

Lehnen, Leila. *Citizenship and Crisis in Contemporary Brazilian Literature*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013.

Within the scope of their Latino and Latin American Studies publishing line, Palgrave MacMillan has created a worthy pathway for the study of contemporary Brazilian (and Lusophone) culture for English-speaking audiences. There is a most welcome enterprise that promotes and strengthens the multidisciplinary field of Brazilian Studies, particularly in the U.S. and other Anglophone countries. Within this publishing pathway, Palgrave has brought forth Leila Lehnen's illuminating *Citizenship and Crisis in Contemporary Brazilian Literature*.

Leila Lehnen's book introduces the reader to several key works of contemporary Brazilian literature published mainly during the first decade of the 21st century, and for this alone it is a noteworthy contribution. She also offers us a profound level of understanding of these fictional works, as well as correlations and contrasts between them and other genres, such as filmmaking, through in-depth analysis and her perceptive sensibility and intelligent explorations. Moreover, in tandem with these close readings and her in-depth critical analysis, Lehnen provides the reader with a thorough study of the socio-economic and political scaffolding of the period in question, corresponding to Brazil's post-dictatorship years at the end of the twentieth century and into the new millennium. In so doing she adds invaluable contextual and critical knowledge to the discourse on contemporary citizenship. Lehnen draws from the fictional works themselves and the lives of their characters to illustrate and denounce the cavernous gaps that existed (and continue to exist) between Brazil's underprivileged classes and true, participatory citizenship, even during a time of democracy. Most significantly, Lehnen emphasizes the concrete role that artistic production and fiction-writing play in advocating for and engendering empowerment and social change.

The introductory chapter, "Voices of Contestation: Obstacles and Paths to Citizenship," sets Lehnen's project in motion by defining key theoretical concepts and outlining the fictional works to be addressed in each chapter. In the process she underscores the obstacles to citizenship and basic human rights, even while articulating and upholding avenues of agency and social action

within the marginalized and peripheral communities represented in these fictional narratives.

In her analysis and accompanying structural framework, Leila Lehen is an ambitious and intrepid guide, drawing on her literary expertise. In Chapter 1, “Luiz Ruffato: Landscapes of Disrepair and Despair in *Inferno provisório*,” she tackles Ruffato’s monumental multi-volume *Inferno Provisório* with great sensitivity. Her readings of the first four of Ruffato’s five volumes address the multilayered registers of Brazilian experience during the latter half of the 20th century. In other words, her adept analysis captures the essence of a very complex and changing Brazil as portrayed in *Inferno Provisório*. In this and subsequent chapters she guides readers down a path of continual revelation, even when faced with forbidding landscapes.

In Chapter 2, “Fridges and Suburbs in the New World Order: Fernando Bonassi’s Spaces of Abjection,” Lehen offers an analysis of two works by Fernando Bonassi: *Subúrbio* (1994) and *O menino que se trancou na geladeira* (2004). Lehen masterfully demonstrates how these novels represent in allegorical form a society lacking in social, civil and political infrastructures, betraying an era of neoliberal policies.

In Chapter 3, entitled “Practical Handbook of Citizenship: Negating/Negotiating Human Rights in São Paulo’s Periphery,” readers are treated to Lehen’s analysis of two works of fiction by Ferréz, set within spaces of socio-economic crisis and cultural marginalization—*Capão Pecado* (2000) and *Manual prático do ódio* (2003)—in which she elucidates racially discriminatory practices as well as strategies of resistance present in them.

In Chapter 4, “Cartographies of Hope: Charting Empowerment in *Guia afetivo da periferia*,” Lehen leads us through Marcus Vinícius Faustini’s upbeat *Guia afetivo da periferia* (2009), whose narrator embarks on a journey through the city of Rio de Janeiro, and in the process “establishes himself as a citizen of the entire metropolis” (21). According to Lehen, this action has the cathartic effect of shattering boundaries between the center and the periphery, boundaries that had traditionally rendered the periphery as a perpetually violent and negative space.

Despite some minor typographical errors that should have been corrected in the proofreading and editing process, *Citizenship and Crisis in*

Contemporary Brazilian Literature is a well-researched, topical and intelligible book, grounded in theoretical frameworks and complete with informative and contextual commentary on the topic of citizenship. Crisis and obstacles to citizenship notwithstanding, ultimately, as expressed in the Epilogue, Leila Lehnen's fine volume envisions a present-day Brazil in which even the disenfranchised have "the right to have rights" and in which marginalized communities, such as those portrayed in the works of fiction she examines, rely on cultural agency to create "terrains of sociability" and transformation.

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