that erupts after one final act of randomized terror committed by Zé.

When Zé discovers that Ned (played by acclaimed musician Seu Jorge), a handsome well-liked youth of the same age, has found work outside the favela, he attacks him and his girlfriend (Sabrina Rosa). He forces Ned to watch him rape his girlfriend.[18] Beyond reminding viewers that the favela is male terrain,[19] the scene signals an irrevocable shift in favela governance. Ned allies himself temporarily with Carrot to eke out some vigilante justice and destroy as many of Zé's "men" that he can. Meanwhile, narrator/observer Rocket has been approached by a mainstream news source to document life in the favela, which, according to him, has become like "living in Vietnam."

After a long, drawn-out shooting rampage from both gangs, there is finally a moment of quiet as the camera pans over the dead bodies splayed over the streets. Ned has been killed and Carrot arrested. Then we see, through Rocket's viewfinder, that Zé has bribed the police and will ultimately be released from custody. In his narration,

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[18] The character played by Sabrina Rosa is credited as "Ned's girlfriend." Feminist scholars have critically interrogated the use of rape as an empty plot device used to further a male-driven narrative. See for instance: Projansky, S. (2001). *Watching rape: Film and television in postfeminist culture*. New York: New York Press.

[19] The few women featured in the film are unnamed victims of gendered violence who precipitate more violence: Shorty kills "his wife" for her infidelity, Ned goes to war as a result of his "girlfriend's" rape, and Dona Zélia is killed in an act of symbolic matricide. The female characters, who are given small speaking roles and granted a measure of subjectivity, are coded in terms of traditional femininity as associated with land and fertility, such as Angelica (played by Alice Braga, one of the few full-time actors in the cast) who urges her boyfriend to leave the favela for the country.

Rocket tells us that a picture will make him "famous." Moments later, he documents the Runts, who have now emerged as a gang in their own right, as they lead Zé into a back alley and assassinate him. That picture, Rocket explains, will guarantee his "salary" and thus his escape from the favela. As a relative pacifist, now with an income, Rocket's identity is sufficiently fluid to permit him to move within and through the favela to other parts of the city. This hybridity will enable him to deflect or avoid the full force of the normative regime that now dominates the favela, the law of the gun.[20] In the very last sequence of the film, the Runts' only literate member starts to draft a "black list" of people they have to kill.

In the next sections, I explore how the film works to construct the favela as a metonym for social problems, specifically of gang violence without legal redress and for urban Black masculinity in need of regulation.

The Normative Power of Realist Aesthetics

City of God is considered by some commentators as an homage and renewal of Brazil's Cinema Novo.[21] In the 1960s, filmmaker Glauber Rocha set out the principles of that film movement. Specifically, Cinema Novo adhered to an "aesthetics of hunger," using disturbing images in a "revolutionary" capacity rather than a "primitive" one, and an "aesthetics of violence," to show how "violence is a normal behaviour for the starving."[22] Cinema novo is consequently inimical

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[20] Hybridity is not simply to blend identities; rather, it refers to the dynamic relation through which subjugated groups appropriate the culture of the powerful in subversive ways. Such "seizure" of identities and practices is a "contestation" of their authority: Bhabha, H. (1994). *The location of culture*. London and New York: Routledge at 63.

[21] See for instance: Nagib, L. (2004). Talking bullets: The language of violence in City of God. *Third Text, 18*(3), 239–250; Xavier, I. (2003). Angels with dirty faces. *Sight and Sound 3*(10), 28–30. For a range of critical perspectives on the film, see generally: Viera, E. (2005). *City of God in several voices: Brazilian social cinema as action*. Nottingham: Critical, Cultural and Communication Press.

[22] Rocha, G. (1995). Aesthetics of hunger. (R. Johnson & B. Hollyman, Trans.). In R. Johnson & R. Stam (Eds.), *Brazilian Cinema*, 2nd ed (68–71 at 68). New York: Columbia University Press. The *cinema novo* movement also used allegory to express dissent; filmmakers allegorized

to the "commercial industry" and its "commitment to untruth and exploitation."[23]

Because it blends the documentary tradition (with hand-held cameras and the use of actual news footage) and digital editing techniques (such as fast motion and arc shots), *City of God* has been held up as a venue for circulating political messages about urban poverty directly to a broad, international audience.[24] Yet the film has also been criticized as a watered-down and apolitical appropriation of critical aesthetics, and it actually promotes what film scholar Ivana Bentes has called a "*cosmetics* of hunger,"[25] in which "the goal is a 'popular' and 'globalized' film industry, dealing with local, historic and traditional subjects wrapped in an 'international' aesthetics."[26]

Specifically, there is a nod in the film to the formal state policies that created and normalized the existence of favelas (as Rocket explains that the favela is "where the politicians dump their garbage"). But aside from this passing reference, there is no explanation for the gradual breakdown in social cohesion other than the argument that, as

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economic disparities, forced migrations, political corruption, and conflict between Indigenous peoples and settlers: Madureira, L. (2005). *Cannibal modernities: Postcoloniality and the avant-garde in Caribbean and Brazilian literature*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press.

