Quarto de Despejo no Palco: Staging Authenticity in Representations of Brazilian Poverty

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In the spring of 1961, a personal account of poverty in Brazil was brought to life on stage in the São Paulo theatrical production of *Quarto de Despejo.* As an adaptation of the published diary of scavenger Carolina Maria de Jesus (1915-1977), the play added new layers of social significance to the portrayal of poverty and discrimination suffered by many of the Brazilian poor in the mid-twentieth century. Staged by the Companhia Nydia Lícia and performed at São Paulo's Teatro Bela Vista, the play was produced and directed by Amir Haddad from a dramatic adaptation by Edy Lima.[1]

In their theatrical rendition of *Quarto*, Haddad and Lima attempted to recreate the physical and narrative minutia of poverty in Carolina's diary on stage for a middle-class audience, revealing glimpses of her life as she had lived it prior to entering the spotlight. The diary and the play, both based on the daily reality of Carolina's struggle to support her three children, presented a nuanced vision of twentieth-century Brazilian poverty to audiences far afield of the favela. But the stage production also introduced the notion of authenticity, or spontaneous and unmediated truth, to Carolina's story in complex ways, defining the notion differently in relation to material objects, Carolina's role in the play, and the stage performance of poverty. In this article, I argue that *Quarto's* theatrical audience, searching for authentic experiences of poverty that were motivated by a romanticization of the poor, engaged in a form of tourism by visiting a place outside of their usual environment, even if only through the conventions of the proscenium theatre.

Tourism theory provides the useful, if somewhat unconventional framework that I will use to explore notions of authenticity in the stage performance of *Quarto*. By definition, tourists travel outside of their usual environment to visit unfamiliar places of interest, often in search of a greater understand-

ing of society and culture. In practice, tourism is based on the displacement of objects and/or people from their original surroundings, providing new perspectives on the modern world. In deeming some artifacts or monuments more worthy of attention than others, tourism curates the world as "a museum of itself" that "organizes travel to reduce the amount of down time and dead space between high points" (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 7).

Although considerable scholarship explores tourism as theatre, the analysis of the act of going to the theatre as a form of tourism is less common and may be entirely novel.[2] Indeed, tourism and theatre often intermingle in contemporary Brazilian culture, as seen in dance and theatre spectacles created and performed specifically for visitors to cities such as Rio de Janeiro and Salvador.[3] The recreation of Carolina's diary as a stage spectacle was an invitation for the general public to peek at the physical reenactment of the unfamiliar daily reality of the destitute other, much like sightseeing tourists. With the producers, directors, and actors acting as guides, the theatre-goers were spectators who watched a story unfold before them. The audience of the live stage performance witnessed the real time interplay between Carolina's favela context, her actions, and her emotional responses as a complete package, even if only through a recreation on stage. Many art forms have the potential to provide portals to other worlds, but fewer demand that their audience viscerally confront harsh realities that take place within close geographical proximity of the theatrical space. This contrasts with the contributions required of her diary's readers, who must flesh out the sensory details of the story on their own (the look of unpainted shacks, the sounds of arguing neighbors and children playing) over the scaffolding provided by Carolina's text. This article employs Dean MacCannell's continuum of the "staged authenticity" of tourist experiences to demonstrate how Lima and Haddad incorporated people and objects from the favela in their stage production to provide their audience with a carefully constructed glimpse of the other, a representation that multiple individuals deemed "authentic," meaning unmediated and true to life. However, this exploration also reveals the complications that inevitably arise from the project's attempt to unite São Paulo's poor and middle-class residents through a specific staged representation of poverty.

A descendent of slaves, Carolina hailed from the backlands of the southeastern Brazilian state of Minas Gerais, where she received little formal education, migrating to São Paulo in 1937. Carolina built a shack in the downtown favela of Canindé in the late 1940s and supported herself and her three young children by selling some of the scraps of paper and cardboard

that she picked from the trash, while using others to write short stories, plays, and a diary about her daily experiences. In 1958, journalist Audálio Dantas published excerpts from her diary in the *Folha de São Paulo* newspaper in serial format, eventually leading to the 1960 publication of *Quarto de Despejo: diário de uma favelada*.[4] The diary became one of the bestselling books in Brazilian publication history, yet, after an initial period of success, it was quickly forgotten by the Brazilian public. For years, critics focused on the peculiarities of Carolina's personality and her writing style, debating Audálio Dantas' interference in the text and whether or not it was even possible for a poor black woman from the favela to produce literature.[5] The diary was also tremendously successful in translation with an international audience, for whom it came to symbolize social injustice against the poor on an international scale.

The voice of the destitute was often excluded from Brazilian public life in the 1960s, but Carolina's unusual life story gained national and then international attention, and her diary's publication eventually provided her with the resources with which to leave the favela.[6] She moved her family to a middle-class neighborhood, but she was never truly accepted by the middle class (Ferreira 105) and her fame brought her considerable trouble; believing her to be newly wealthy, opportunists flooded Carolina with requests for financial assistance. With no guidance as to how to handle the social expectations and etiquette of the middle class, Carolina was misunderstood and mocked in the press for her unusual behavior (Penteado 31; Rangel 8). In 1969, she relocated to a small farm in Parelheiros on the outskirts of São Paulo, where she lived until her death from respiratory failure in 1977. Although Carolina published three other books during her lifetime, none had the novelty and subsequent social or commercial impact of *Quarto de Despejo*.[7] Carolina died isolated and largely forgotten by the public, having physically left the favela but never truly leaving poverty or gaining acceptance by the middle class or Brazil's elite circle of writers and intellectuals.

