Everyday Consumption in Twenty-First-Century Brazilian Fiction

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Notes

Introduction

1. All translations are the author’s, except otherwise noted in the bibliography.

2. The path toward this goal had been paved by the “Indian” literature of the nineteenth century, which had identified in the figure of the native-Brazilian a national representative (Philippou 247). José de Alencar, for instance, who sets out to build a national Brazilian identity in a series of novels that are intended to offer a detailed account of the various landscapes of the country, creates indigenous characters in his novels *Iracema* (1865), *O guarani* (1857), and *Ubirajara* (1874). For Maria Candida Ferreira de Almeida, Alencar went beyond the apparent copy of the European medieval knight, especially in *Ubirajara*, by making specific ethnographic references to indigenous culture, which have been overlooked by literary critics. Traces of cannibalism can be identified in the novel in question, both in veiled references in the narrative and in the paratexts that accompanied the narrative. Later on, modernist poet Oswald de Andrade will, according to Almeida, “[retirar] a antropofagia das entrelinhas e das notas, colocando-a em primeiro plano e propiciando um discurso de exaltação de uma atitude brasileira diante das relações de alteridade” (“remove anthropophagy from in between the lines and from notes, bringing it to the foreground and providing a discourse of praise for a Brazilian attitude toward otherness”; 207).

3. For Julio Ramos, as Latin American countries attempted to become modern integrated nations, *modernismo*—whose Brazilian contemporary is *Simbolismo* and *Parnasianismo*—sought to free literature and art from commercial interests, as a rejection of the North American way of life, which *modernistas* perceived as undesirable chaotic heterogeneity and discontinuity. They viewed modern literature as a means to re-establish totality and continuity in the fragmented world of the unruly urban masses. They conceived of the intellectual as a leader capable of speaking from outside and above commodification, thus occupying a position that allowed him to be critical and to lead the masses toward modernity, while circumventing the dangers of commodification. The intellectual was thus a mediator between high and low cultural expressions and an agent of protection against foreign culture (235). Literature sought to represent the marginalized in a “safe” way, subjugating the voices of the masses to a will to control heterogeneity in the name of nation-building (209).

4. For Andreas Huyssen, the avant-garde was revived again by pop artists in the 1950s in Europe and died in the United States when the works of artists such as Andy Warhol seemed to confirm that art had indeed become an uncritical affirmation of capitalism (*After the Great Divide* 168).

5. Other writers who have dealt with consumption in their work, to varying degrees, include Patrícia Melo, Luiz Ruffato, Lourenço Mutarelli, Carol Bensimon, Santiago Nazarian, Cecília Giannetti, Regina Rheda, and Victor
Heringer. In other works of mine, I examine the representation of consumption in Luiz Ruffato’s *Eles eram muitos cavalos* (2001), in André Sant’Anna’s *Sexo e Amizade* (2007), and in two of Regina Rheda’s narratives (L. Bezerra, “A representação,” “Cenas cotidianas,” and “Citizens of nowhere”).

**Chapter One**

1. The idea that the middle class expanded during the Lula years is a contested one. For Marilena Chaui, for instance, it is rather the working class that expanded, not only due to the inclusion of many via consumption, but also because what used to be considered the middle class has largely become the working class, as a consequence of the privatization of the service sector and the decrease in job security (130).

2. According to the Caixa Econômica Federal’s website, the program, which was created in 2009, establishes groups that receive subsidies according to their income. For houses in urban areas, there are four groups, whose incomes vary from R$1,800.00 to R$7,000.00 monthly. For houses in rural areas, subsidies vary according to annual income of up to R$78,000.00, divided into three different groups (“Minha casa”).

3. Throughout the novel, the protagonist aspires to exert power over others while abandoning his condition of exploited low-income worker. The use of the word “senhor” links the social condition of the protagonist to slavery’s lasting effects upon low-income sectors of Brazilian society. Moreover, it suggests that the protagonist stands for the desire of the oppressed to be transformed into the oppressor.

4. All quoted dialogue from *Luxúria* in italics appears as such in the original, unless otherwise noted.

5. The lack of subject expression in the sentence makes it possible to read the verb *to belong* as referring either to the woman or to her genitalia, since the verb forms for both subjects take the third person singular in Portuguese.

6. This kind of interaction has been represented in Muylaert’s previously mentioned film *Que horas ela volta?* (*The Second Mother*). They are also reported regularly by domestic workers who anonymously tell their stories on the Facebook group “Eu, empregada doméstica” (“I, domestic worker”), which has over 164,000 followers as of the writing of this book.