[23] Rocha, *supra* note 22 at 70.

[24] Demetrios, M. (2007). Brazil on screen: Cinema novo, new cinema, utopia. *Sight and Sound, 17*(11), 92–93; De Andrade Tosta, A. L. (2013). Fictional and everyday violence: The Brazilian audience as an interpretive community of Brazilian cinema. *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies, 38*(1), 17–34.

[25] The term is Ivana Bentes' and has since been taken up by other commentators: Bentes, I. (2003). The serao and the favela in contemporary Brazilian film. In L. Nagid (Ed.), *The new Brazilian cinema* (121–137). London and New York: I.B. Taurus. See for instance: Oliveira, E.K.F. (2008). An ethic of the esthetic: Racial representation in Brazilian cinema today. *Vanderbilt e-Journal of Luso-Hispanic Studies, 4*(43–53). A similar critique is developed by Melo, who borrows from Ângela Pryston to qualify the film's aesthetics as one of "entertainment" through a "popification of poverty": Pryston, Â. (2003). Representações da subalternidade: Entre as urbanidades periféricas e as fantasias hegemônicas. Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, Recife at 3, cited in Melo, M. (2004). Aesthetics and ethics in *City of God*: Content fails, form talks. *Third Text, 18*(5), 475–481 at 479, footnote 8.

[26] Bentes, I. (2003). The serao and the favela in contemporary Brazilian film. In L. Nagid (Ed.), *The new Brazilian cinema* (121–137 at 125). London and New York: I.B. Taurus.

one critic describes it, "[g]angsterism happens" in favelas "because one is bad and has a taste for killing."[27]

Both positive and negative reviews of *City of God* stem from its purported use of neo-realist aesthetics and its marketing as based on actual events.[28] Its screenplay was adapted from Paulo Lins' novel of the same name, itself promoted as "a gift to the middle class," inspired by interviews with impoverished favela inhabitants.[29] Lins, a resident of Cidade de Deus, had also been a graduate student of Alba Zaluar, one of Brazil's most respected ethnographers and experts on the regulation and repression of drug use and trafficking in favelas.[30] Moreover, a number of scenes were shot on location in Nova Sepetiba (then an unfinished settlement),[31] in Cidade Alta (a more developed housing project that blends tower-block apartments and residual shacks), and briefly in Cidade de Deus. Further, the cast consisted of almost two hundred previously untrained actors, most of whom were young people from favelas who improvised much of the film's dialogue.[32] The film's final credits roll over the archival newsreel of Ned's actual arrest and culminates with a final voiceover

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[27] Melo, *supra* note 25 at 480.

[28] DVD Jacket Cover. For a critical examination of the realist aesthetics in *City of God* and its location within a "deeply embedded cultural trajectory" in Brazil, see: Jaguaribe (2004), *supra* note 14 at 330.

[29] Interview with Paulo Lins conducted by Kátia Lund, cited in Lund's Introduction to the Bloomsbury 2006 first English edition of the novel: Lins, P. (2006). *City of God.* (Trans. A. Entrekin). London: Bloomsbury Publishing. The screenplay is an adaptation by Braulio Mantovani of Paulo Lins' autobiographical/fictional novel: Lins, P. (1987). *City of God*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing. See also: Peixoto, M. (2007). Rio's favelas in recent fiction and film: Commonplaces of urban segregation. *PMLA, 122*(1), 170–178 at 172.

[30] See for instance: Zaluar, A. (1999). *A Máquina e a revolta* (trans. *Machine and revolt*). São Paulo: Editora Brasiliense; and Zaluar, A. (1994). *Condomínio do diabo* (trans. *The devil's condominium*). Rio de Janeiro: Editora UFRJ. The ethnographic project that Lins worked on is entitled "Crime and Criminality Among the Working Classes."

[31] Elbow, G. (2005). Three recent Brazilian films: A review. *Journal of Latin American Geography, 4*(2), 125–133 at 128.

[32] Dawson, T. (Interviewer) & Meirelles, F. (Interviewee). (2002). *Interview with Fernando Meirelles* [Interview transcript]. Retrieved from
http://www.bbc.co.uk/films/2002/11/29/fernando_meirelles_city_of_god_interview.shtml

narration from Rocket, revealing that he is a really a young Wilson Rodrigues, the acclaimed Brazilian photographer.