Despite the Brazilian and international academic community's familiarity with Carolina's story, the stage production of *Quarto* largely appears as a footnote in most scholarly work on its author. Apart from promotional articles and a few critical reviews published in the news media during the play's brief theatrical run, little documentation remains of the performance. As such, this study relies on the oral histories of Carolina's family that were collected by Brazilian historian José Carlos Sebe Bom Meihy and the late Latin Americanist scholar Robert M. Levine, only available in their 1994

volume *Cinderela negra: a saga de Carolina Maria de Jesus.* Silva has written of the performance's details and its critical reception ("Descoberta") based on the aforementioned sources, yet little attention has been given to the broader implications of the adaptation of Carolina's diary for the theatre, and particularly its relation to understandings of authenticity in performance. The following exploration of the play fills this gap by connecting an overlooked aspect of Carolina's story to broader discussions on authenticity and the representation of poverty, using tourism theory in a new way.

Defining and Performing Authenticity On and Off Stage

The social construct of authenticity is believed to separate truth from falsity, spontaneity from pretense, and intimacy from distance. An authentic artifact's origin can be verified and proven, an authentic person does not conform to social forces but is creative and true to one's self, and an authentic cultural experience faithfully represents an aspect of social life as lived by actual people. Per Charles Taylor, the current widespread preoccupation with the notion of personal authenticity is a result of the "massive subjective turn of modern culture, a new form of inwardness, in which we come to think of ourselves as beings with inner depths" (26), in which it is more important to be in touch with the self than with God or the idea of the greater good. For MacCannell, individuals in modern society have at once lost their attachment to their own surroundings and gained a "fascination for the 'real life' of others" in sharp contrast to the industrial era's insularly bounded worlds of work, home, and neighborhood ("Staged Authenticity" 91), leading to the increasing value ascribed to cultural productions that provide glimpses of other cultures. In this context, the label of authenticity is both employed by and marketed to outsiders to signify the "purity" of certain cultural forms, denoting their lack of outside influence and commercial potential. Vannini and Williams write that contemporary uses of authenticity stand for ideals that can be "invoked as a marker of status or method of social control" (3). As an ideal quality of an object, person, or process that can neither be negotiated nor achieved, authenticity's slippery nature is tied to a period's values, tastes, beliefs, and practices, changing along with them over time. Taken together, these ideas illuminate authenticity as a notion increasingly valued by individualistic modern societies, which stems from a growing interest in the lives of others, yet it is often employed as a means to maintain the status quo.

The notion of authenticity haunted Carolina's career. It was used by the print media to both support and criticize her work and her personal choices.

In his very first mention of Carolina in the Brazilian print media, Dantas described her writing as an *authentic* portrayal of the favela and the experience of poverty, emphasizing its *truthful* nature.[8] Her texts were unpolished and rife with unusual spelling and grammar usage—Carolina had only two years of schooling, and some journalists disparaged her as "semi-analfabeta" (Penteado 31; Martins 6). The reading public took her unfamiliarity with the *norma culta* as proof that Carolina had not been processed by the Brazilian educational system, setting her apart from all other authors published at the time and making her seem like a truer, more spontaneous version of herself.[9] In a review of her diary, journalist Bráulio Pedroso deemed Carolina's early writing authentic because it was unsullied by commercialization, stating that her urge to write was a "vocação *autêntica* que nada tem a ver com os fabricantes de contos e novelas movidos pela vaidade de um nome publicado em letra de jornal" (emphasis mine). In labeling Carolina's texts as authentic, members of the press helped to establish public expectations that her actions as an individual were unaffected by vanity or the promise of financial return.

Subsequent media coverage of Carolina's life and work, however, broadened the notion of authenticity in her writing to incorporate the intrinsic value of her "real" unmediated self, at times conflating it with her experience of poverty prior to her appearance in public life. In a newspaper account of a 1960 book-signing event, one journalist emphasized Carolina's *personal* authenticity, describing her character as constant and unchanged from her days in the favela, despite considerable new attention from the public:

> Carolina falou pouco. Não estava nervosa, nem alegre, nem radiante. Era a mesma Carolina de olhos abertos, gestos vivos, voz calma, a mesma que durante doze anos catou papel pelas ruas e leu, nas horas de folga, os livros encontrados no lixo, e escreveu, quando tinha fome, nas páginas encontradas em branco. ("Carolina na tarde de autógrafos")

Here Carolina's public behavior aligned with the image portrayed in her diary, indicating a seamless transition between her past and present selves that reinforced her legitimacy as a voice of poverty in Brazil. Several months later, a different journalist would criticize the changes in Carolina's appearance and lifestyle, calling her "ex-humilde" and describing her new attention to fashion as a superficial sign of "esnobismo" ("Ex-Favelada Carolina Hoje Está Sofisticada"). The press portrayed the surface transformations that accompanied Carolina's publishing success as proof that she was deceiving her public, muddying what was seen as the authentic self that her diary revealed.