7. “Quando precisar abrir um armário ou uma gaveta, fala comigo … Mas, não me leve a mal: eu preferia que você não tomasse mais o seu banho aqui, com água do nosso banheiro, dentro da nossa casa, entende?” (“When you need to open a cabinet or a drawer, talk to me first … But don’t get me wrong: I’d prefer that you didn’t take a shower here, using the water in our bathroom, in my house, you see?”; Bonassi, *Luxúria* 76).

8. In the 2002 election campaign, Lula’s appearance was much different from in previous times when he was a presidential candidate. His tailored suits, trimmed beard, and contained demeanor were part of marketer Duda Mendonça’s crafting of an image aimed at conveying a renewed and more sober version of the candidate, one that would be more appealing to those who rejected his ties to leftist ideals perceived as radical (Silva and Boni 108).
9. It is important to note that there is disagreement on whether Brazil implemented counter-cyclical measures during the time in question. Jorge Mattoso, for instance, argues quite the opposite, noting that it was the innovative nature of the administration’s counter-cyclical measures that shielded Brazil from the 2008 global economic crisis (113).

10. Congresswoman Luiza Erundina declares in an interview by Rodrigo Martins in *Carta Capital* in 2016: “Só chegamos a este estágio [da crise política] por causa da nossa omissão com a reforma política, e não me refiro apenas a regras eleitorais. É preciso repensar o sistema político, o Estado e o pacto federativo como um todo.” (“We have only gotten to this point [in the political crisis] because of our omission in the matter of political reform, and I am not referring here only to electoral rules. It is necessary to rethink the political system, the State, and the federal pact as a whole”; “Os modelos”).

11. This part of the translation—as well as any other passages from the Bible henceforth—is quoted from *The Bible. King James Version*, Bible Hub, biblehub.com/kjv/proverbs/6.htm. Accessed 20 March 2019.

12. While the Bible does not mention directly the seven deadly sins, the quoted passage is considered an antecedent to it (Tucker 63).

13. Pinheiro-Machado cites “o alinhamento neoliberal com o capital financeiro” (“the neoliberal alignment with financial capital”) as one of the causes for a crisis of PT’s ideals (“A era pós PT”).

14. Vargas acted as interim president from 1930–34, then as constitutional president from 1934–37, and finally as a dictator from 1937–45. He was then democratically elected in 1951 and served until 1954, when he committed suicide in the face of his imminent ousting.

15. Juscelino Kubitschek (1956–61) promoted great optimism about Brazil’s future through his motto “50 years in 5,” promising that his administration would achieve the equivalent to fifty years of development in five years. The construction of Brasília to be the capital of Brazil, with its modern architecture, was part of this developmentalist enthusiasm.

16. The idea that it was necessary to make the “cake” rise first so that it could then be divided was a metaphor used by then-Finance Minister Delfim Neto to explain the gap (and convey confidence in closing it later) between the accelerated growth of the Brazilian economy at the beginning of the 1970s, when Brazil experience the so-called “milagre econômico” (“economic miracle”), and the disparities in income distribution at the time (Habert 13).

17. See Chapter 2 for details on Cardoso’s presidency.

18. From the 2014 protests on, support for a military intervention grew in Brazil among ultra-conservative groups, with members of the military speaking directly about said possibility (Sousa and Peron; R. Valente).

19. The topic has become so prominent in Brazilian culture that it is dealt with in the Netflix series *3%*, in which, every year, individuals living in absolute poverty have a chance to compete for a spot at “the Offshore,” which is richer and better. The title of the series refers to the percentage of candidates who are able to pass the so-called “Process,” through which
they are screened. The several phases of the “Process” are designed to test the candidates’ endurance of what closely resembles neoliberal expectations and ideas of success.

20. The Bullet Coalition is against gun control and human rights for convicts.

21. Along with the “Bancada da Bala” and the “Bancada do Boi” (Cattle Coalition, which includes rich landowners against agrarian reform), the “Bancada da Bíblia” (Bible Coalition, made up mainly of evangelical conservatives) is part of what Workers’ Party affiliate Erika Kokai calls the “Bancada BBB.” She uses the term, which was adopted by the Left thereafter to refer to conservatives in the congress of Brazil (R. Martins, “A bancada BBB”).

22. Sant’Anna’s use of ellipsis in the last line alludes to both meanings of the word “só” in Portuguese.

Chapter Two

1. Mao’s government, like many others throughout Chinese history, manipulated Confucian thought to legitimate itself. The Cultural Revolution, which sought to destroy the so-called four olds—culture, thinking, habits, and customs—preached that Confucian thought was at the root of Mao’s enemies’ attempts to make China move toward exploitative capitalism. In order to prevent that from happening, Mao argued, it was necessary to eliminate Confucianism from Chinese society, even if that meant, as it did, to arrest, torture, and kill the population, and to destroy Confucius temples across the country (Rainey 180).