My argument is the following: what I consider to be the more troubling aspects of the film and those that generated the most critical scholarly commentary are the result of strategic cinematographic and narrative choices. These decisions were made by Meirelles, at his sole discretion:

> I invited [Kátia Lund] to join the project as a co-director. We had a special way of co-directing. She didn't choose locations or art direction. She didn't edit and never talked to the director of photography. She was really just focused on the acting.[33]

Drawing on such statements, I suggest that Meirelles' cinematographic and narrative strategies reinforce a privileged standpoint vis-à-vis people who inhabit favelas and reflect a narrow conception of how law exists and operates within their neighbourhoods. Later, I question whether much of what I consider the film's strengths, most obviously the improvised dialogue and compelling performances, might more justly be attributed to Kátia Lund's (sometimes overlooked) interventions.[34] I situate Lund's works alongside those being produced by other Brazilian artists and community activists reclaiming the cultural production of their own communities through film and other art forms; these also reflect what I consider to be a more pluralist and collaborative understanding of favela law.

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[33] Gonzalez & Meirelles Interview, *supra* note 16.

[34] Lund being credited as co-director meant that she was not included in Meirelles' nomination for Best Director at the Academy Awards: Bellos, A. (2004, February 6). And the winner isn't… *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/film/2004/feb/06/oscars.oscars2004. For other examples of women having their directorial contributions overlooked, see: Ainsworth-Coles, B. (2016, June 17). The strange case of the hidden female director. *Bitch Flicks*. Retrieved from http://www.btchflcks.com/2016/06/the-strange-case-of-the-hidden-female-director.html#.WdkEdGiPImQ

Favela Law as Expressed through Cinematography and Narrative Strategies

Prior to making *City of God,* Fernando Meirelles had worked in advertising and primarily as a director of commercials. He had never set foot in a favela, and his understanding of life in the favelas was admittedly "for the middle class"[35] and "from a middle-class point of view."[36] Without advancing a theory of authorial intent, I question whether a combination of his embeddedness in consumer industries and his privileged standpoint as a white middle-class man helped shape *City of God* into the film it became—a film that represents governance in favelas as "the law of the gun" and reduces a diverse and complex community to a war zone without locating the actual drug and gang violence as the outcome and extension of Brazil's history of political authoritarianism, colonialism, or the transnational gun trade.[37]

Specifically, in *City of God,* cinematography and narrative strategies serve to present the favela as a space in slow physical and moral deterioration leading to the complete breakdown of its modes and instruments of governance. According to Meirelles, the film's style moves from a "romantic [and] warm atmosphere" in the first chapter to "drug dealings" captured through a "free and relaxed" camera in the second, and "towards the end, war breaks out … and the images are chaotic and out of focus."[38]

Indeed, when we first encounter the favela, it is golden-tinged; its habitants are fresh-faced and shoeless. A steady camera captures the clear blue open sky. At the end of this chapter, a long shot of Rocket and his friend talking about their homework dissolves into a longer

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[35] Bellos, A. (2002, December 8). Putting the gang to rights. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/film/2002/dec/08/features.review1
[36] Gonzalez & Meirelles Interview, *supra* note 16.
[37] See also: Melo, *supra* note 25 (the film's use of the conventions of advertising exploits rather than undermines inequality and violence).
[38] Dawson & Meirelles Interview, *supra* note 32.

shot of the boys as teens casually walking by a murder scene. The film's hues noticeably shift to blues and deep greens; the extra-diegetic score shifts from traditional samba to funk and disco. Cinematography breaks with continuity editing to produce a sense of stagnation when a three-dimensional map is superimposed onto an image of Rocket running through the labyrinthine favela. In the final chapter, the favela is shown under cover of night, lighted only by the flash of weapons firing. Colour is used to create a favela that shifts from a place where a semblance of community norms exists to one dominated by gang warfare. Moreover, in each of these iterations, favela inhabitants adhere to unofficial rules that afford them no justice and that are in direct confrontation with the official laws that seem to govern elsewhere in Rio.

In the first chapter, the unwritten code of family and community survival shelters the Tender Trio temporarily as two of its members will be assassinated: one by a racist police officer, the other by his mentee. In the second, Zé emerges as a rule-maker and enacts "gang law," which will become the dominant regulatory mechanism in the favela. Zé accepts appeals and dissenting opinions from his childhood friend Benny (Phellipe Haagensen). Yet, this vehicle for equity will be destroyed when Benny is murdered, relevantly, on the night before he plans to leave the favela for a more agrarian lifestyle. Similarly, Ned will be coded as a "gangster with a conscience," and his justice-seeking and honour-bound quest for retribution stands in direct confrontation with Zé's authority. However, Ned will be killed by a child to whom he had previously shown clemency. That child, in the third chapter, will become the new despot, having assassinated Zé. He brings with him the new favela law, the law of the Runts. This law will be enacted by illiterate tweens and interpreted without loyalty or allegiances to their community. Furthermore, the favela will come under official state-sanctioned surveillance, which will be performed by corrupt police who deploy formal law to advance the power of drug cartels.

