

Dictionary of Literary Biography® • Volume Three Hundred Eighty-Four

Twenty-First-Century Brazilian Writers



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Twenty-First-Century Brazilian Writers

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**Dictionary of Literary Biography,
Volume 384: Twenty-First-Century
Brazilian Writers**

Monica Rector and Robert N. Anderson

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Plan of the Series

. . . *Almost the most prodigious asset of a country, and perhaps its most precious possession, is its native literary product—when that product is fine and noble and enduring.*

Mark Twain*

The advisory board, the editors, and the publisher of the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* are joined in endorsing Mark Twain's declaration. The literature of a nation provides an inexhaustible resource of permanent worth. Our purpose is to make literature and its creators better understood and more accessible to students and the reading public, while satisfying the needs of teachers and researchers.

To meet these requirements, *literary biography* has been construed in terms of the author's achievement. The most important thing about a writer is his writing. Accordingly, the entries in *DLB* are career biographies, tracing the development of the author's canon and the evolution of his reputation.

The purpose of *DLB* is not only to provide reliable information in a usable format but also to place the figures in the larger perspective of literary history and to offer appraisals of their accomplishments by qualified scholars.

The publication plan for *DLB* resulted from two years of preparation. The project was proposed to Brucoli Clark by Frederick G. Ruffner, president of the Gale Research Company, in November 1975. After specimen entries were prepared and typeset, an advisory board was formed to refine the entry format and develop the series rationale. In meetings held during 1976, the publisher, series editors, and advisory board approved the scheme for a comprehensive biographical dictionary of persons who contributed to literature. Editorial work on the first volume began in January 1977, and it was published in 1978. In order to make *DLB* more than a dictionary and to compile volumes that individually have claim to status as literary history, it was decided to organize volumes by topic, period, or genre. Each of

these freestanding volumes provides a biographical-bibliographical guide and overview for a particular area of literature. We are convinced that this organization—as opposed to a single alphabet method—constitutes a valuable innovation in the presentation of reference material. The volume plan necessarily requires many decisions for the placement and treatment of authors. Certain figures will be included in separate volumes, but with different entries emphasizing the aspect of his career appropriate to each volume. Ernest Hemingway, for example, is represented in *American Writers in Paris, 1920–1939* by an entry focusing on his expatriate apprenticeship; he is also in *American Novelists, 1910–1945* with an entry surveying his entire career, as well as in *American Short-Story Writers, 1910–1945, Second Series* with an entry concentrating on his short fiction. Each volume includes a cumulative index of the subject authors and articles.

Between 1981 and 2002 the series was augmented and updated by the *DLB Yearbooks*. There have also been nineteen *DLB Documentary Series* volumes, which provide illustrations, facsimiles, and biographical and critical source materials for figures, works, or groups judged to have particular interest for students. In 1999 the *Documentary Series* was incorporated into the *DLB* volume numbering system beginning with *DLB 210: Ernest Hemingway*.

We define literature as the *intellectual commerce of a nation*: not merely as belles lettres but as that ample and complex process by which ideas are generated, shaped, and transmitted. *DLB* entries are not limited to “creative writers” but extend to other figures who in their time and in their way influenced the mind of a people. Thus the series encompasses historians, journalists, publishers, book collectors, and screenwriters. By this means readers of *DLB* may be aided to perceive literature not as cult scripture in the keeping of intellectual high priests but firmly positioned at the center of a nation's life.

DLB includes the major writers appropriate to each volume and those standing in the ranks behind them. Scholarly and critical counsel has been sought in deciding which minor figures to include and how full their entries should be. Wherever possible, useful

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references are made to figures who do not warrant separate entries.

Each *DLB* volume has an expert volume editor responsible for planning the volume, selecting the figures for inclusion, and assigning the entries. Volume editors are also responsible for preparing, where appropriate, appendices surveying the major periodicals and literary and intellectual movements for their volumes, as well as lists of further readings. Work on the series as a whole is coordinated at the Brucoli Clark Layman editorial center in Columbia, South Carolina, where the editorial staff is responsible for accuracy and utility of the published volumes.

One feature that distinguishes *DLB* is the illustration policy—its concern with the iconography of literature. Just as an author is influenced by his surroundings, so is the reader's understanding of the author enhanced by a knowledge of his environment.