MacCannell's framework of staged authenticity is helpful in examining how the notion of authenticity was used in the stage performance of *Quarto.* MacCannell attempted to pinpoint how authenticity was evoked and employed in the realm of tourist experiences, mainly in response to sociologist Erving Goffman's dichotomy of the regions of social performance.[10] Goffman uses the metaphor of the theatrical stage to describe how interpersonal interactions occur in a "front" space, which is a meeting place designed for the performance of formal transactions between hosts and their guests, or service people and their customers. This is clearly separate from the "back" space, where individuals retire to relax and prepare for their social and professional interactions or performances, closed to audiences and outsiders (Goffman 107, 112). For Goffman, the existence of "back" space allows for the physical aspects (props or preparatory activities) of a social performance to be hidden from view, producing a firm sense of social reality that is grounded in a certain level of mystification (MacCannell *The Tourist* 93).[11]

MacCannell argues that Goffman's "front" and "back" are in fact extremes on a continuum of the tourist experience that bracket four additional stages of experience also worthy of analysis: a front region that is somewhat decorated to appear like a back region (Stage Two), a front region that is completely organized to look like a back region (Stage Three), a back region that is open to outsiders (Stage Four), and a back region that has been cleaned up or altered (Stage Five) because outsiders are occasionally allowed to visit (*The Tourist* 101-2). Sightseers' quest for authenticity is always motivated by Goffman's back region, or Stage Six, where they aspire to experience the elusive intimacy and closeness of "life as it is really lived" (94), yet by their very nature tourist experiences fall somewhere between Stages Two and Five. The notion of "staged authenticity" is in itself inherently contradictory; the production of cultural events specifically for outsiders requires a level of premeditation that cancels out the spontaneity of quotidian life away from the visitor's gaze.

In the context of *Quarto*'s stage performance, the audience may have aspired to reach the favela as actually experienced by its residents (Stage Six), an impossible feat. Although the play *simulated* favela life, allowing the viewers to reach Stage Three, or "a front region that is totally organized to look like a back region" (*The Tourist* 101), it did not provide access to the favela itself, instead offering its audience a vague hint at the lived experience of the favela without actual exposure. Attempts to construct an "authentic" image of Carolina for both the stage and the print media were fundamentally

flawed, given that many unarticulated layers of experience lie between the published diary that was accepted by the "front" of Brazilian society (the middle-class audience), and the "back" of favela reality (*favelados*) it described. MacCannell's continuum further reveals the intrinsic problems in adapting a personal diary for the theatre; the multiple layers between front and back regions highlight the difficulty of determining one true, "authentic" reality over others. When the audience watched the dramatic performance of *Quarto de Despejo* in the theatre, they engaged in a form of tourism in that they sought to get "behind" the surface appearance to find a more *authentic* experience of an unfamiliar social space. Dantas, the journalist and original mediating figure in Carolina's story, reached Stage Five on MacCannell's continuum in his initial visit to her shack in the favela, coming as close to Carolina's life "as it was really lived" as anyone would get prior to the dramatic changes in her life wrought by fame.

Quarto de Despejo in context: from the favela to the stage

The symbolic nature of Carolina and her writing emerged from broader themes in twentieth-century Brazilian social history, particularly migration, urban development, and the perception of poverty. She moved from agrarian Minas Gerais to metropolitan São Paulo on the tail end of a national rural-urban exodus that was incited by low wages and a dearth of opportunities in the countryside. At the time, rural to urban migration led to overcrowded Brazilian cities, an abundance of cheap labor, and the development and growth of favelas as residences for destitute newcomers without jobs or places to live. Migrant *favelados* were blamed for their own lack of employment and resources, as well as social problems such as segregation and promiscuity (Paulino 100). In the 50s and 60s, Brazilians who lacked cultural, educational, and financial resources were overwhelmingly black or of mixed-race, creating an association between dark skin and poverty, despite the popular embrace of the concept of racial democracy in Brazil during most of the twentieth century.[12]

Carolina's story met with a particularly receptive audience during the *anos dourados*, when the Brazilian public was optimistic about economic development and populist reform (Levine and Meihy *Life and Death* 136).[13] During this period, leftist artists and intellectuals were actively questioning the nation's class- and race-based inequalities that had arisen from Brazil's history as a slaveholding colony, forming progressive cultural entities like the Centro Popular de Cultura (CPC) and São Paulo's experimental Teatro de

Arena and Teatro Oficina that questioned the status quo and sought to create social and cultural change and to improve the lives of marginalized Brazilians. Carolina's blunt depiction of misery and economic struggle appealed to readers with a similar social outlook. Furthermore, with the growth of urban favelas and widespread social inequality, poverty took on a new connotation as a symbol of national identity within Brazilian popular culture in the 1960s. For example, the poor *sertão*, or arid northeast, and the favela both served as inspiration for musicians and filmmakers from the middle-class left, who saw these places as sites of crisis that were inhabited by rebellious or impotent characters, signifying either impending revolution or failed modernity (Bentes 242), yet always viewed as agents of authenticity. This perspective contributed to a common ideology of the period that Marcelo Ridenti has termed *romanticismo revolucionário*, which cast the marginalized poor as the true revolutionaries of Brazilian society in the face of growing social inequality (*Em Busca do Povo Brasileiro* 24). Levine and Meihy posit that elite and middle class sectors actually romanticized the poor in the hopes that the lower classes would retain their traditionally docile nature (*Life and Death* 89), thereby maintaining the social hierarchy of Brazilian society. MacCannell echoes this viewpoint beyond the context of Brazil, writing that the principle outcome of the modern preoccupation with authenticity is the preservation of individuals' place in society ("Staged Authenticity" 590). Linking the concept of authenticity to marginalized traits like poverty and race, although likely unintentional, was nevertheless an efficient way to maintain the status quo.