Meirelles has claimed that the choice to shoot only these last few violent and chaotic scenes in the actual Cidade de Deus favela was because he was otherwise unable to strike an agreement with the neighbourhood boss.[39] It would seem that this was a deliberate choice that would enable him to present a cinematic favela as a place where legal actors are ineffective, there are no legitimate triers of fact, and there is no recourse for injustice. He has admitted as much: the favela, he has claimed, is "completely different from the rest of Brazil," especially because it has "no police, no judges."[40] He firmly believes that "the middle class … have no idea of the abyss which separates these two countries: Brazil [Rio] and Brazil [its favelas]."[41] That he claims to have adhered to the rules of the "gang jurisdiction" in filming ultimately reflects his normative assessment of how favela inhabitants govern and are governed:

The "owners" are the judges in the favela, deciding on things ranging from personal or family issues to questions about public administration … It was the drug organization which decided, and not the town hall, if would be permitted to film in the area or not. To film inside a favela you need location producers who know how to reach the "owner" and one who knows the behavior codes so as to not make any errors.[42]

The limited and limiting assumptions about favela law expressed through cinematography in *City of God* are accentuated by the use of myth. Specifically, Meirelles draws on narrative strategies to depict who has the authority and legitimacy to govern interactions within the favela. This is most obvious when the ambitious but easily

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[39] *Interview with Fernando Meirelles* (*the director*) [Interview transcript]. Retrieved from http://www.goldenscene.com/cityofgod/cityofgod-cast.html

[40] Keefe, T. (Interviewer) & Meirelles, F. (Interviewee). *Fernando Meirelles and City of God: The Hollywood flashback interview* [Interview transcript]. Retrieved from http://thehollywoodinterview.blogspot.ca/2010/01/fernando-mereilles-and-city-of-god.html

[41] Latino committee special event. (2004, March 23). *City of God.* Retrieved from https://www.dga.org/Events/2004/03-March-2004/City-of-God.aspx

[42] Golden Scene Interview, *supra* note 39.

dismissed Li'l Dice re-emerges as the sadistic and power-obsessed Li'l Zé. As the dark-skinned man with a lust for power at any cost, who relies on evil spirits to help him fulfill his destiny, Zé corresponds to and "fulfills" what Paul Gormley has referred to in another context as a "white construction of young black men as anarchic and primitive."[43]

According to the Ubandan Shaman,[44] or "exu-the-Devil" (the messenger of evil spirits), Li'l Dice has been "forgotten" by God. We then witness his ruthless "thirst for killing" in a flashback sequence. In his new self, Zé embodies the grotesque (no amount of money can make him attractive to women) and disturbs viewer identification (he experiences a hyperbolized glee when he randomly murders). Zé determines the norms that will govern relationships in the favela and the consequences for their transgressions. As perverse as his dictatorship may be, Rocket tells us that it brought a certain stability to the favela:

> Since Zé killed off all his enemies, there were no shoot-outs in the City of God. You could drive there. The playboys felt safe buying their drugs there. The City teamed with the addicts and Li'l Zé grew rich.

Yet in the final scenes of the film, Zé will have to re-establish himself as the favela's primary lawmaker. "Kids," he tells the Runts, "we will have to do a few more hold-ups to get my business going again." Not only do the Runts refuse to accept the "rules of the ghetto" Zé planned to re-implement, but they execute him.

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[43] Gormley, P. (2005). *The new brutality film: Race and affect in contemporary Hollywood cinema*. Bristol: Intellect Ltd at 100 (in the American 'gangsta' film *Menace II Society* [1993], the character of O'Dog is depicted as dangerous and engaging in "random and unpredictable" and even "casual" violence).
[44] Umbanda is a blend of West-African Macumba, Catholicism, and Indigenous spirituality: DeGroat Brown, D. (1994). *Umbanda: Religion and politics in urban Brazil*. New York: Columbia University Press.

In telling the story of the rise and fall of the power-hungry and despotic Zé, the film glosses over or misses several important dimensions of violence that exist in favelas. Instead of exploring more systemic explanations for drug violence in favelas, or what Janet Perlman has called the "interconnectedness of material, cultural, historical, social-psychological, and political dimensions"[45] of urban poverty, *City of God* is essentially a story of evil, embodied in Zé, tempered or confronted by good, in the figure of Rocket. In this regard, the film's only expression of hope is one individual's capacity for fulfillment and ability to surmount insurmountable obstacles through creativity. Meirelles claims that "[f]or the drug dealers, there's no hope. There's no way out for them and, in the end, they all die. Rocket represents hope in the film."[46] Rocket, then, is the only character to affirm his dignity and individuality against the dehumanizing forces of gang violence. He surmises that "a picture could change my life" and becomes a photojournalist. Whereas the tagline for the film's release in English-speaking countries is, "[i]f you run the beast catches, if you stay the beast eats," Rocket will escape by documenting the interactions that take place within his neighbourhood for those who live beyond its borders. He "decided to get out," he tells us, because "the slum had been a purgatory [but] now it was hell [and] that's how I became a reporter."

