

## FIVE

FARE TALES AND FAIRY TAILS:  
HOW GAY SEX TOURISM IS SHAPING THE  
BRAZILIAN DREAM**Gregory Mitchell<sup>1</sup>**

**Abstract:** This article analyzes the aspirations of *michês*, straight-identified Brazilian men who exchange sex for money with gay-identified male sex tourists from North America and Western Europe. In so doing, I contrast the exoticizing fantasies of the tourists with the consumerist daydreams of the *michês*, who often see sex work with men as one of the few routes available to them for consumer consumption and possible migration. Contrary to existing research on Brazilian sex workers, my findings demonstrate that, for the *michês*, the ability to participate in consumer culture occupies their minds far more than discussions of sex or AIDS.

**Introduction**

Gustavo has a nice phone. It has a large screen and a camera with more megapixels than he probably needs. He turns it to face me. “This is my daughter,” he says, showing me a sleepy-eyed infant in a pink jumper. “Her name is Ana. She has a brother, Samuel, who’s three.” Gustavo flips to another photo to show me a picture of him, his common-law wife, and Samuel at nearby Copacabana beach together. The picture quality is good - better than my own phone’s, in fact. He also has naked photos of himself and close-up shots of his erect penis on this phone, which he sends to prospective clients. We decide to do a follow-up interview in week, but he says his phone hasn’t worked in months because of his cash flow problems so there’s no point giving me the number. “But don’t worry. You can find me at the *sauna* again no problem. I need to work if I am going to get the phone functioning again.”

Although straight-identified, Gustavo works in gay bath houses with brothel-style prostitution known as *saunas*. Working in a

*sauna* can be lucrative. A successful *garoto de programa*<sup>2</sup> in Rio can clear 2,000 U.S. dollars in a month, at least for the brief period when his is a fresh face on the scene, whereas a minimum wage worker earns around 270 U.S. dollars per month for the same hours. But Gustavo, like other *garotos*, doesn't want to work every day. He prefers working just two or three days, during which he'll try to do as many 40-minute *programas* (sessions with a client) in a shift as he can. He'll make a few hundred dollars, and then he won't work again until he runs out of money. Sometimes that means he's off for weeks. Often, though, he spends the money on expensive clothes, cologne, and electronics. He takes his friends to clubs and buys liquor by the bottle. He buys gifts for his wife and kids, and (I later come to suspect) his girlfriends.

But Gustavo's hair is starting to recede. He looks closer to being 35 than the 25 he tells people. He still does quite well, but *garotos de programa* are part of a larger category of *michês* (hustlers) who work in parks, streets, bars, and other less lucrative venues – locales where *sauna* rentboys eventually find themselves as they age out and become less competitive. Outdoors, *programas* can turn dangerous for clients and *michês* alike and offer only subsistence wages. Gustavo knows street hustling may be in his future if he doesn't start saving in earnest soon. And he knows that he needs his expensive phone working again.

Popular portrayals of male sex workers tend to dichotomize the men. On the one hand, newspapers, films, and television shows depict them as dangerous killers and thieves (see Mott & Cerqueira, 2003). But as Kerwin Kaye (2007) has observed in his analysis, they are also portrayed as youth in peril who can be rescued and mentored into being ideal and grateful young lovers. Both archetypes are premised on the assumption that the *michê* is desperate and dangerously destitute. Thus, clients often expressed surprise when a sex worker<sup>3</sup> had an MP3 player, phone, or computer, especially because sex workers in *saunas* tend to come

from and often continue to live in the poor periphery of the city. But even among the low end street *michês* with whom I've worked – men who use sex with gay tourists to scrape out a hand-to-mouth existence – there is a tendency to pass the time talking about the pricey items they plan to purchase one day.