The stage adaptation of *Quarto* was part of a wave of theatrical innovation used to enact and express social change.[14] Socially engaged theatre aimed to perform plays that were founded on political and social critique, using language that could be understood and embraced by socially and culturally diverse audiences.[15] *Quarto*'s playwright, Edy Lima, became involved with socially conscious theatre through her work with Teatro de Arena (Vallerio), leading to her adaptation of Carolina's diary.[16] In an interview with *Folha de São Paulo*'s theatre critic Carlos de Moura shortly before the play opened, Lima reflected on how to diminish the increasing distance between the theatre and the public. Given the success of Carolina's diary, Lima believed that her adaptation in particular was part of a greater process of engaging an audience increasingly indifferent to the world of the theatre:

> O primeiro passo é trazer para o palco os problemas verdadeiros que possam eletrizar a plateia, fazê-la discutir e, portanto, tomar posição. Que caminho melhor para obter-se esse resultado do que uma história

> verdadeira vivida por quem a escreveu, o que é ao mesmo tempo um levantamento sociológico da favela, como acontece com 'Quarto de Despejo'? (Moura)

Despite Lima's intentions, turning *Quarto de Despejo* into a dramatic script proved challenging because the published diary does not follow a traditional narrative arc or contain significant action, and instead records the minutiae of quotidian life in the favela as a personal document not meant for public view. In writing about her daily struggles to find food for her children, her arguments with neighbors and acquaintances, and her hopes for the future, Carolina created a sense of the numbing nature of the misery in which she lived, but not the beginning, middle, and end of a story. In her adaptation, Lima attempted to create dramatic action within her script in a way "faithful" to the language and thought of the original. In their reviews, however, critics questioned her success in this endeavor. One critic from the *Estado de São Paulo* wrote that the play lacked dramatic unity, leaning further in the direction of comedy than drama as intended ("Quarto de Despejo") and others emphasized the difficulties inherent in adapting Carolina's story for the stage (Barroso, Silveira).[17]

When *Quarto de Despejo* was performed on stage in São Paulo in April of 1961, Brazil was amidst a moment of idealism and protest, with popular and student movements calling for reform on multiple fronts (Santos 36). The city of São Paulo was experiencing a period of intense urbanization during which the idea of progress was used to justify both public and private development projects, to which Carolina's story of "atraso" functioned as both a counterpoint (Medeiros da Silva 115) and a reflection of Brazil's economic rise and improved status in the global order. In portraying a personal narrative about the crisis of urban development and the results of poverty on Carolina as an individual, the play called for social change through its representation of the favela.

Touring the Favela: the authenticity of objects and experiences

Lima and Haddad employed several techniques designed to minimize the perceived distance between Carolina's diary and its staged adaptation. Carolina herself was involved in the theatrical adaptation of her diary from the very beginning, inviting Lima and the members of the cast to her home, attending rehearsals, and lending several of her personal possessions to the production (Jesus *Casa* 152), thereby bringing the play symbolically closer to her favela life. They also sent Carolina and Ruth de Souza to visit Canindé

together (158). During this visit, disparate notions about the significance and importance of authenticity began to emerge between Carolina, Haddad, Lima, and the actors. According to the *Estado de São Paulo*, "a fim de dar maior *autenticidade* ao seu desempenho, Ruth de Souza foi visitar a favela do Canindé em companhia de Carolina Maria de Jesus... chegou a catar papel na rua, para reconstituir o ambiente em que se desenrola a trama" ("'Quarto de Despejo' Em Ensaios" 9; emphasis mine).

Print media coverage of this field trip to the favela highlighted a form of authenticity that privileged the physical space, objects, and activities from Carolina's story. In her second diary, published under the title *Casa de Alvenaria: diário de uma ex-favelada*, Carolina recorded her own memories of the visit:[18]

> Vamos na favela. A Ruth quer identificar os tipos para representar no palco. Fomos na residência da Ruth. Ela foi preparar-se para sairmos. Achei interessante quando a Ruth pegou o saco de catar papel e entrou no automóvel. Eu disse-lhe:—Se catar papel fosse assim, dentro do automóvel ouvindo rádio, a vida seria um paraíso. Eu ia revendo os recantos que percorria. Quando chegamos na favela fiquei com dó dos infaustos que habitam aquele antro degradante. Descemos do automóvel e percorremos a favela. As crianças reconheceu-me de longe:—Olha a Carolina! Os favelados iam saindo dos barracos, descalços e sujos. A Ruth foi fotografada perto da torneira com uma lata d'água na cabeça. Ela não sentiu emoção. Eu senti. Olhando aquele fio d'água a quantidade de habitantes. Que luta para encher uma lata! (158-59)[19]

During the visit, Carolina functioned as a *de facto* tour guide for Ruth, providing her prettier, more likable, more popular proxy access to a world that was not typically frequented by members of the middle class. The tour allowed Ruth to "play" at specific aspects of Carolina's life in order to later create a more realistic performance, without having to suffer the actual physical consequences of poverty experienced by *favelados*. For Ruth as a middle-class observer, collecting water from a public spigot was a simple and picturesque embodied ritual that took place in poor communities all over Brazil. Ruth did not experience the water-borne illnesses or the pain and inconvenience of carrying heavy cans on her head suffered by the poor, but the experience did conceivably help her to empathize with the favela residents by "playing" at the rituals of the poor, subsequently leading to a more believable performance of Carolina's story.