Rocket's escape is tied to his ability to act as a conduit between worlds, generating a vision of favelas that resonates with the economically comfortable, predominantly white people of the "city," and by extension, the film's primary audience—non-Brazilians in search of authentic representations of urban poor and the most likely

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[45] She explains that a shift in discourse towards social exclusion, otherness, capabilities, and assets has enabled activists and academics to locate "the blame for intergenerational and persistent poverty on the underlying structures of the state and society, rather than on the deficiencies and deficits of the poor": Perlman, J.E. (2005). The myth of marginality revisited: The case of favelas in Rio de Janeiro, 1969–2003. In L.M. Hanley, B.A. Ruble & J.S. Tulchin (Eds.), *Becoming global and the new poverty of cities* (9–55 at 23). Washington: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.

[46] Gonzalez & Meirelles Interview, *supra* note 16.

consumers of the increasingly popular "favela tours."[47] *City of God*'s power as a consciousness-raising mechanism for these middle-class audiences, however, is debatable. It ultimately casts the favela in opposition to the city, and its modes of governance are in direct conflict with formal and institutional legal sources and sites. In conceptualizing the rules by which favela inhabitants govern and are governed as illegitimate, the film misses a crucial insight from critical legal pluralism: law is constituted and exists within and through multiple interstitial spaces for personal, communal, and societal negotiation and interaction.[48] In the next section, I explore how revitalization movements within favelas—and specifically the reclaiming of the cultural production of favelas through art emerging from, by, and for favela inhabitants—advance a pluralist vision of the multiple modes of legitimate and effective governance that already exist in these communities.

Alternative Visions of Favela Law

In *City of God*, whereas informal (favela) law is enacted by non-state actors and thus illegitimate and managed through tyranny, formal (city) law is weak in favelas and state actors are either incapable of effecting justice or are used by illegitimate norm-producers as an instrument of oppression. These conflicting normative universes are spatially divided, the favela being under the control of illicit authorities, the rest of the city managed through legitimate state actors. The film's expression of governance parallels the city government of Rio's most contentious strategy for addressing violence within the favelas: the Unidade de Polícia Pacificadora/Pacifying Police Units (PPU).

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[47] For a critical review of "favela tourism": Jaguaribe, B. & Hetherington, K. (2004). Favela tours: Indistinct and mapless representations of the real in Rio de Janeiro. In M. Sheller & J. Urry (Eds.), *Tourism mobilities: Places to play, places in play* (155–166). London and New York: Routledge; Freire-Medeiros, B. (2011). "I went to the City of God": Gringos, guns and the touristic favelas. *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies, 20*(1), 21–34.
[48] Kleinhans, M.M. & Macdonald, R.A. (1997). What is a *critical* legal pluralism? *Canadian Journal of Law and Society, 12*(2), 25–46.

In 2009, Rio launched a "pacification" strategy across the city in over 30 neighbourhoods, including Cidade de Deus. The program's main objective was to (re-)establish state authority and police control within favelas. It is organized around the belief that favelas are spatially and socially separate entities, each with their own norms, laws, and institutions.[49] The strategy aimed to replace violent police crackdowns in favelas with voluntary surrender of weapons by gang members in order to effect "greater integration of these territories and their inhabitants into the city."[50] While some favela inhabitants have reported a decrease in gang violence since the strategy's implementation,[51] others maintain that it does nothing to reduce police brutality, because the police continue to target youth who are racialized as Black, of mixed race, and/or Indigenous.[52] For instance, according to Human Rights Watch, pacification has done little to diminish the number of extra-judicial police killings of unarmed favela residents.[53] Moreover, with pacification has come gentrification, and as the middle class increasingly sees the charms of

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[49] See generally: Corrêa, J. et al. (2016). Poor youths and "pacification": Dilemmas between discourse and practice from the perspective of young people about policing in Rio de Janeiro's favelas. *International Sociology, 31*(1), 100–120; and Oosterbaan, S. & van Wijk, J. (2015). Pacifying and integrating the favelas of Rio de Janeiro: An evaluation of the impact of the UPP program on favela residents. *International Journal of Compared and Applied Criminal Justice, 39*(3), 179–198.

