

Lehnen, Leila. *Citizenship and Crisis in Contemporary Brazilian Literature*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. 252 pp. Print.

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For the past two years, Brazil has been awash with protests. Although protests usually involve the middle classes, the participation rates of other classes grew, spreading to cities all over Brazil and becoming the largest protests in Brazil since the 1992 protests against President Fernando Collor de Mello. The protestors took to the streets to demonstrate against not only the abuse of power in the government and lack of investigations of this abuse (PEC 37), but also against differentiated rights of citizenship. They highlighted Brazil's hosting of the 2013 FIFA Confederations Cup, the 2014 FIFA World Cup, and the 2016 Summer Olympics as reasons for the financial scandals of many over-budget projects, increased cost of living and taxes, and a displacement of peoples to build unnecessary stadiums that would not be used after these sporting events. The protestors felt they were being denied basic rights of citizenship, including access to transportation, health care, education, welfare benefits, and employment. And yet, despite the general mistrust of the government and President Dilma Rourseff's (PT, or Worker's Party) leadership, she took 41.5 percent of the votes in the first round of the 2014 presidential elections as the incumbent candidate for presidency, guaranteeing that she moves on to the second rounds against Aécio Neves from the Social Democratic Party (PSDB) in the upcoming October 26 elections. The disconnect and rupture between protests and elections points to the ambiguities of citizenship and crisis, as Leila Lehnen introduces in her book, *Citizenship and Crisis in Contemporary Brazilian Literature*.

In this book, Lehnen presents readers with nine literary texts published from 2000-2009 to consider the socioeconomic and political influence on Brazilian literature post-1985 military dictatorship in order to understand how these texts develop a new definition of citizenship. Writing against scholars such as James Holston and George Yúdice, she examines literature as a way of accessing cultural citizenship, one that focuses on a people's

right to the cultural expression of identity. She argues that citizenship and crisis have become prevalent themes in Brazilian literature, appearing as cultural expressions of socioeconomic, civil, and cultural rights, offering a new historicism that recovers the marginality of cities and metropolitan centers.

Considering the literal and figurative peripheries that these nine texts emerge from and react to, Lehen gives voice to writers and moments in literature that are typically subsumed by those who are in power. Comprised of four content chapters, an introduction, and an epilogue, Lehen moves through moments of differentiated and insurgent citizenship as windows into crises that portrayed in Brazilian literature. She examines Luiz Ruffato's *Inferno provisório* (*Mamma, son tanto felice*) [Mamma, they are so happy, 2005], *O mundo inimigo* [The enemy world, 2005], *Vista parcial da noite* [Partial view of the night, 2006], and *O livro das impossibilidades* [The book of impossibilities, 2008]; Fernando Bonassi's *Subúrbio* (Suburb, 1990) and *O menino que se trança uma geladeira* (The boy who locked himself in the fridge, 2004); Reginaldo Ferreira da Silva's *Capão pecado* (Capão sin, 2000) and *Manual prático do ódio* (Practical handbook of hate, 2003); and Marcus Vinícius Faustini's *Guia afetivo da periferia* (Affective guide of the periphery, 2009) which all discuss the crises staged when rights of citizens are deemed deficient.

In the first chapter, "Luiz Ruffato: Landscapes of Disrepair and Despair in *Inferno Provisório*," Lehen discusses the concept of differentiated citizenship in Ruffato's depictions of the working class. This chapter introduces not only the shifts in representations from rural to urban Brazil but also "the transformation of social bonds within the familial sphere" resulting from this, revealing the intergenerational legacies of differentiated citizenship that give rise to a violent insurgent citizenship and childhood dystopia (24). Lehen's description and analysis of Ruffato's bricolage of intertextuality, narrative fragmentation, and hypertextuality points to a modern Brazilian literature whose ruptures in citizenship are transcribed onto the pages of literary texts, moving as a pendulum between "aspiration and reality, between possibility and impossibility" (58). Indeed, in her analysis, Lehen introduces characters that move beyond dichotomous narratives of social ascension and descent as citizens, inhabiting instead spaces beyond citizenship, beyond rural and urban, in order to unveil the fissures of contemporary Brazilian social citizenship as produced by the nation-state, capitalism, and neoliberalism.

Lehnen moves past moments of differentiated citizenship to an expansion of insurgent citizenship in her second chapter, “Fridges and Suburbs in the New World Order: Fernando Bonassi’s Spaces of Abjection.” Here, she examines how Bonassi’s texts served a particular socio-historic moment post-military dictatorship, pointing to ideas that challenged citizenship from the 1980s through the 1990s, such as symbolic and physical infrastructure, estrangement, and violence. Introducing Bonassi’s style of *romance reportage* (report novel), she uncovers the interstices of social critique in which “the narrative creates a symbolic space of contestation” (78) that questions truth, exclusion, and inclusion to recover the “individualized, privatized performances” (81) of citizenship through a close reading of *O menino que se trança uma geladeira*. As she moves on to *Subúrbio*, she uses Julia Kristeva’s *The Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* to describe the abject subjects that recall the boundaries of citizenship through geographic and social categories. In her discussion of the abject, she argues for a marginalization, dissociation, ambiguity, and unstableness that appear juxtaposed with “pockets of prosperity” in contemporary portrayals of urban Brazil, “perturb[ing] Brazil’s late-capitalist dystopian landscape” (120).