This shift to consumerism (both actual and imaginary) stands in stark contrast to the lived experiences of *michês* in the past. This article is concerned with understanding how *michês* who sell sex to gay tourists use consumerist daydreams to construct and enjoy possible futures. I argue that daydreaming about purchasing power and participation in consumer society is both an emotion-management technique for *michês* and also a way in which they rethink their position in society and possible relationship to a globalized world. To do this, I map the historical trajectory of *michetagem* (hustling) in Brazil across three primary points. First, I examine the case of street *michês* in the São Paulo of the early 1980s (during the end of the Brazilian military dictatorship), who are the subject of an ethnographic master's thesis and book by the venerated Argentine poet and anthropologist Néstor Perlongher. Second, I investigate the case of *michês* in public locales in Rio de Janeiro in the early 1990s (a period of hyper-inflation and economic instability). In doing so, I rely upon fragmentary interview records and other archival materials from a now defunct non-governmental organization (NGO), *Programa Pegação*.<sup>4</sup> In these two earlier historical moments, I observe a reluctance to speak about daydreams and a lack of aspiration to join the segment of Brazilian society that wanted to be part of global flows of commerce and that take pleasure in consuming as an act of leisure. Finally, I turn to my own ongoing ethnographic research, which I commenced in 2006, among approximately 45 *michês* and 40 clients to demonstrate just how important consumerism and daydreams of participating in it are becoming to *michês* across a variety of racial and class divisions.<sup>5</sup> Employing the work of anthropologists Colin Campbell (1987) and Arjun Appadurai (1996) on imaginaries, I examine how the men rely on a

*consumerist dreamscape* to indulge in the pleasure of dissociative daydreams in addition to or to mitigate the absence of actual consumerism.

Present-day Brazil still features a high disparity between rich and poor. This is so despite the fact that after Brazil moved from dictatorship to democracy and eventually conquered its disastrous inflation, it earned its coveted place as one of the four so-called “BRIC countries” (Brazil, Russia, India and China) that Goldman Sachs predicted could topple U.S. economic hegemony. Throughout Brazil’s historical trajectory, shifts in political economy have affected masculine subjectivities in the male sex trade. In fact, I’ve found male sex workers today to be uniquely equipped for helping us to understand the relationship between globalization and masculinity precisely because *michês* interact so extensively with gay tourists from the U.S. and Europe.

This article is concerned with understanding how *michês* who sell sex to gay tourists use consumerist daydreams to construct and enjoy possible futures. To do this, I ultimately will turn to Colin Campbell’s influential, but now outmoded 1987 book *The romantic ethic and the spirit of modern consumerism*. I attempt to recover his work, which Campbell wrote in the heyday of Thatcherite-Reaganite free market global capitalism, when the excesses of consumerism were portrayed in films, television, and the media as an essential part of being American. I want to take Campbell’s work and reposition it within the contemporary Brazilian context in order to better understand how the key features of his theorization translate into a globalized sexual economy that he could not have anticipated. I argue that we gain not only a better understanding of prostitution, but also of the rise in consumerism in Brazil at a moment when there is intense interest and even anxiety on the part of the international community regarding the country’s growing geopolitical and economic clout. In so doing, I hope to not only suggest that Campbell’s theory is due for revival, but also to highlight the non-work aspects of *michês*’ lives and

thereby disrupt the unhelpful assumption that sex workers spend their entire days either having, thinking about, or talking about sex.

### Nomads No More

In a poem entitled *Michê*, the queer anarchist and poet Néstor Perlongher describes how hustlers and clients come together in the meat market of the park (*la carroña del parque*), where cocks (*pinga*) are transformed into greasy, lustful dwarfs (*enano grasiento y lujurioso*) and sex acts are described through floral imagery. Scholars and activists today remember Perlongher mostly for such surreal and erotic poetry, but this poem was not just an expression of Perlongher's own homoerotic infatuation with hustlers. It is a supplement to his anthropological work. In 1982, Perlongher fled Argentina's military dictatorship and undertook a master's degree in anthropology at Brazil's prestigious UNICAMP university, where he wrote and published a master's thesis that remains the only book-length study of Brazilian *michês* (Perlongher, 1987).

While Perlongher's work provides a baseline understanding of *michetagem* in the early 1980s, he also pushed the boundaries of ethnography in several ways as both a poet and activist. His surreal poetry was another form of ethnographic epistemology, and it is likely that the bodies of his interlocutors were as well. He was, according to his friend, the noted journalist João Trevisan (1986), obsessed with masculine, teenage boys from the slums, sometimes having sex with as many as eleven a day.<sup>6</sup> Even when they beat or robbed him, these situations "filled him with fear – but also delight" (Perlongher, 1987, pp. 37-28); as a disciple of Antonin Artaud and his Theatre of Cruelty, Perlongher perceived humiliation and suffering as having divine qualities, and as sources of revelation (Bollig, 2008). While his methods were unconventional, he wrote performatively, echoing his much beloved Deleuze as he drifts with readers "around the streets—and [moving] down—in terms of income, class, legal position, and

physically onto the street, down into nightclub basements or public toilets—into the city” (Bollig, 2008, p. 26). For him, *michês* are nomads, circulating along customary paths from point to point, client to client, always reaching the point in order to leave it behind rather than to dwell. It is in the state of cruising – when betwixt and between points – that he feels the *michê* is best understood.