[50] Governo do Rio de Janeiro. *Preguntas frequentes* (trans. *Frequently asked questions*). Retrieved from http://www.upprj.com/index.php/faq (translated and cited in Poets, D. [2015]). The securitization of citizenship in a 'segregated city': A reflection on Rio's Pacifying Police Units. *Brazilian Journal of Urban Management, 7*(2), 182–194 at 183. Retrieved from http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S2175-33692015000200182#B057.

[51] See: Rodrigues, R. (2014). The dilemmas of pacification: News of war and peace in the "marvelous city." *International Journal of Security and Development, 3*(1), 1–16. Doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/sta.dt; and Oosterbaan & van Wijk, *supra* note 49.

[52] See: Penglase, R.B. (2014). *Living with insecurity in a Brazilian favela: Urban violence and daily life.* New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press; Larkins, E.R. (2013). Performances of police legitimacy in Rio's hyper favela. *Law and Social Inquiry, 38*(3), 553–575; Vargas, J.C. & Alves, J.A. (2010). Geographies of death: An intersectional analysis of police lethality and the racialized regimes of citizenship in São Paulo. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 33*(4), 611–636; and Savell, S. (2016). Performing humanitarian militarism: Public security and the military in Brazil. *Focaal,* (75), 59–72.

[53] Human Rights Watch. (2016, July 7). Good cops are afraid: The toll of unchecked police violence in Rio de Janeiro. Retrieved from https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/07/07/good-cops-are-afraid/toll-unchecked-police-violence-rio-de-janeiro

these communities, the cost of living has skyrocketed, and long-time residents are again pushed to the margins of the urban space.[54] Thus, Amnesty International has found that much of the police brutality in favelas is enacted against protestors, whether peaceful or part of the more militant landless workers' movement who organized in response to historical and ongoing expulsions of favela inhabitants and its heightening with the Pan American Games in 2007 and again during the FIFA World Cup in 2014.[55] Expulsions, arrests, and even "disappearances" increased recently when President Rousseff signed the "General Law of the Olympics"[56] to curtail protests during the Olympics and Paralympics Games in 2016.[57] However, in any of these representations, whether Meirelles' film, the pacification strategy, or even the human rights discourses, favelas are associated with lawless violence (either from gangs or from military police).

Cidade de Deus resident and filmmaker Wagner Novais has been critical of the pacification projects for this very reason and has insisted that existing rule of law and security would be improved in favelas through non-repressive means, specifically through education and infrastructure: "I want to see schools, health, transportation, and education because there are already too many police. What is lacking

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[54] Freeman, J. & Burgos, M. (2016). Accumulation by forced removal: The thinning of Rio de Janeiro's favelas in preparation for the games. *Journal of Latin American Studies, 49*(3), 549–577; Bezerra, K. (2017). *Postcards from Rio: Favelas and the contested geographies of citizenship*. New York: Fordham University Press; Griffin, J. (2016, June 15). Olympic exclusion zone: The gentrification of a Rio favela. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://amp.theguardian.com/cities/2016/jun/15/rio-olympics-exclusion-zone-gentrification-favela-babilonia

[55] Amnesty International. (2016/2017). *Brazil 2016/2017*. Retrieved from https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/americas/brazil/report-brazil/#endnote-1

[56] (Bill 02/2016). See also Amnesty International (2016/2017), *supra* note 55.

[57] Amnesty International. (2016, September 15). Brazil: A legacy of violence: Killings by police and repression of protest at the Rio 2016 Olympics. AMR 19/4780/2016. Retrieved from https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr19/4780/2016/en/; Rio Gringa. (2013, October 7). The Amarildo case and Rio's pacification strategy. [Web log comment]. Retrieved from http://www.riogringa.com/my_weblog/2013/10/the-amarildo-case-and-rios-pacification-strategy.html

is dignity."[58] Boaventura de Sousa Santos made this point decades ago in his discussion of governance in and through favelas by way of residents' associations.[59] Accordingly, favela law is the informal legal system that the "oppressed" have developed to ensure order and cohesion within their communities. This law parallels, confirms, relativizes, confronts, and sometimes undermines the official, formal state-based law.[60] De Sousa Santo's insights remain relevant today. Consider how in 2011, Cidade de Deus began producing its own local currency to help increase spending within the neighbourhood as part of a larger project to invite international tourists to associate with the community, as one inhabitant puts it, "not [with] violence and problems, but [with] innovation and solutions."[61] Such initiatives and their key role in norm production and conflict resolution within favelas has expanded beyond residents' associations to community-industry collaboration such as *Favela-Bairro*, a vehicle for community members and architects to reimagine favela spaces to improve the quality of life for residents through urban design.[62] Similarly, non-profit organization Grupo Cultural AfroReggae, spearheaded by hip-hop sensation Anderson Sa, who had in the earlier years of his career sold recreational drugs, endeavours to nudge youth away from gang culture toward more creative outlets. Its mandate stems from the assumption that drugs are not the main cause of violence within favelas; it is the false city-favela dichotomy produced and reproduced in media, art, and policies and the resulting

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[58] Portella, J. (2016, January 29). City of God protests and calls for end to violence. (Trans. E. Gladding). Retrieved from http://www.rioonwatch.org/?p=26556

[59] De Sousa Santos, B. (2002). *Toward a new legal common sense: Law, globalization and emancipation*, 2nd ed. London: Butterworths.