Therefore *DLB* volumes include not only drawings, paintings, and photographs of authors, often depicting them at various stages in their careers, but also illustrations of their families and places where they lived. Title pages are regularly reproduced in facsimile along with dust jackets for modern authors. The dust jackets are a special feature of *DLB* because they often document better than anything else the way in which an author's work was perceived in its own time. Specimens of the writers' manuscripts and letters are included when feasible.

Samuel Johnson rightly decreed that "The chief glory of every people arises from its authors." The purpose of the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* is to compile literary history in the surest way available to us—by accurate and comprehensive treatment of the lives and work of those who contributed to it.

The *DLB* Advisory Board

Introduction

Brazilian literature can be divided into three basic periods: (1) the colonial period, from Portuguese discovery in 1500, through colonization and expansion until Brazil's independence from Portugal in 1822; (2) the national period, beginning with the political break from Portugal in the nineteenth century and accompanied by the nation's search for an identity of its own, until about 1960; and (3) the contemporary period, from the 1960s through the present, in which can be found elements of premodernism, modernism, and postmodernism, in the context of an economically and culturally globalizing world. The first two of these periods are discussed in detail in the introduction to *DLB 307: Brazilian Writers* and recapped here; the contemporary period, the focus for *DLB 384: Twenty-First-Century Brazilian Writers*, will then be treated in more depth.

Brazil's initial cultural identity copied the European model. Marked by heavy Portuguese influence, the country nevertheless immediately started deviating from this model due to the transculturation with indigenous inhabitants and African ethnic groups and a different physical geography. Brazilian literature soon began to portray the reality of this New World. The colonial period comprises mainly Renaissance, baroque, and neoclassical features. (See "Colonial Literature [Jesuit Literature, Baroque, Neoclassicism, Arcadianism]" in the appendix of *DLB 307*.) This Eurocentric vision dominated writing in Brazil into the nineteenth century.

The national period embodied a reaction against neoclassical aesthetic values. Romanticism, despite its European roots—or even because of them—had an early explicit influence on national identity. Brazil was a country wanting to be independent from Portugal both politically and culturally. French, Spanish, English, and North American writers influenced Romantic Brazilian authors. Brazilian writers valued nature and portrayed the indigenous population, as "noble savages." In the second half of the nineteenth century, journalism intensified and events increasingly informed literature, notably before and after slavery was abolished in 1888 and around the time the Republic was declared in 1889 (prior to which Brazil had been a constitutional monarchy). Realism and naturalism predominated in prose and Parnassianism in poetry. A crucial watershed in the history of Brazilian literature came with the work of Joaquim Maria Machado

de Assis. Although he never lived outside the city of Rio de Janeiro, his literary production has both universal characteristics and an uncannily protomodernist stylistic and philosophical orientation.

In the early twentieth century, artists in Brazil attempted cultural liberation by embracing the modernist movement. In 1922 the *Semana de Arte Moderna* (Week of Modern Art) marked the official beginning of Brazilian modernism, bringing to life social issues of urban life and sowing seeds of innovation and renewal. It was not a unified movement; rather, there were several groups with the same intent: to achieve a distinct, independent Brazilian identity. Regionalist novels, a form that had first appeared in the nineteenth century, flourished in the 1930s, as works of remarkable quality were published. Informed by neorealism and contemporary Brazilian sociology, these works opened a new path for Brazilian prose fiction, especially thanks to authors from the Northeast.

The period from 1945 to 1964 was marked by the emergence of the Generation of 1945, which expressed new realities in prose fiction, reshaped the novel and the short story, and revolutionized Brazilian theater. Some have labeled this period *neomodernismo* (neomodernism). Others classify it as the third generation of modernism, the first two being the "heroic" phase of the 1920s, launched by the *Semana de Arte Moderna*, and the neorealist renewal of regionalist prose fiction of the 1930s. Historical events also shaped this period's trajectory. Politically, post-1945 Brazil experienced a period of democratization, followed by authoritarian dictatorship, followed again by democratization. In 1945 the *Estado Novo* (New State) ended with the ouster of Getúlio Vargas, who had installed this dictatorship in 1937. It was also the end of World War II and the eve of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. In 1964 the democratically elected president João Goulart was overthrown by a civil-military alliance and replaced by an authoritarian government dominated by the military that lasted until 1985. There has been much intellectual discussion about the import of these dates, though; some say Brazilian modernism ended around 1960, while others extend it until 1980, and still others say it is ongoing. Suffice it to say that the writers of late modernism show a more formal attitude than those in the immediate wake of the *Semana de Arte Moderna*. The main character-