Chapter 3: “Practical Handbook of Citizenship: Negating / Negotiating Human Rights in São Paulo’s Periphery” develops Lehnen’s introduction of the dichotomy between urban and rural in Brazil by focusing specifically on Reginaldo Ferreira da Silva’s (better known as Ferréz) depiction of São Paulo as a site in which human rights unfold as immediate and more pressing concerns, bypassing previous categorizations of citizenship. Using Giorgio Agamben’s classification of disjunctive citizenship, she highlights the marginalization found in São Paulo’s peripheries. These subjects, caught in the nexus of inclusion and exclusion are both “the abject object of the upper and middle classes’ sovereign gaze” while denied “legal status or membership in the civic community” (124). They become the subjects of a transformative marginal literature that seeks to give readers a snapshot of quotidian life in the “dangerous” peripheries. Lehnen reads both *Capão pecado* and *Manual prático do ódio* as a “counter-discourse to the hegemonic narratives of marginalization propagated by the mass media” (141), giving agency to Ferréz’s sarcastic vision that emphasizes the redemptive possibilities for marginal literature while highlighting the figure of the organic intellectual that can lead the reader to new interpretations of the peripheries.

Lehnen's final chapter, "Cartographies of Hope: Charting Empowerment in *Guia afetivo da periferia*" begins by introducing the approaching 2014 FIFA World Cup and 2016 Summer Olympics. Addressing the international concerns of crime and violence in Brazil, officials promised to "clean up" the cities, hiding and silencing the unwanted scenes that mar the panoramic depictions of Brazil. And yet, the cultural productions that emerge from the peripheries become symbolic counterparts to how outside "others" view, consume, and respond to the peripheries. Lehnen narrates this through a close reading of Marcus Vinícius Faustini's *Guia afetivo da periferia*, which introduces active citizens who engage in claiming their citizenship rights, basing it on Engin F. Isin and Greg M. Nielsen's "acts of citizenship." She argues for a reading of citizenship that moves beyond the city boundaries and includes the peripheries. Here, disenfranchisement gives way to insurgency and, ultimately an "authenticity" emerges in the literature, one that captures the sociopolitical, economic, and cultural diversity of citizenship. The texts establish existing disjunctures but also act as reconciling agents that, by incorporating the "poetry in the metropolis's daily rhythms" (183) enact performances of "cultural agency and insurgency" (187), which implicate the reader in these moments. Lehnen argues that the study of the inclusion of this novel in Brazilian literature gives readers a new way of interpreting the city, citizenship, and agency.

Lehnen's book, expanding upon existing theories of citizenship, elaborates upon these by examining aspects in literary studies, making it a welcome addition to Brazilian Literature Studies. Not only do the close readings offer insight into some of the newer literary production in Brazil, Lehnen's analysis moves beyond citizenship through her examination of hegemony, religion, mass media, and abject subjects. More specifically, she notes dissociations between consumed postcard images of Brazil and the hidden reality of differentiated citizenship in the peripheries of Brazilian cities. Moreover, her analysis of *Guia afetivo da periferia* is timely, providing readers with a juxtaposition of contemporary moments of crisis gleaned from media portrayals of the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil. These are the moments that the world is currently watching, as Brazil not only prepares to host the 2016 Summer Olympics but as they consider and evaluate the incumbent President Rousseff's performance in the upcoming October 26 run-off election. In a country where voting is mandatory, voters ask themselves: what achievements has President Rousseff accomplished to spread uneven citizenship rights to more Brazilians; will she help to grow the economy; and, finally, do they have the courage to opt for change with another candidate? Those that

vote for President Rousseff do so for many reasons but her effective distribution of low-cost housing, installation of electricity and water programs in rural areas, and student grants to allow greater access to education speak to the very moments of differentiated citizenship that Lehen's analysis of nine contemporary Brazilian texts also addresses.

In summary, Lehen's *Citizenship and Crisis in Contemporary Brazilian Literature* is an enthusiastically recommended contribution to Brazilian, Latin American, and Citizenship Studies. Its close readings not only broaden readers' understanding of existing scholarship but also press its readers to consider how Brazilians' understanding of citizenship has changed post-1985 military dictatorship. Moreover, the questions of citizenship that the authors of the texts and Lehen raises urge readers to consider the interaction between literature, politics, economics, and the rights of citizens. Often times, readers dismiss the stance that situates authors squarely in the realm of politics. This especially happens in Brazil, where "successful" literature is that which is approved for adoption in school curricula. Lehen's analysis, however, brings these readings out of peripheries of literary circles into a more public view, emphasizing a cultural production that acts for its citizens and gives access to marginal areas that are otherwise left unexamined.