[60] *Ibid* at 404.

[61] Cangialosi, A. (2014, November 16). *City of God's money: The rebirth of Rio's first favela community currency*. Retrieved from http://www.rioonwatch.org/?p=19032. See also: Coutinho, M. H. (Spring 2011). The Brazilian favela as stage and persona, and the challenge of an alternative-narrative. *Platform, 5*(2), 79–92 (arguing that despite the risk that favela-based performances will be co-opted by hegemonic socio-economic forces, alternative narratives can, and do, nonetheless emerge).

[62] McGuirk, J. (2016). Failing the informal city: How Rio de Janeiro's mega sporting events derailed the legacy of Favela-Bairro. *Architectural Design, 86*(3), 40–47.

social marginalization of people who live in these othered spaces of the city.[63] Finally, *Nós do Morro (We from the Hillside)*, founded by Guti Fraga in 1986, has always, in his words, worked to empower community members and to "change stereotypes through quality [rather than] pity."[64] Through such initiatives, young people from favelas are taking on the role of cultural mediators, advancing different normative assessments of their lived experienced through performance and performativity. These more compelling stories exist in other cinematic artifacts produced around the same time as *City of God*. *Something in the Air* (*Uma Onda No Ar*) is a fictionalized account of the actual creation of Radio Favela—a pirate station that became a crucial means of expression in one community.[65] The short film *Picole, pintinho e pipa* (*Popsicle, Chick and Kite*), directed by *Nós de Morro* graduate Gustavo Melo, tells the story of four boys cobbling together enough money to buy a kite and the interactions they have—with elderly laundry women, fellow students, taxi drivers, and business owners—throughout their day.[66]

That the story Meirelles tells is in such stark contrast to the revitalization narratives circulated by others is disappointing given that he enlisted Kátia Lund's help specifically to introduce him to the world of favelas and to help recruit actors who could convey "the same feelings of boys in the favelas."[67] Indeed, when she was brought in to co-direct *City of God*, Lund had already built a reputation for layered and compassionate depictions of life in impoverished

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[63] Ramos, S. (2006). Brazilian responses to violence and new forms of mediation: The case of the Grupo Cultural AfroReggae and the experience of the project "Youth and the Police." *Ciência & Saúde Coletiva, 11*(2), 419–428. Retrieved from http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1413-81232006000200019; and Spowage, P. (Spring 2011). An AfroReggae explosion: Reimagining the value of quality, profit, and the global market in the development of applied performance. *Platform, 5*(2), 53–70.

[64] Smith, C.B. (2013, January 8). *Nós do morro: Voice, art, and empowerment*. Retrieved from http://globalshakespeares.mit.edu/blog/2013/01/08/nos-do-morro-voice-art-and-empowerment/

[65] *Uma Onda No Ar*, *supra* note 14.

[66] Melo, G. (Director). (2006). *Picolé, pintinho e pipa* (trans. *Popsicle, Chick and Kite*) [Motion picture]. Brazil: Cavideo Produções & Nós do Morro.

[67] Demetrios, M. (2010). *The Faber book of new South American cinema*. London: Faber and Faber at 148.

communities; she also built relationships with residents and the drug syndicates that wielded power within favelas.[68] Those normative commitments were put to film in her and J.M. Salles' *News from a Personal War* (*Notícias de uma guerra particular*), which solidified her reputation as a provocative documentarian telling nuanced but nonetheless politically motivated stories.[69] The same normative commitments to telling honest but complex stories led to Lund recruiting actors from *Nós do Morros* only to establish, at Meirelles' suggestion, a workshop series entitled *Nós do Cinema* (*We in Cinema*) to further train and retain local actors for *City of God.* In exchange for the opportunity to receive a diploma in acting, a meal, and paid bus transportation, students devoted five hours a week to classes.[70] In their film *Cidade de Deus – 10 Anos Depoi* (trans. *City of God – 10 Years Later*), documentarians Cavi Borges and Luciano Vidigal explore the lives of the actors recruited and trained for Meirelles' and Lund's film. They found that while a few were able to continue acting or making films, others were drawn into the drug