But Perlongher’s work also documents a time and space before *michetagem* had moved indoors, becoming increasingly static and non-nomadic. During the late 1990s, hustling also had to adjust to the beginnings of a global boom in gay tourism, a time when, as Jasbir Puar (2002) notes, “coming out meant coming out in terms of purchasing power” (p.105). And what better place to exercise that power than in beautiful, post-dictatorship Brazil where inflation guaranteed that any American or European could be king? Just as Perlongher’s hustlers had worked in train stations and on street corners, selling sex mainly to effeminate, known homosexuals and to closeted, married men, male prostitutes in 1990s Rio focused on several public cruising areas. By 2000, these areas were increasingly moving indoors and catering to a growing number of gay tourists. As gay tourism became a recognizable and sought-after niche industry on a global scale, gay tourists in Brazil came to be seen as the most lucrative clients. Those tourists willing to pay for sexual services directly tend to prefer the relative safety and the relaxed social environment of *saunas*, which has led the industry in Rio to shift indoors today. Hustling still occurs outside, especially on beaches and in parks, and also happens in semi-public places like shopping malls, where teenagers can turn tricks in exchange for high-end clothing and expensive electronics.

Having experienced rampant inflation, Brazil has always been a nation of consumers rather than savers, but having been among the last ones in and the first ones out of the present economic crisis, Brazilians are spending as never before (*Economist*, 2009). When I speak to *michês* now, even the poorest describe what they’d like

to purchase next. Before discussing the implications of this turn to consumerism, it's important to acknowledge that the upside to this turn is that there is a renewed sense that there *is* a hopeful future, or even that there is to be a future at all. This is an interesting development because research among *michês* in Rio de Janeiro carried out in the early 1990s by social workers from the group *Programa Pegação* revealed a consistent hopelessness, an apathy toward sexual and personal health, hygiene, and a belief that their lives would be violently foreshortened by forces far beyond their control, including death at the hands of parents, police, or through starvation. Such hopelessness was so pervasive that the government officially recommended de-emphasizing the lethality of AIDS in outreach work. Ana Filgueiras, Director of the Brazilian Center for the Defense of the Rights of Children and Adolescents, explained: "Equating AIDS and death can blunt a campaign's effectiveness. If you say 'AIDS kills', [they say] it's just another thing to kill us. The police kill us, too.' Killing is not serious to them. But if you tell them AIDS makes you very thin and weak, that's something they are afraid of" (Meyer, 1989, p. 9).

While doing archival work, I found original records, including handwritten notes and selected quotations, from dozens of interviews with *michês* conducted by *Programa Pegação*'s small staff in the early 1990s. Their interlocutors consistently express an intention to leave prostitution "soon" ("*mudar de vida em breve*"), but also seem disillusioned about the future. During his third meeting with one *michê* who worked in *Via Apia*, a dangerous area where police and gangs tormented both clients and *michês*, one social worker wrote that the young man was "feeling the weight of his years" ("*estar sentindo o peso dos anos*") in prostitution because of police pressure ("*os constantes as saltos e pressão policial*").

Police "pressure" may be an understatement. A short distance from the *Via Apia* is Candelária Church where a death squad of off-duty police and others opened fire on approximately one

hundred street children, some of whom were involved in prostitution, who were sleeping on the church's steps. Such death squads were aimed at social cleansing, and in this instance the squad killed eight youths between 11 and 20 years of age in one of Brazil's most infamous historical events (see Penglase & Kimzey, 1994). In light of the crippling poverty and harsh living conditions, it is no wonder that the *michês* at this time described their futures in bleak terms. Rather than envisioning upward mobility, one *michê* interviewed said his "dream" was to return home to the shacks of his impoverished *favela* (shanty-town), but he was "afraid of the bandits there" ("*tem medo dos bandidos da favela*").