As a rising star of the theatre, Ruth visited a favela that was open to outsiders (MacCannell's Stage Four), an experience that helped her build empathy for Carolina's character and story. But Carolina's visit lay outside of MacCannell's continuum; given her success and subsequent departure from the favela, she could not return to the favela of her past in the way she once experienced it. On this "field trip," she was no longer Carolina from Canindé, but instead Carolina the published author, a figure recognized for having transcended the boundaries of poverty. Although she could vividly recall the daily routines of favela life that had been her reality only months before, upon her return her view of the past was altered by her recent experiences of privilege and celebrity. Carolina believed that Ruth's stage performance would lack authenticity simply because it wasn't performed by Carolina herself, but in fact she herself was less capable of an "authentic" performance given how the events that had transpired since her departure had altered her perception. When she left the favela, she relegated the version of herself that lived there to the nostalgia of the past.

Ruth was one of more than forty black or mixed-race actors who performed *Quarto de Despejo*. Some were "atores negros da favela" (Levine and Meihy *Cinderela Negra* 48) while a few, like Ruth, were professional actors from the Teatro Experimental do Negro (TEN). For the actors from the favela, their very experience with poverty qualified them for inclusion in the play. The middle-class actors from TEN, however, were invited to perform aspects of Carolina's life precisely because they were talented actors who were also black.[20] Although it featured some TEN actors, *Quarto de Despejo* stood apart from TEN productions because it was specifically intended for a middle-class audience. TEN founder Abdias do Nascimento himself related that his greatest desire was to earn prestige and become accepted and integrated into Brazilian society, which was controlled by the white elite (Domingues 121-22). With this aim, TEN's plays were directed at the traditionally white elite theatre-going public, held in the most prestigious and well-respected theatres, which were far from black neighborhoods and financially inaccessible to the black masses. In contrast, *Quarto de Despejo* was held in the Teatro Bela Vista, a recently established venue founded by the actor couple Nydia Lícia and Sérgio Cardoso in the immigrant-heavy Bixiga neighborhood of São Paulo in 1956 ("Histórico | Teatro Sérgio Cardoso"), located only six kilometers from the favela of Canindé. The Teatro Bela Vista also catered to a white middle-class and elite audience, but it was comparatively accessible to an audience of mixed race and class given its location and short history.[21]

In contrast to TEN's focus on the approval of the powerful Brazilian white elite, *Quarto* signaled a new paradigm in the representation of blackness by performing poverty in a new theatre in a traditionally mixed neighborhood within walking distance of the favela it portrayed.[22]

In addition to Ruth's reconnaissance mission to Canindé, director Amir Haddad sought to increase the verisimilitude between the theatre and the favela by dressing *Quarto de Despejo'*s stage in an unconventional manner. Soon after Ruth and Carolina's visit to the favela, the following announcement was published in several São Paulo newspapers:

> A peça... requer na montagem grande número de objetos, ferro-velho, brinquedos quebrados etc. Pelas dificuldades encontradas na busca desse material, a Cia. Nydia Lícia e o Teatro da Cidade pedem aos interessados que enviem, como doação as coisas velhas de que dispuserem em casa. Haverá espaço para tudo em 'Quarto de Despejo.' O material pode ser enviado para o Teatro Bela Vista. ("Objetos")

The article further informs the reader that Carolina had already made her own donations to the production, including "as roupas que usou nos anos em que viveu na favela do Canindé, tendo cedido seu casaco preto, calças e camisas de seus filhos, vidros de perfumes, e numerosos objetos pessoais" ("Objetos").[23]

Together with Carolina's personal effects, old and cast-off objects were used in the play to recreate Carolina's life, faithful at least in its physical appearance. But by requesting discarded objects from the newspaper-reading public of São Paulo, whose excess possessions connoted middle-class status, Lima and Haddad were also attempting to forge a more intimate connection with their audience. At the same time, the request for donations reinforced the societal division between poverty and privilege, emphasizing the distance between the play's potential audience, who had excess objects to give away, and the people it represented, who lacked possessions and would presumably accept donations from the privileged. In this middle-class vision of poverty, the poor do not lack possessions, but instead possess a smaller number of cheap or old things. Haddad and Lima requested donations from the city's *quartos de despejo* (literally translated as "garbage rooms") to reconstruct an imaginary discard pile on the theatre stage. In filling the stage set with the discarded possessions of the newspaper-reading society at large, they were inviting potential audience members to participate in the representation of their understanding of poverty by furnishing the imagined rejected space

with their own rejected objects, creating a version of Carolina's story that conformed to their notions of physical authenticity.

The performance drew such empathy from the crowd that audience members began to give donations to the cast that were intended for the poor who were represented on stage. The number of "contribuições que possam minorar o sofrimento dos favelados" was so great that the theatre company hired two social workers expressly for the purpose of distributing the collected money in the favela ("'Quarto de Despejo' Auxília"). By soliciting the audience's participation in both the material and the sociocultural aspects of the production, the theatrical adaptation of *Quarto de Despejo* created a representation of poverty that was controlled by the middle class, first by selecting which of their rejected possessions to contribute to the set, and then by making financial donations to the general cause of the city's poor that was portrayed before a backdrop of their own discarded goods.