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[68] She produced Michael Jackson's *They Don't Care About Us*, which was shot in the Dona Mara favela of Rio: Bellos (2004), *supra* note 34. The inhabitants of Brazil's most marginalized communities have inspired much of her work. See for instance: *Golden Gate* (*Palace*), an episode from the series *Brava Gente* (which ran from 2000–2003 on Canal Viva): Lampréia, T. et al. (Directors). (2000). Golden Gate: Palace II [Television Series Episode]. In Tolomelli, E. & Daflon, V. (Producers), *Brava Gente*. Brazil: Rede Globo de Televisão. Her work has continued since the release of *City of God* through the spin-off television series *Cidade dos Homens* (*City of Men*), for which she directed four episodes between 2002 and 2017: Arraes, G. et al. (Producers). (2002–2018). *Cidade dos homes* (trans. *City of Men*). Brazil: Fox Filmes do Brasil. Her short contribution to the anthology film *All the Invisible Children,* entitled *Bilu & João* (2005), explores the daily life of two young binners in São Paolo who collect empty cans and bottles to supplement their family's income: Aidar, R. et al. (Producers) & Charef, M. et al. (Directors). (2005). *All the Invisible Children* [Motion picture]. Italy: MK Film Productions S.r.l. & Rai Cinemafiction.

[69] *News from a personal war*, *supra* note 14. The film takes a historical look at the 'democratization of cocaine,' the development of organized crime and the overwhelming number of drug-related gun deaths in Rio.

[70] Rogers, D. (2003). Lessons of streets and screens: In the wake of the hit film *City of God,* its young "stars" are pursuing movie careers as an alternative to the violence and dead end of Rio's favelas, where most of them still alive. *Americas, 55*(6), 46–53 at 50.

trade.[71] Their film is a powerful counterpoint to *City of God*'s romanticised individualist story of one boy's escape from poverty through creativity. In fact, the directors invite critical reflection on the "difficulty of living art in Brazil" and show how individual transformation, such as Rocket's, will not help communities without broader infrastructural and political change.

Kátia Lund appears to be actively trying to do just that. Since the release of *Anos Depoi,* she has been commissioned by an international funding agent to develop and produce five documentary films, in which she and her collaborator/protégée Lili Fialho showcase, among other things, Guti Fraga's programs, which use art to help revitalize his neighbourhood,[72] and the women-dominated Afro-Brazilian Jongo music scene.[73] With the assistance of community activist Luis Carlos Nascimento, Lund has remodeled *Nós do Cinema* as *Cinema Nosso*, a "self-governing" non-profit film and media educational centre whose mission is to "contribute to the development of critical thinking of children, adolescents and young people from the popular classes through the audiovisual language."[74] There, she has worked directly with first-time filmmakers from various marginalized communities across Brazil; these collaborations concluded with her own feature about the making and the impact that the experience had on her, her collaborators, and their broader community.[75] Lund's work with *Cinema Nosso* seems to be anchored in a desire to build permanent cultural institutions and infrastructure to the communities in which she works and to provide meaningful

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[71] Zulian, P. (2013, October 12). *"City of God – 10 years later": Co-director on where the stars of the Brazilian hit are today (Q&A)*. Retrieved from http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/city-god-10-years-director-648069

[72] Bowman, K. et al. (Producers) & Fialho, L. & Lund, K. (Directors). (2016). *Guti and the Theater of Dreams [Motion picture]. Brazil: Cinema Nosso.*

[73] Bowman, K. et al. (Producers) & Lund, K. & Fialho, L. (Directors). (2016). *Jongo Fever* [Motion picture]. Brazil: Cinema Nosso. For scholarly discussion of women producing favela funk, see: Moreira, R. (2017). "Now that I'm a whore, nobody is holding me back!": Women in favela funk and embodied politics. *Women's Studies in Communication, 40*(2), 172–189.

[74] Rise Up and Care. *Cinema Nosso*. Retrieved from http://riseup.care/cinema-nosso/

[75] Fialho, L. & Lund, K. (Directors). (2016). *Movie Magic Motion* [Motion picture]. Brazil: Cinema Nosso; *Cinema Nosso*. Retrieved from http://www.cinemanosso.org.br/

and transferrable skills to students/participants. Her work there is also motivated by a genuine desire to facilitate cultural production by favela residents, for favela residents, "with relevant themes to their own social-cultural lives."[76]

Rio is changing: its neighbourhoods are witnessing revitalization and reappropriation of their cultural image and are actively struggling for greater social and spatial well-being, increased participation, and conditions of agency and economic development. In view of this change, I am hopeful that Meirelles' vision of favelas, generally, and Cidade de Deus, especially, as "the darkness of … slums, one of the most violent and dangerous places in South America"[77] will be viewed as a trope and one that is replaced with or at least tempered by stories that locate favelas at the centre of Brazil's rich and multi-textured culture.

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[76] Rise Up and Care, *supra* note 74.
[77] Gonzalez & Meirelles Interview, *supra* note 16.