I don't believe this pessimism is attributable to rigid interview questions or a lack of sustained contact. In fact, Longo founded *Programa Pegação* on the principle that its staff would eschew narrow quantitative surveys and informational leafleting and instead focus solely on "personal and constant contact" by building long-term individual relationships on the streets (see Longo, 1998; Parker, Larvie, & Cardoso Jr., 1992). The benefit of qualitative and ethnographic approaches is their tendency to yield deeper, if sometimes more ambiguous and complicated data. In short, I trust their expertise and data regarding the *michês'* bleak outlook and apparent reticence about long-term plans or dreams for the future.

However, my own subjects are not so pessimistic about the future, instead talking at length about their plans and dreams. Whether they are *garotos de programa* working indoors or lower-end and homeless *michês* working beaches and streets, these men are accessing a middle-class consumerist Brazilian dream in order to imagine their futures, even while remaining marginalized within their communities. This turn to a hopeful imaginary is not the same as actual upward mobility, of course. Consumerist dreamscapes remain a poor substitute for actual social change, but they do signal a noteworthy shift in the men's affect and relationship to society that is both owed to and circumvented by neoliberalism. That is,

late capitalism taught them to dream in new ways, but it's also a system that prevents those dreams from coming true.

### **Brazilian Dreaming**

Beto, a *michê* from Brazil's impoverished Northeast, worked the tourist beaches where he ostensibly sold souvenirs, but derived nearly all of his money from selling sex rather than beaded jewelry, which served as a pretense for his contact with tourists. Beto longed to go to Europe. "This tourist is sending me a plane ticket!" he would tell my research assistant and me, causing eye rolls and snickers. Beto fantasized about going to parties with a rich gringo where there would be "lots rich people and they're all going to be nice... because they have to be." While recounting this fairy tale one evening, Evandro joined in, imagining that if he ever went to Europe on the arm of a gay gringo, he would abandon the man and seduce a string of rich, young heiresses (minor royalty perhaps) or maybe marry an elderly woman who would promptly die of a heart attack from the tremendous orgasm he would give her on their wedding night, leaving him with money, a house and a visa.

I found it rather telling that they didn't fantasize about seducing some American heiress, given the prevalence of U.S. popular culture in Brazil. Evandro explained that I was being naive. "Everyone knows you can't even get a U.S visa without pay stubs and a house," he explained, "so even if the guy is American, you can only go to Europe." Thus, it's more feasible to seduce British royalty than get an American tourist visa. Even their daydreams are subject to the Department of Homeland Security, it seems.

Travel wasn't the only focus. Functionally illiterate *michês* told me they wanted laptops. Others proclaimed they wanted *gringos* to buy them iPods, but didn't realize they needed a computer to connect it to. And they loved to talk about clothes, especially sneakers. Nike Shox, a type of shoes, enjoyed popularity among

middle-class Brazilians at this time, and this trend was reflected strongly among *michês*. Those with *gringo* boyfriends pressured the foreigners to buy houses and cars for them, although they generally wanted these to be in their home neighborhoods, where they felt more socially comfortable and where those they most wanted to impress lived. This fantasy was lived out by very few and, in fact, is actually inconsistent with their over-riding concern that their lives as sex workers not be suspected or discovered by their neighbors. Such a contradiction hints at the often illogical nature of consumerism. And while the *michês* interviewed by *Programa Pegação* did sometimes make reference to wanting sneakers (Reeboks, in those days), their overall exposure to global media was minimal and they had practically no foreign tourists as clients to spur them on to grander fantasies of living luxurious lives abroad.

In his seminal work *The romantic ethic and the spirit of modern consumerism*, Colin Campbell (1987) theorized consumerism and daydreams. Campbell distinguishes “traditional hedonism”, which he characterized as largely embodied indulgences like sex, socializing, eating, dancing, or drinking, from “modern hedonism”, in which we construct mental images, imagine future enjoyment, or anticipate emotions. Campbell sees artistic and philosophical Romanticism as marking a shift in thinking that positioned the self and one’s personal emotions at the center of one’s worldview, thereby inadvertently making the on-going success of consumerism possible. Yet

the more proficient one becomes at creatively imagining emotions and sensations, the more likely it is that ‘real’ consumption fails to deliver... This establishes a cyclical pattern of consumer frustration in which actual consumption is typically a disillusioning, dissatisfying experience...” creating a “cycle of desire and disappointment” in which consumers must search for

ever-elusive satisfaction “amongst the seemingly endless supply of new products (Boden & Williams, 2002, p. 496).