In casting some poor favela residents and using Carolina's clothing and belongings on stage, Haddad and Lima further bridged the gap between proscenium theatre that catered to the middle class and the representation of poverty on stage. When the audience witnessed this staged authenticity of poverty, they could suspend their disbelief and imagine themselves as tourists in the poorest part of the city. But it was the audience members who actually participated in the staging of authentic poverty, by contributing unwanted objects or donating money to the *favelados* who performed on stage, who transcended the inherent voyeurism of poverty tourism, empathizing with Carolina and her neighbors' "real" struggle for survival as they influenced their staged representation.

Critical response: the problem with authenticity

Quarto's theatrical adaptation received mixed reviews, achieving greater financial than critical success (Levine and Meihy *Cinderela Negra* 48). Excessive adherence to the details of the diary led to a stilted play robbed of its dramatic nature (Medeiros da Silva 119). Critic Décio de Almeida Prado wrote that the performance lacked "um tratamento mais demorado e mais aprofundado da matéria," instead emphasizing the comic nature of favela gossip and fights (Klemz). Carolina's own response to the performance is ambiguous, with some sources citing her support of the play ("Estréia"), and others focusing on her poor behavior during opening night (Levine and Meihy *Cinderela Negra* 78).

After attending a dress rehearsal of the play, Carolina expressed her approval in a text that was included in the playbill and later reprinted in the *Estado de São Paulo*:

> Fui ver o ensaio da peça, 'Quarto de despejo.' Fiquei emocionada. Revendo *a cópia fiel de minha vida, na favela*. As brigas constantes no meu barracão. Considero a favela a sucursal do inferno, com suas cenas degradantes. A peça no palco *retrata com fidelidade* as ocorrências da favela do Canindé. A Ruth de Souza está magnifica no papel de Carolina Maria de Jesus. Ela representa o pavor que eu sentia, quando residia naquela núcleo degradante. [...] A peça é cómica, dramática e chocante. E vai agradar o público culto de SP. Felicito à dramaturga Edy Lima pelo seu trabalho, *conservando a fidelidade ao livro*. ("Estréia"; emphasis mine)

Carolina's written support reinforced the performance's adherence to its original source of inspiration, presenting it as a faithful and authentic depiction of her life. It bestowed legitimacy upon the performance, the director, and the cast by the one woman who had the authority to do so. In the print media, Audálio also stressed the play's authenticity, describing the play as "a favela vista de dentro" (Dantas "Ruth virou Carolina") (Stage Five). However, in an interview years later, Carolina's daughter Vera Eunice (b. 1953) recalled her mother yelling at the actors onstage from the audience during the opening night performance and insisting on playing the lead role herself (Levine and Meihy *Cinderela Negra* 78).[24] This singular testimony calls the credibility of the text above into question. Did Carolina really confront the performers on opening night in this way, or is this assertion an outcome of an exaggerated childhood memory from a girl who was only eight years old at the time? Perhaps Carolina simply had conflicting feelings about the play, leading her to first write a positive review based on a rehearsal in the hopes that it would attract attention to the performance and then impulsively acting out on opening night before an audience.

If Carolina truly desired to play herself on stage, it likely stemmed from her own aspirations for fame and public attention, but also would have exposed the limits of her understanding of authenticity. Vera Eunice's testimony implies that Carolina could only ensure complete fidelity to her own story by playing the lead role herself. When, after merely visiting the favela for a day, Ruth de Souza played the part instead, it would have conflicted with this notion of the truth. If Carolina actually insisted publicly on playing the role, it would mean that she did not recognize that her own success and sub-

sequent departure from the favela only months prior to the play's production had further diminished her ability to perform her past experience of poverty according to these rules. The act of casting a successful actress in the lead role drew a clear line between reenactment and theatrical performance, ensuring that the performance of Carolina's story was indeed a form of staged authenticity. Regardless of who performed the role of Carolina, the context of the proscenium theatre functioned as a protective veil that separated the middle-class audience from the discomfort and misery on stage, allowing them to passively "tour" the disagreeable truth of the misery of Carolina's life from afar (Stage Three).

A theatre is traditionally a space where those of means purchase tickets to be entertained by people performing on a stage physically separated from the audience. The theatre in which *Quarto* was performed was socially, but not geographically distant from the favela that the play portrayed. At the Teatro Bela Vista, in an example of MacCannell's Stage Three, the middle-class audience was privy to a view of favela life in which the poorest members of São Paulo society struggled to survive, recreated in a middle-class space. By incorporating actors and props with "real" connections to favela life, *Quarto* further bridged the discrepancies between these two social realities, bringing the theatrical experience into the realm of Stage Four. These aspects of the performance eased the tensions that Carolina's story created for middle-class audience members, given its geographical proximity to their own homes. After all, in a true example of Stage Six, as a *favelada* Carolina could have rummaged through *their* garbage in her attempts to sustain her family.

While the theatrical adaptation of *Quarto de Despejo* allowed the theatre-going public a view of favela life, it did so in a controlled manner within the realm of MacCannell's Stage Three or Four, introducing aesthetic elements of poverty to an audience that was unlikely to experience them in other ways, such as by actually visiting a nearby favela, which would have been a Stage Five tourist experience. It packaged the experience of poverty and favela life in a way that allowed the theatre-goer to experience it without danger or actual physical discomfort, directly accessing the abstract idea of the favela without going through the complications of getting there.