2. In an interview with Bernardo Sorj and Sérgio Fausto, Fernando Henrique Cardoso states, when asked about the labeling of his policies as neoliberal:

É curioso porque as políticas de meu governo tiveram muito pouco de liberal. Estávamos preocupados em fortalecer os serviços públicos, ampliar o acesso a eles, reorganizar os gastos. O gasto social aumentou e aumentou muito. Infelizmente o grosso da comunidade acadêmica não entendeu isso. Para a maioria da comunidade acadêmica—em especial a das ciências humanas, por causa da forte penetração ideológica nas universidades—nós éramos neoliberais. Quando na verdade nós estávamos reorganizando o Estado, inovando, inclusive na área social. (56)

It is interesting because my administration’s policies had very little liberalness. We were concerned about strengthening public services, expanding access to them, reorganizing expenses. Social spending increased, and it increased a lot. Unfortunately, the majority of the academic community did not understand this. For the majority of the academic community—especially those in the social sciences, due to the strong ideological penetration in universities—we were neoliberal. When the truth is that we were reorganizing the state, innovating, including in the social area.
3. About the impact of the crises on different sectors of the Chinese population, Teiwes writes: “the degree of enthusiasm varied, with rural youths and peasants in some relatively well-off villages believing the Socialist Education Movement’s propaganda on the power of Mao’s Thought on the eve of the Cultural Revolution, whereas peasants in poor regions complained about the Great Leap losses and reportedly showed minimal affection toward Mao. Meanwhile, various urban groups continued to follow Mao, often rationalizing that others must be responsible for recent disasters” (143).

4. In the Iran-Contra affair, the Reagan administration secretly provided arms indirectly to Iran while the latter was subject to an arms embargo. They did so via Israel, who sent the arms and then received payment from the U.S. The scheme was carried out in exchange for seven American citizens who were being held by the Iranian paramilitary group Hezbollah. It was also arranged for part of the proceeds from the sales of the arms to fund the Contras, a right-wing rebel group in Nicaragua that, backed by the United States, opposed the socialist Sandinista government. At the time, U.S. military backing of the Contras had been prohibited by the Boland Amendment passed by Congress.

5. Krista Brune points out in the article “Mediating Language, Translating Experience: Negotiating Postdictatorial Metropolis in Duas praças” that Lísias uses fragmented language in his novel Duas praças to represent a disconnect between experience and communication, engaging the reader in acts of translation of the protagonist’s thoughts into words (19).

6. The protests started in São Paulo due to an increase of R$0.20 in the bus fare. Soon the protests grew into a much wider movement, with the focus shifting to the escalating spending on infrastructure in preparation for the 2014 World Cup and to a fight against corruption (“Brazil Unrest”).

7. The particle was discovered in 2013 and was called the God particle because it was believed to have caused the “Big Bang.” For more information, see: www.cbsnews.com/news/god-particle-why-the-higgs-boson-matters/

8. Brazilian country music.

9. See more details about this phrase in Chapter 1.

10. It is in the New Testament, that is, in the Christian Greek Scriptures, that the reference to the word “being God” can be found. The most well-known reference appears in John 1:1: “In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God and the Word was God.”

11. Paradoxically because the very existence of different languages reflects the diversity of cultures and ways of living/seeing the world. Language death, from a social perspective, is the death of diversity, knowledge, and history (Crystal 66) in so far as it limits our abilities to communicate with others, ultimately decreasing our chances to survive.
Chapter Three

1. Just four years later, another dam disaster brought catastrophic consequences to another city: Brumadinho, in the state of Minas Gerais. The mining company Vale, which co-owns Samarco with the BHP group, was again involved. As of the writing of this book, 186 people were killed and more than 100 remain missing (“Brumadinho Dam Collapse”).

2. The film explores the limits between reality and fiction by parodying the language of documentaries in order to talk about the social injustices of capitalism. The film caused controversy when some viewers, taking it literally, expressed repulsion against the population of Ilha Grande dos Marinheiros, where the film was shot (“Ilha das Flores: depois que a sessão acabou”). In the film, the population appears competing with pigs for food that is dumped into a pigsty.

3. Maria Fernanda Garbero highlights this connection in her review of Maia’s work (“Sujos” 2018), which Maia herself explains in an interview by Olívia Fraga (Maia, “Dificilmente”).