Such daydreaming requires a certain withdrawal from the real world. Campbell explains that “individuals employ their imaginative and creative powers to construct mental images which they consume for the intrinsic pleasure they provide” (1987, p. 77). He continues and here his words have particular resonance for the *michês* whom I know: “the contemporary hedonist is a dream artist... Convincing daydreams are created, such that individuals react subjectively to them as if they were real... this is the distinctively modern faculty, the ability to create an illusion which is known to be false, but felt to be true” (78). If I were to be so rude as to pressure Evandro about the likelihood of inheriting a fortune from a European aristocratic lady, he would probably admit that it isn’t going to happen. But over the three years I’ve known him, he remains surprisingly invested in such imaginings regardless of probability. The daydreams are like a hobby for him, but have the added effect of helping him cope with his limited options, poverty, and sometimes unpleasant work life. The details of the dream (i.e., the location, the exact client, etc.) change, but the focus on attaining a life of luxury remains the same. In fact, very few *michês* are without an endless array of get-rich-quick schemes that often involve cheating the system through clever trickery that Brazilians call *jeitinhos*<sup>7</sup>. Like Campbell’s hedonists, *knowing* reality’s harsh truths is less important than *feeling* dreams.

There are many criticisms to be made of Campbell, to be sure. Most obviously, there is the ethnocentrism of cherry-picking motifs from and relying upon a Western European artistic and philosophical movement to explain something that is now as globalized as consumerism, particularly when other regions had their own corollaries and interpretations of Romanticism. Campbell also could not have anticipated, as sociologists Sharon Boden and Simon J. Williams (2002) note, that humanities and social science scholars would advance so much work in the study

of *affect*, or pre-individual autonomic responses to the world around us that are both emotional and embodied. That is, Campbell relies on a Cartesian notion of the mind and body being utterly distinct, when increasing evidence suggests they are not. He also tries to add rules that are not particularly useful or supportable (and which I disregard henceforth) to differentiate daydreams, fantasies, and imaginings based upon how realistic and likely their contents are to actually happen.

What makes Campbell worth recuperating, then? Campbell understands the importance of daydreams, and their relationship to consumption and to connecting one's self to a particular identity. In considering daydreams seriously we understand class, capitalism, and oppression, as well as the potential for resistance and/or acquiescence to those forces. I also think the timing is right. As the magnitude of the global economic crisis became apparent in 2008 when investment banks began collapsing, pundits everywhere were atwitter about the death of capitalism. As I write this, fashion designers and marketing gurus are blabbing on about "Recession Chic" being the hottest trend, rendering even inconspicuous consumption conspicuously performative. Far from abandoning attempts to theorize consumer culture, I think Campbell can help us to understand why even our current moment of anti-consumerism is eminently commodifiable.

### **Romancing the Self**

Romanticism came late to Brazil. Only near the mid-nineteenth century did Gonçalves de Magalhães, Álvares de Azevedo and other canonical figures secure its status in Brazil. Not surprisingly, the Brazilian literati interpreted the Romantic ethos differently than Western Europeans, not least because they had to contend with ongoing struggles over national identity and racial issues surrounding Afro-Brazilian slaves and freedmen, large numbers of indigenous people, and a variety of white European-descended and recent immigrants. Although different in many regards, Campbell's basic

interpretation of Romanticism still applies in the Brazilian context. What Brazilian intellectuals did find traction with, perhaps because Brazil's vast interior and the Amazon remained uncharted terrain, was Romanticism's emphasis on horror, awe, untamed nature, morbidity, and the emphasis on the individual.

If Romanticism and consumerism under Campbell emphasize one's relationship to oneself, the contemporary Brazilian bourgeoisie actually constitute a pretty good case study. In her analysis of class-relations between middle-class city-dwellers and their lower-class domestic servants, Donna Goldstein (2003) describes middle-class Brazilians' infatuations. Although benefitting from modernization, middle-class Brazilians lacked political power in mid-20<sup>th</sup> century Brazil. Rather than become revolutionaries or engage in class struggle, "middle-class citizens instead seemed to turn inward," eventually becoming enamored with self-help, spiritism, and especially psychotherapy (Goldstein, 2003, pp. 164-165).