Conclusions

In the face of ongoing contemporary struggles around urban development, favelas, and the marginalization of the poor, Carolina Maria de Jesus' diary continues to stand as an important testimony to the daily experiences of

poverty. This article's examination of its little-known theatrical adaptation and the context in which it was produced redirects the discussion about Carolina's work away from its categorization as literature and towards the representation of poverty and its relationship to the notion of authenticity. Theatre has the potential to reconstruct other cultural spaces and offer glimpses to those who would otherwise be completely ignorant of them. Performing *Quarto* before an audience inspired empathy and the discussion of social ills amongst the middle class and the elite, but the preoccupation with "authenticity" complicated both the subject of the play and its presentation. In structuring my analysis of the play around MacCannell's continuum of staged authenticity, I have exposed the multiple situational layers that contribute to the illusion of the "real" in this theatrical representation. MacCannell developed this framework in the context of tourism, leading me to propose that *Quarto*'s audience was participating in a nascent if unconventional form of sightseeing with the goal of experiencing the "authentic" reality of the favela, which today is commonly referred to as *poverty tourism*.

With roots in early twentieth-century slumming, contemporary poverty tourism feeds on unidirectional cross-class curiosity about the exotic other in an increasingly globalized world. It packages the experience of poverty as a commodity to be sold to privileged travelers in search of experiences beyond the tourism mainstream, such as favela tours in Rio de Janeiro. Favela tourism relies heavily on romanticized notions of the authenticity of poverty, but unlike *Quarto*'s audience of middle class *paulistanos*, it appeals almost exclusively to international tourists (Perlman 328). Freire-Medeiros and Cohen call this commodified global image of Brazilian poverty the *traveling favela* (95), an imaginary place at the intersection of poverty, violence, creativity, and cosmopolitanism. Favela tourism is controversial, criticized in the media for objectifying poverty while stripping residents of agency (Freire-Medeiros 2), yet its supporters argue that in exposing visitors to "the perfect opposite of the world the tourist comes from" (23), slum visits allow tourists to feel empathy and solidarity with the other. Whether *favelados* actually benefit from this form of tourism hinges entirely on the individuals or organizations who control the tour and distribute the profits. These contemporary forms of tourism are built around bringing privileged visitors to physical spaces that symbolize poverty, in contrast to *Quarto*'s attempt to recreate poverty in a space of privilege. However, both experiences nevertheless build upon notions of authenticity and the reality of poverty to bring individuals together across boundaries of class.

In adapting Carolina's diary for the theatre, Haddad and Lima extended the reach of her work in several positive ways. At a time when representations of poverty were limited in range, the performance added depth and nuance to the way Brazilians thought about the poor. Through visits to the favela, the inclusion of amateur actors, and the use of discarded objects donated by both Carolina and members of the community, they brought Carolina's experiences to life, rendering them physically in a way that expanded her audience. However, fixation on the "authenticity" of the performance and the objects it displayed complicated the play's representation of poverty, inherently distancing its middle-class audience from Carolina's uncomfortable reality through the very context of its production.

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Notes

[1] Amir Haddad, born in 1937, was one of the original founders of Teatro Oficina, which he left in 1960. In 1980 he founded the street theatre group Tá na Rua, which he continues to direct today. Lima, born in 1924, was a writer, journalist, and playwright from the state of Rio Grande do Sul. Affiliated with Teatro de Arena, she is best known for her play *A farsa da esposa perfeita*, first performed in 1959. She is also a successful author of children's literature.

[2] See Balme, MacCannell, amongst others.

[3] Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for this insight.

[4] Dantas first encountered Carolina in 1958, when he was reporting on the opening of a playground in Canindé for the *Diário de São Paulo.* From the crowd, Carolina began to yell at some men who were competing with local children for spots on the swing set, yelling, "Deixe estar que eu vou botar vocês todos no meu livro!" ("Nossa Irmã Carolina" 3) Dantas approached her to ask about her book and Carolina invited him to her shack to see countless notebooks full of her writing. Her first diary was published in forty countries and translated into thirteen different languages. The 1962 English translation published by E.P. Dutton was entitled *Child of the Dark: the Diary of Carolina Maria de Jesus*.

[5] For years Carolina was mostly ignored by literary scholars of the Brazilian canon but has recently gained attention from authors researching marginal literature (see G. Penteado, Oliveira, amongst others).

[6] Carolina and her children left the favela in August 1960 for a room in Osasco on the outskirts of São Paulo, offered by reader Antônio Soeiro Cabral (*Casa* 29). In December of the same year, she moved into a modest *casa de alvenaria*, or cinder-block house, in the northern neighborhood of Santana, with the modest earnings from her published diary.

[7] These include a second diary, *Casa de alvenaria* (1961), as well as *Pedaços da fome* and *Provérbios* (1963). Posthumous publications include *Diário de Bitita* (1982), *Meu estranho diário* and *Antologia pessoal* (1996), and *Onde estaes felicidade* (2014).

[8] "Dentro dos seus escritos, o mais surpreendente é um 'diário' em que ela descreve a vida no seu barraco e, talvez sem o querer, faz uma *autêntica* reportagem da favela" (emphasis mine; Dantas "O drama da favela").

[9] The *norma culta* refers to the erudite use of Portuguese grammar and vocabulary.