4. For example, the narrator describes the cremation process as follows:

   Caso a mercadoria sofra danos, basta preencher a urna funerária com sobras de cinzas que são guardadas pelo funcionário da manutenção do forno. Este sempre apanha uns punhados de cinzas provenientes de muitas cremações e guarda-as num galão de plástico. Depois são moidas de modo uniforme e repõem a falta dos grãos perdidos dos outros. (Maia, Carvão 27)

   In case the merchandise becomes damaged, all that is necessary is to fill the urn with the rest of the ashes that are kept away by the employee who does the maintenance of the furnace. He always picks up a handful of ashes from many cremations and puts them away in a plastic container. Afterward, the ashes are ground uniformly, and are used to replenish the particles that were lost from other bodies.

5. The following passage about Palmiro exemplifies their poor health: “De tanto aspirar fuligem dos muitos anos em que trabalhou numa carvoaria e dos anos seguintes em que cremou corpos, seu pulmão ficou debilitado. Sua respiração tornou-se barulhenta, e constantemente, num ruidoso escarro elimina pela boca uma secreção gosmenta em pedaços de papel higiénico que costuma carregar nos bolsos das calças” (“Due to all the soot that he inhaled during the many years that he worked in a coal mine and the years after that when he cremated bodies, his lungs became debilitated. His breathing became noisy, and, in constant and loud expectoration, he spits gooey sputum in pieces of toilet paper”; Carvão 29).

6. Others characters in Maia’s novel also behave very similarly to Steinbeck’s, particularly J. G., from Carvão animal, who echoes Lennie, the big guy who talks and behaves like a child in Of Mice and Men.

7. A search for the sentence on a search engine yields quotes in websites on veganism that attribute the quote to Adorno, including a reference on
In a discussion board on Michigan State University’s website (msu.edu), participants note that they have tried to confirm the source of the quote, but that the quote does not seem to appear in any of Adorno’s work. I myself was not able to confirm it either, having thus to rely on this discussion board as the best source of information that I was able to find.

8. Edgar Wilson is a recurrent character in Maia’s novels. In O trabalho sujo dos outros, his ambiguous nature also becomes evident, for example, when he helps his friend “retrieve” his kidney from his sister’s body, while showing solidarity and compassion for his friend’s suffering due to his health issues.

9. Maia revisits this issue in Enterre seus mortos, when she describes the damage caused by a quarry to a nearby city: dead animals, injured people, lung diseases, and polluted waters (26).

Chapter Four

1. According to Amann and Baer, in their article “Neoliberalism and Its Consequences in Brazil,” most of Latin America had adopted the Washington Consensus by the end of the 1980s. Brazil increasingly moved in that direction, with the process accelerating at the very beginning of the 1990s with Fernando Collor de Melo (1990–92) and later on with Fernando Henrique Cardoso, as I discuss in Chapter 2 (Amann and Baer 946–47).

2. The term Generation X is used, with some variation, to refer to the age group that was born between the early 1960s and the late 1970s. As Catherine Strong notes in her book Grunge: Music and Memory, this generation is usually described as a group of young individuals who feel disconnected from society. They are constructed as “tolerant, but cynical, [living] lives centered on consumption and mass media and overwhelmingly downtrodden by the more successful Baby Boom generation” (135). Furthermore, this generation is commonly characterized by a lack of interest in politics and current affairs, as well as by a lack of commitment to promoting social change. In sum, Generation X-ers are in general perceived as apathetic, disillusioned individuals.

3. Lança-perfume was a deodorizing spray that became popular in Brazilian Carnaval at the beginning of the twentieth century. The product became illegal in the 1960s due to deaths following the inhaling of the substance.

4. The protagonist mentions several biblical characters who committed suicide:
   i. Abimelech, “who opts for suicide out of pride, shame at his condition, and concern for his image” (Shemesh 158)
   ii. Samson, who, out of revenge, would have carefully planned his suicide and kept the plan concealed (159)
   iii. Saul, whose motive is similar to Abimelech’s (161)
   iv. Ahithophel, whose suicide is unclear, but appears to have been motivated by his anticipation of future events and results from
Chapter Five

1. In Postcards from Rio: Favelas and the Contested Geographies of Citizenship (2017), Kátia Bezerra demonstrates how various cultural products by favela-based groups promote other perspectives on favelas (slums) and their inhabitants, claiming their right to the city and contesting neoliberal discourses on urban development that mask capitalist exploitation as social inclusion and the promotion of citizenship (9).

2. The project published several titles that deal with life in the periferia, including accounts on social projects in addition to narratives such as Faustini’s (Lehnen, Citizenship 166).