Maureen O'Dougherty (2002) goes even further in arguing that consumption is the *sine qua non* of the Brazilian middle-classes, a fact that is no less evident (but much more formative) in times of recession. In part, this is because Brazilian media wrongly tell the middle-classes that it is *they* who are most hurt by economic turmoil, effectively resulting in the erasure of difference and creation of solidarity in the face of both corrupt government officials and the frightening, darker-skinned masses of the truly poor. Ultimately, their efforts to retain their class position and privilege led Brazil's middle-classes to embrace neoliberalism and emulate North American consumerism under the auspices of modernity, despite the fact they were battling declining job security, longer hours, rising costs, and devalued currency.

Lucia Rabello de Castro (2006) has also examined consumer culture in Brazil, but focuses on its role among poor urban youth. While not specifically about *michês*, her results are strikingly

relevant to my own data. She found that “youngsters’ demands to consume, as a ‘mode of inclusion’ in society, achieve short-term gains that narrow down prospective visions of the self” (Rabello de Castro, 2006, p. 179). That is, in the absence of substantive and promising educational and work-related opportunities, the country’s urban poor turn to other forms of expression, such as music, to force their participation upon society.

She argues that, sadly, young people are taking up “consumer values and ideology in a monolithic way faced with the dearth of other narratives and discourses that can mediate the impact of consumerism” (Rabello de Castro, 2006, p. 182). For example, they buy fashionable clothes they cannot afford in order to hide their poverty, move un-policed through public space, and to distance themselves from their non-consuming peers and family-members. “Accordingly,” she writes, “ideals and moral expectations based on values such as self-renouncement, collective realizations above individual ones, compassion and solidarity seem to go in the counter-current of the established consumerist *modus vivendi*” (Rabello de Castro, 2006, p. 184). As in Campbell’s case, consumer culture does not redeem, but rather is borne out of and forever perpetuates a lack in our modern lives. Unlike Evandro and Beto whose income in beach areas was very low, many of the men I met in Rio’s *saunas* were living their dreams, at least for a short time and in the kinds of “depleted” forms de Castro outlines. Gustavo, for example, recalled how easy it was to get cash from sex when he first started working in Rio’s *saunas*. He relished being able to take his friends and female romantic partners to clubs and other entertainment venues, but now regrets those expenses and explained to me that trying to live such a lifestyle contributed to his current inability to provide for his children.

To better distinguish between the libratory and depleted forms of imagining, it is worth reading Campbell’s theory through the lens of Arjun Appadurai (1996), whose conceptualization of imagination-as-work is particularly salient. For Appadurai,

imagination today is distinct in that it focuses *collective* energy. He wants to discourage the sense of imagination as connoting a gift employed by individuals, which is “its tacit sense since the flowering of European Romanticism” (Appadurai, 1996, p. 8), and instead build upon Benedict Anderson to think about ways that groups of people imagine themselves as *communities* in the context of globalization, evidenced here in Appadurai’s oft-cited “scapes” in which people, media, technology, money, and ideas globally flow.

In referring to consumerist dreamscapes, I am not trying to add another definitive “-scape” to Appadurai’s collection of technoscapes, ethnoscapas, and the like. Instead, I simply mean to invoke what by now is a familiar framework in the humanities and social sciences to suggest that daydreams can also be understood as multiple worlds with the same kinds of fluid and complicated processes, ever-shifting viewpoints, and situated interconnectedness that other scholars have used to examine a range of topics. Particularly relevant here are Denise Brennan’s (2004) use of “sex scapes” to examine commercial sex and Richard Parker’s (1999) use of “homoscapes” to theorize same-sex desire in Brazil. Patrick Larvie (1997) even used Appadurai’s “ethnoscapas” in his brief analysis of *Projeto Pegação*. Of the *michês*, he writes:

Movement becomes essential to their survival and wellbeing, and many become masters of the signs of cultural capital that facilitate their movement. Sumptuary display becomes a strategy for survival and an art form, gender performativity an occupation, and the ability to locate, identify, and utilize the networks through which people and capital move becomes an essential tool in managing the oppression they confront every day (Larvie, 1997, p. 160).

