

Lígia Bezerra. *Everyday Consumption in Twenty-First-Century Brazilian Fiction*. West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2022. 282 pp.

In 2022 there were more active smartphones in Brazil than the Brazilian population¹. Consumption, demonstrated by technological purchases and the implementation of socio-economic programs like Bolsa Família (2003) and Minha Casa Minha Vida (2009), was a crucial platform in President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's first tenure and likewise in President Dilma Rousseff's subsequent administration. Although social theorists such as Theodor Adorno often tie such consumption with European mentalities, understanding Brazil's unique consumption can be key to understanding Brazil's national identity and overcoming many of its social issues. In *Everyday Consumption in Twenty-First-Century Brazilian Fiction*, Lígia Bezerra helps readers better understand Brazil's political and social climates by analyzing Brazilian consumption through the lens of ten fictional works published during Lula's and Rousseff's administrations. The combination of historical examples and fictional analysis in the book's five chapters create thought-provoking representations of the varying social classes within twenty-first-century Brazil. Bezerra maintains a neutral tone throughout the book and neither praises nor condemns the modern-day Brazilian consumer. Such neutrality aims, to the extent possible, to create an objective understanding of Brazilian consumption, as both historically and fictionally represented.

Bezerra's analysis is effective in addressing each literary work's value in representing real-world consumption while showcasing how such consumption can manifest differently

¹ According to a study by the FGV, there were 242 million phones in active use and a population of 214 million. <https://portal.fgv.br/en/news/brazil-has-424-million-digital-devices-use-reveals-fgvcias-31st-annual-survey>

due to social and economic standings. Chapter 1, “A Consumer’s Dystopia,” showcases this strength by addressing consumption’s ties with sex, violence, and microaggressions while still considering the everyday lower-class consumer and “the profound unhappiness that follows the realization that one no longer has money” (50). Bezerra expresses perceptions and convictions that seek to not only depict the lower-class consumers’ errors and toxic relationships but simultaneously depict trials that come to those segregated due to their inability to consume and “imagine a better life” (77) for themselves. Chapter 2, “The Consuming Self,” proposes literature’s possible impact to prevent the commodification of the self. The author incisively analyzes self-failure and self-made triumphs in the novels *O Livro dos Mandarins* (Ricardo Lísias) and *Reprodução* (Bernardo Carvalho) by illustrating a consumer utopia that values appearance over knowledge and selfishness over empathy. Such illustrations create a discourse of self-awareness and invite readers to critique the consumerist world we live in. Chapter 3, “Consumer Culture’s Collateral Damage,” analyzes three novels written by Ana Paula Maia that focus on the invisible violence that exists within consumer capitalism, centering mainly on lower-class workers who not only work in precarious work environments but who see first-hand the conclusive evidence of consumerism’s role in ecological harm. Unlike the other chapters, this chapter’s concentration on those who do very little consuming juxtaposes with the other main characters analyzed in previous and subsequent chapters. It shines a light on those often deemed as invisible in a consumption-based society. Bezerra not only eloquently recounts and examines each of the three novels but successfully tethers lower-class experiences one to another to demonstrate the possibility of change by asserting subjectivity. The choice to use multiple literary texts from the same author for this chapter, a technique that she does not employ in other chapters (and that at first glance could be perceived as too zeroed in for such a project as this one, focused on creating a “broad perspective” and using authors from “diverse backgrounds” [31]), intertwine as the Bezerra narrates and investigates a fictional universe, not far from our very own, where working-class people are stereotyped as savages. Chapter 4, “A Consumer’s Dreams and Nightmares,” focuses on what the Bezerra calls “ambivalent awareness,” that is, the relationship and equilibrium of one’s awareness and oblivion of consumer culture’s effects

on one's ability to be subjective. Chapter 5, "Working Class Consumption," analyzes Marcus Faustini's *Guia Afetivo da Periferia*, wherein Bezerra advocates for authors like Faustini who write about consumer culture and its threats to democracy.

Bezerra's in-depth study is eloquently worded and maintains a narrative of historical examples while providing pluralistic representations of modern-day consumption. The work overall is such a pleasant read that it is hard to find faults. However, a minor adjustment would strengthen the book. More analysis and development is needed in Chapter 3 to better compare with the book's other chapters. While the existing research of the three fictional works is engaging and appealing, compared with the other chapters, the author's interaction with the works analyzed in Chapter 3 maintains a more surface-level analysis.

Everyday Consumption in Twenty-First-Century Brazilian Fiction would be a valuable addition to the libraries of those working with twenty-first-century texts and those seeking to better understand Brazilian consumption. Bezerra's clear explanations and the inclusion of necessary background information make this a valuable work for experienced scholars in the field as well as for those with little to no expertise on the subject who want to learn more.

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