istics of Brazilian modernism, broadly speaking, have been artistic experimentation, realism that sometimes incorporates the fantastic, use of poetical forms with new structures, linguistic and metalinguistic innovations, regionalism that speaks to universal themes, and social and human themes.

The second half of the twentieth century was a time of important developments in Brazilian literature and performing arts. In the 1950s, the brothers Haroldo and Augusto de Campos together with Décio Pignatari experimented with the limits of language with concrete poetry, which uses the page as the canvas for the poem, making use of words, typography, and color as form and content. (See “Concrete Poetry” in the appendix to *DLB 307*.) This poetic innovation was continued by Mário Chamie in the 1960s with Poesia-Praxis. In the 1960s the cultural phenomenon known as Tropicália or Tropicalismo (Tropicalism) also arose. This movement, whose “manifesto” was Caetano Veloso’s song “Tropicália,” was centered in popular music but also encompassed visual arts (Hélio Oiticica), film (Cinema Novo), and theater (Teatro Oficina). (See “Tropicália” in the appendix to *DLB 307*.) Cinema Novo (New Cinema) is an artistic movement in its own right, most often associated with director Glauber Rocha, whose heyday was in the 1960s and early 1970s. Música Popular Brasileira (Brazilian Popular Music, MPB), when capitalized, refers to a collection of styles and themes that were prominent in popular song and whose success was encouraged—and judged—by the great media-sponsored song festivals of the 1960s. Several talented songwriters, notably Chico Buarque, contributed to Brazil’s poetic legacy and went on to write in other genres. All of these artistic phenomena of the 1960s interacted, yielding syntheses and new directions in subsequent decades.

Concrete poetry, Tropicália, MPB, and Cinema Novo all overlapped with the military dictatorship (1964–1985). Political themes and struggles for personal and collective freedoms were evident in all types of cultural production of the period despite the repression and censorship under the generals. The government’s control of print production brought forth the so-called marginal poets, who published and distributed their work independently; several of them were canonized in Heloísa Buarque de Hollanda’s 1975 anthology, *26 poetas hoje* (26 Poets Today). Brazilian literature also benefitted from the emergence of a new generation of female writers, including Sônia Coutinho and Patrícia Melo, who joined their still-productive predecessors featured in *DLB 307*. Finally, the mid-1970s to early 1980s also witnessed the coalescence of local groups of Afro-Brazilian authors, notably Quilombhoje in São Paulo.

Although Brazil’s cultural scene in the late 1970s and the 1980s was energized by the return of democracy and the expiration of draconian censorship, Brazilian literature was mostly contained within the nation’s borders,

as the Portuguese language has always been an obstacle for the dissemination of Brazilian literature, even though it is the sixth most widely spoken language in the world. In the 1990s, however, the creation of the Mercado Comum do Sul (Southern Common Market), also called Mercosul in Portuguese, fostered regional economic integration that resulted in cultural exchange as well. On the South American continent, more books began being translated from Portuguese to Spanish and vice versa and a sense of shared cultural identity increased, aided by the advent of new technology and mass production and distribution. Weekly news magazines such as *Veja* and *Isto É* published best-seller lists and the readership broadened.

Trends begun during the years of the dictatorship continued and grew. Women were voted into the Academia Brasileira de Letras (Brazilian Academy of Letters), and Nélida Piñón became the Academy’s first female president in 1996. Interest in literary works about Afro-Brazilian cultural, social, and political themes grew, and Afro-Brazilian writers started making their way into the mainstream, notably with novels and short stories by Conceição Evaristo, Marilene Felinto, and Esmeralda Ribeiro. The lives of people living on the margins of society were the focus for authors such as Rubem Fonseca, João Antônio, and José Louzeiro.