Larvie's use of ethnoscapas in examining 1990s *michetagem* is a useful heuristic device, but I think it is not completely sufficient for explaining the role of consumerism among my own interlocutors today. To do that, we need to understand how consumerism functions in Brazil more broadly. For Appadurai, the US "is no longer the puppeteer of a world system of images but is only one node of a complex transnational construction of imaginary landscapes" (Appadurai, 1996, p. 31), or what I have been calling *consumerist dreamscapes* in the Brazilian case study.

Brazilians don't simply dream of whatever the US culture industry exports. Instead, consumer trends in Brazil are complex reflections and refractions. For example, following the success of *Slumdog Millionaire* at the 2009 Oscars in the US, Brazilians became obsessed with India. Bookstores featured whole sections on India, women wore *bindi* stickers on their foreheads, yuppies flocked to Starbucks asking for *chai*, and a *telenovela* about Brazilian-Indian romantic entanglements (using Brazilians playing Indians, no less) became an overnight sensation. Brazil's Indophilic moment, of course, had nothing to do with an enduring or sustained interest in India. Instead, *Slumdog's* utopian treatment of slum life in that other much-lauded BRIC country was highly relatable in Brazil, and it became the happy doppelganger to Brazil's own Oscar-darling slum movie *City of God* (2002), with which Brazilians have an ambivalent relationship. Yet without the Oscar hubbub, without the US-UK celebration of *Slumdog*, and without Brazil's anxiety over how its own slum movie had been received upon export, Indophilia probably wouldn't have crept into Brazilian consumer culture. Thus, the American Academy Awards didn't create a market for *chai lattés* and *bindi* stickers so much as a complex set of global interactions in an *ideoscape* did.

Likewise, *garotos de programa* don't just fantasize about consumerism because they interact with comparatively wealthy gay tourists. Nor do they watch television and decide to go out and sell sex in order to buy things they see in advertisements. Instead,

they are trying to gain a sense of agency for themselves by imagining upward social mobility and acceptance by Brazil's middle-classes. Unlike *michês* of the past, today's *michês* are surrounded by poor peers who can and do consume (albeit beyond their means and at the expense of their families), and they have access to many more wealthy foreigners than in the past. As they start to actually consume, then, they do follow Campbell's theorization and find the consumption unsatisfying, leading them to continue turning tricks and spending still more. But unlike in Appadurai's formulation, their "work of imagination" is individualistic rather than collective.

For me, the *consumer dreamscape* is not so much a part of a *collective ideoscape* (Appadurai, 1996) as it is an individual realm of fantasy – that is, a *scape of one*, for better or worse. It is not even a place for processes of identification. The purpose of fantasizing about consumption isn't to identify with another person or group of actual people with whom one shares common cause, but to tap into a Weberian ideal type: the bourgeois Brazilian consumer. Resorting to this dreamscape is an understandable defense mechanism for these young sex workers, but it is also a selfish retreat, which is why the dreamscape still reeks of the false promise of consumerism rather than revealing itself as a site of resistance or liberatory potential.

Campbell positions such daydreaming as a result of an ever-present *lack* in our modern lives. I do not wish to contend that the *michês* of 20 years ago had no capacity for dreams, but all evidence does suggest that they lived day-to-day and disliked talking about the future. Barring the odd mention of Reeboks, they certainly did not express themselves through a desire for consumer electronics, designer clothing, and luxury cruises. For them, imagining beyond the ethnographic present was a depressing prospect. As Brazil moved into economic prosperity, and also became increasingly hooked into global cultural and economic flows, hustlers in both high end sauna venues and low end beach

and street hustling began paying attention to their future, which includes not only daydreaming but taking proactive steps toward ensuring they are alive to experience those futures.