3. By 2017, Kondzilla, a production company owned by Konrad Dantas, had produced more than 60 music videos, which together had surpassed 100 million views on YouTube (A. Pereira).

4. Women often appear in these videos as another object that the singer is able to consume along with the cars, houses, and brand clothing and accessories that he displays. In “O cara do momento” (“The Dude of the Hour”), for instance, Menor da Chapa appears in the video with women surrounding him in a Jacuzzi and around his car. In “Olha como nós tá” (“Check Out How We’re Doing”) by MC Buru, women appear dancing, in a typical funk fashion that reproduces moves that evoke sexual intercourse, around the cars that the protagonist of the music video flaunts. Most of the time, all the viewer sees of the women dancing is close-up shots of their buttocks or shots that focus on their bodies from the waist down, thus portraying them as just another object to be consumed. The lyrics of “Baile de favela” (“Favela Party”) by MC João in turn, are particularly aggressive toward women, suggesting gang rape in lines such as “os menores preparado pra foder com a checa dela” (“the under-aged kids ready to fuck up her pussy”). Nevertheless, it is important to also point out that women have carved out their space in funk. Funkeiras such as Ludmilla provide a woman’s perspective of women’s sexuality in songs like “Hoje,” for example, which portray women as agents of their own sexuality. An even more empowering example of funk made by women is MC Soffia, a funkeira from São Paulo who started her career at 12 years old, whose “Menina Pretinha” (“Little Black Girl”) celebrates Afro-Brazilian young girls: “Menina pretinha / Exótica não é linda / Você não é bonitinha / Você é uma rainha” (“Little black girl / Exotic is not beautiful / You are not cute / You are a queen”). The song touches on consumption by valuing toys that represent Afro-Brazilian girls, such as black dolls, as opposed to Barbies.

5. According to Érica Peçanha do Nascimento, “a expressão ‘literatura marginal’ serviu para classificar as obras literárias produzidas e veiculadas...
à margem do corredor editorial; que não pertencem ou que se opõem aos cânones estabelecidos; que são de autoria de escritores originários de grupos sociais marginalizados; ou ainda, que tematizam o que é peculiar aos sujeitos e espaços tidos como marginais” (“the expression *literatura marginal* served to classify literary works that are produced and distributed by alternative channels, outside of the editorial market; that do not belong or that oppose established canons; whose writers come from socially marginalized groups; or yet that broach what is peculiar to subjects and spaces considered marginalized”); 22). For Lucía Tennina, the term *literatura periférica* was the second one to have most impact in the characterization of this group of writers. Cautioning that there are authors who do not identify with the term *literatura marginal*, Tennina notes that “a literatura marginal da periferia não é um conjunto homogêneo do qual se pode derivar uma representação unitária, mas sim algo que se define a partir de sua mobilidade como um processo performativo de posicionamento do sujeito que escreve em relação a certa ideia de ‘marginalidade’ a partir da qual toma a palavra em determinado espaço, momento, serie literária ou circunstância” (“*literatura marginal* from the *periferia* is not a homogenous collection that can be said to represent everyone, but rather something that defines itself based on its mobility as a performatative process of positioning the subject that writes in relation to a certain idea of ‘marginality’, from which he/she speaks in a certain space, moment, literary series, or circumstance”; 33).

6. The Operação Lava-Jato (Operation Car Wash) was launched in 2014 to investigate black market money dealers involved in the use of small businesses such as car washes to launder illegal profits. The operation expanded after it was discovered that the dealers were working for a Petrobrás executive and grew exponentially as it reached the upper echelons of Brazilian political class, implicating companies with business all over the world (Watts).

7. Tennina notes that the “sacralization” of the mother figure is a common trope in the *literatura de periferia* written by male authors, which reinforces the view that women belong in the domestic sphere (181).

8. *Bombril* is both a famous Brazilian brand of cleaning products and the generic term for steel wool. It is being used in the latter sense here.

9. The word *carioca* refers to someone from the city of Rio de Janeiro.

10. Trips to Disneyland became an important status symbol in the 1980s and 1990s among Brazilian middle-class families, who increasingly opted for these trips instead of debutante balls for their daughters. According to Maureen O’Dougherty, going to Disneyland became not just a practical way to save money for a middle class in crisis, but also a way for parents to escape the unpredictability of everyday life in Brazil as the country went through several economic plans that repeatedly failed to save the economy. Disney provided them with the safe, predictable, anonymous environment for which they longed amidst the difficulty keeping up appearances during the economic turmoil of the time (105).