[10] MacCannell initially published on staged authenticity in the early 1970s and is still considered the preeminent scholar on the social construct of tourism. Although he is a North American scholar who draws his examples of sightseeing largely from the US and Europe, his interdisciplinary approach to sightseeing as a symbol of the human condition can be applied to an array of global contexts, including mid-twentieth century Brazil.

[11] In *Quarto de Despejo*, Carolina reflected upon the social divisions of São Paulo along a continuum similar to that put forth by MacCannell, writing: "Eu classifico São Paulo assim: O Palácio, é a sala de visita. A Prefeitura é a sala de jantar e a cidade é o jardim. E a favela é o quintal onde jogam os lixos" (33). In Carolina's São Paulo, the Governor's Palace was the "front" of the city designed for official transactions, while the favela was the "back" used to store the city's refuse. But her mention of in-between spaces such as the mayor's office and the rest of the city indicates the need for additional stages such as those suggested by MacCannell.

[12] At this time, the intellectual community still widely accepted Brazil's reputation as a racial democracy in which people of all skin colors lived in harmony. A few scholars had disproved this notion by demonstrating that the discrimination that had previously been attributed to social class was in fact correlated with skin color (Fernandes). For further discussion on the subject, see Fernandes, Andrews, and Collins.

[13] After a period of intense national growth and development that included the construction of Brasília under President Juscelino Kubitschek, in 1961 Brazil was briefly governed by populist Jânio Quadros, who abruptly resigned from office in August of that year. Quadros was replaced by his vice-president, João Goulart, who was removed from power during the April 1964 *coup d'état* that led to twenty-one years of military rule.

[14] The mainstream Teatro Brasileiro de Comédia dominated Brazilian theatre in the late 40s and early 50s, but it was only the founding of the Teatro de Arena (1953), the communist party-affiliated Teatro Paulista do Estudante (1955), and the Teatro Oficina (1958) that led to a new emphasis on emotion as the path to social awareness through dramatic performance (Napolitano 107). Experimental techniques flourished under these groups, whose productions largely focused on constructions of national identity. The first theatrical representation of the favela appeared in Teatro de Arena's 1958 production of "Eles não usam black-tie" by Gianfrancesco Guarnieri, which raised social consciousness amongst its middle-class and elite audience (Levine and Meihy *Cinderela Negra* 48).

[15] In the words of Napolitano, "dos operários dos subúrbios aos burgueses do TBC, passando pelos jovens e estudantes, todos estariam aptos a assimilar o conteúdo e a linguagem das peças, de apelo realista, dramático e humanista, ainda que focando problemas classicistas e nacionais" (108).

[16] Augusto Boal (1931-2009), Teatro de Arena's director and a legendary figure in Brazilian theatre, directed her play, *A farsa da esposa perfeita*, in 1959.

[17] Although the ultimate influence of *Quarto*'s 1961 stage adaptation appears to be undocumented, a recent production entitled "Carolina Maria de Jesus—Diário de Bitita," written and directed by Ramon Botelho and starring Andréia Ribeiro in the title role, met critical approval for performances in Rio de Janeiro in 2017 (Fischer).

[18] Melvin S. Harrington Jr. and Robert M. Levine translated *Casa de Alvenaria* for North American audiences as *I'm Going to Have a Little House*.

[19] Both of Carolina's published diaries lack many standard diacritical marks of written Portuguese, as seen in this excerpt.

[20] Abdias do Nascimento founded TEN in 1944 to create space in Brazilian theatre for black directors as well as actors, who were previously either included in marginal roles or excluded altogether, contributing to the success of actors like Ruth and Grande Otelo. TEN's first production was North American playwright Eugene O'Neill's *Emperor Jones* in 1945 at the Teatro Municipal in Rio, which Nascimento distinguishes as a place where "antes nunca pisara um negro como intérprete ou como público" (Nascimento 213). Subsequent TEN productions of *Anjo Negro* (1946) and *Sortilégio* (1957) were also performed at the esteemed venue. By using the word "negro" in the name of his group at a time when this

term was loaded with political significance, Abdias initiated a radical artistic project (210). Cultivating a specifically black cultural identity was considered a divisive and anti-Brazilian project that ran counter to the trends of racial and cultural *mestiçagem* that was promoted through the ideology of racial democracy, threatening the very essence of the Brazilian nation (Alberto 196).

[21] Teatro Bela Vista hosted theatrical performances for over a decade before its abandonment in the early 1970s. After several years out of use, it was renovated and renamed the Teatro Sérgio Cardoso in 1980 and is still in operation today ("Histórico").

[22] This combination of tourism and theatre is further reflected in contemporary favela tourism, which I explore further in my conclusions.

[23] Incidentally, this was not the first time that Carolina's favela life was recreated for an outside audience using objects that symbolized poverty. When Livraria Francisco Alves initially released her diary of May 1960, the bookstore organized an autograph signing event that was decorated with photographs of favela residents and their homes, along with old pots and pans and other kitchen items that were said to belong to Carolina herself ("Carolina Na 'Tarde de Autógrafos'"). This is an example of MacCannell's Stage Two, which is "decorated to appear like a back region" (*The Tourist* 101).

[24] According to Vera Eunice Jesus de Lima, Carolina stood and shouted indignantly from the audience, "Não é nada disso! Está errado!" (Levine & Meihy *Cinderela* 78).

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