There is a peculiar ambiguity to the consumer dreamscape, then. As much as I would relish the opportunity to conclude with an utter rejection of the rise of consumerism among *michês*, it confers certain advantages. Most *michês* I interviewed maintained rigorous condom use, demonstrated moderate knowledge of safer sex practices and facts about HIV/AIDS, and reported engaging in HIV testing at least once since beginning to sell sex. While these positive steps are certainly more attributable to NGO outreach work and progressive government policies than consumer culture, there *is* a connection between the unsatisfying cycle of consumerism and an overall orientation to futurity. Consumerism propels its subjects onward through the desert with the promise of an oasis, even when the goal is a mirage. To the extent that the *michês* console themselves with thoughts of upward mobility and its attendant material conditions and access to luxury commodities, they reveal a link between consumerist daydreams and good sexual health choices. The days when outreach workers feel they need to downplay the dangers of AIDS are over. Contemporary *garotos de programa* expect to live and are not resigned to their fate, even though their lives seldom turn out well.

Very few of the dozens of men I know have made good on plans to go to school or start a business, let alone buy a car or house. And while several have gone abroad with their gringos, this is rare. Beto's plane ticket never came. Realizing he would never see Europe, he decided he wanted to become a fruit vender and planned to work up from a fruit cart to a store. But last I saw him, it had been three years since his tourist had disappointed. He was working in a low-end, filthy venue, quickly aging out and unable to compete. He briefly dabbled in petty crime before fleeing to São Paulo. When he did get money, he spent it on CDs, clothes, and booze. Despite his hardships, he continued rigorous condom

use and reported getting health screenings. He still talked of Europe from time to time. Unlike Perlongher's *michês* of the 1980s and *Programa Pegação's* of the 1990s, hope has come to be seen as rational. Beto has to know he will - in all likelihood - die without seeing Europe, but still believes that his dream is realizable. Yet if Campbell is correct that this sort of day-dreaming is the result of a perpetual lack in our lives, the question becomes how long hope will or can be tolerated without being validated.

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<sup>2</sup> The term *garoto* is shorthand for *garoto de programa*, and is used in *saunas* along with the equally popular English-imported term *boy*. The term *michê* is closer in connotation to that of "hustler," and is a more general term that in some places is more closely associated with selling sex on the street. Although some men reject this term (especially those in high-end saunas), most do not find it offensive. While male sex workers I know use *garoto*, *boy*, or *garoto de programa* more frequently, *michê* is the most common term in sociological, anthropological, and public health research. To balance this academically recognizable term (*michê*) with the one actually used in practice (*garoto de programa*), both appear in this text. Also, I use the term "hustling" to refer specifically to selling sexual services, although I am aware that in some North American communities "hustling" may refer to a range of both sexual and non-sexual commercial activities.

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<sup>3</sup> Among scholars and activists, “sex worker” and “prostitute” are sometimes politically-charged terms that can signal distinct approaches and worldviews. I prefer the term “sex worker” because of its emphasis on labor and agency, but many prostitutes in Brazil’s prostitutes-rights movement resoundingly reject the term “sex worker” as an unnecessary and unwanted import. To balance the perspectives of those on both sides of this debate, I use the terms interchangeably throughout my work despite their differences.

<sup>4</sup> “Pegação” refers to cruising for sex. The program began as “Projeto Pegação” (The Pegação Project) and, after additional funding was obtained, became Programa Pegação (The Pegação Program). In this instance, *programa* simply means a program and does not necessarily refer to the other meaning of *programa*, which is “a session with a client” or a “trick.”

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<sup>6</sup> For more on the ethics of sexual interactions and sexual subjectivity between ethnographers and their interlocutors, see Kulick and Willson, 1995.

<sup>7</sup> The *jeitinho* (or *jeito*) is the subject of a great deal of scholarly writing precisely because it’s the kind of cultural hermeneutic that reveals much about the structures of Brazilian society. A *jeitinho* can be “a quick fix”, “a dodge”, “a rule bending”, “a short cut”, “an end run around an obstacle”, or “a way to cut through red tape”. Perhaps because it is linked to social capital rather than direct economic capital, Brazilians often pride themselves on their ability to find a *jeitinho*. But its very existence and reliance on extra-legal maneuvering also highlights the country’s bureaucracy, corruption, and tenuous hold on the rule of law. Many *garotos de programa* that I know are smooth talkers who are highly skilled at *jeitinhos*, and who use them regularly to gain extra money from tourists, to get into or out of a *sauna* without paying, to avoid trouble with police or other authorities, and to talk their way into accessing job opportunities. For more on *jeitinhos*, see DaMatta (1991) and Barbosa (1995).