“What’s past is prologue”—the authors treated in *DLB 384: Twenty-First-Century Brazilian Writers* grow out of and respond to the twentieth century, even as they adapt to a new age. The vast majority of *DLB 384* authors were well established writers before the last year of the twentieth century, and even the youngest authors included this volume—Clara Averbuck and Daniel Galera, both born in 1979—came of age in the 1990s. At the other end of the age spectrum for the volume, the screenwriter and filmmaker Nelson Pereira dos Santos (1928–2018) brought a wealth of experience to his last projects. The poet Augusto de Campos, born in 1931, changed with the times and continues to be productive well into his eighties. Yet, whether the artist was young or old at the century’s turn, each of the subjects in *DLB 384* has played a role in creating the literary culture of the twenty-first century. In the introduction to her *Novas leituras da ficção brasileira no século XXI* (2011, New Readings of Brazilian Fiction in the 21st Century), Helena Bonito Pereira emphasizes the heterogeneity of Brazilian literature, making a point that applies to the contents of *DLB 384*: “Um olhar de relance aos escritores revela de imediato a diversidade, em termos de faixa etária, ano de estreia, volume ou regularidade de suas publicações, importância ou reconhecimento acadêmico e crítico” (A glance at the writers immediately reveals the diversity, in terms of age, debut year, volume or regularity of publications, importance or academic or critic recognition).

The problems and issues of the twentieth century have carried over into the twenty-first century while new opportunities, problems, and issues—many of them re-

lated to technological advancements—have arisen. There has been a hybrid quality in literature since the 1960s, and readers of these entries will find features associated with premodernism, modernism, and postmodernism in various authors' work. Techniques from cinema, intertextuality, themes such as urbanization and technology are present. Image and electronic media inform not only themes but technique; increasingly, these are mediums of literature. In earlier *DLB* volumes dedicated to Brazilian and Latin American authors, the references quoted were books and articles; in this volume, many references are online: articles, pdfs of items in print, blogs, and other reference sources; and novelists and poets are more frequently incorporating new technologies in their work. P. J. Pereira in his *Deuses de dois mundos* (2014–2015, *Gods of Both Worlds*) trilogy uses e-mails and blogs as structuring devices.

One of the most interesting features of Brazilian literature in the new century is the continuing popularity of an old and distinctive literary form, the *crônica*, which, like short stories, may appeal to a public that has little time to read and is in a hurry to consume words. The contemporary *crônica* has its origin in the nineteenth-century French feuilleton, or serials (*folhetim* in Portuguese) published in newspapers and magazines. Because of the link between literary production and periodical publication in Brazil, the folhetim and *crônica* were important outlets for authors. Brazil's best authors have, since the nineteenth century, published *crônicas*, elevating their quality and turning these short works into a characteristically Brazilian genre. *Crônica* does not have an easy translation into English, as it overlaps with several genres that appear in periodicals: commentary on daily life, literary column, human interest story, "about town" story, or vignette. Literary scholar Massaud Moisés suggests that the *crônica* occupies a literary space between the lyric and the short story. While the *crônica* is often characterized as light and ephemeral, it need not be. It is typically narrative insofar as it is inspired by and relays a passing fact or event, but it is also subjective and thus shows qualities and functions of the essay—though it does not exhibit the persuasive rhetoric of the essay. In the twenty-first century, the *crônica* has a large readership in both periodicals and in anthologized collections. Moreover, many contemporary Brazilian writers are also journalists by training or trade and so are naturally drawn to the genre. Glossed as "chronicle" on its first appearance in the entries of *DLB* 384, the word *crônica* is one of many instances when Portuguese and English fail to align.

In the twenty-first century, Brazilian literature through translation has attracted an international audience beyond the Portuguese- and Spanish-speaking worlds. There are international best-selling authors such as Jorge Amado, who portrayed the exotic Afro-Brazilian religious influences in his home of Bahia, or Paulo Coelho, who continues to entrance readers with his stories of magic and the supernatural world. Beyond popular authors, who are derided

by some academics, critically revered authors such as Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis and Clarice Lispector have also been translated and joined the international canon. Each year more late-twentieth- and twenty-first-century authors, including Milton Hatoum and Adriana Lisboa, are having versions of their works published around the world. Even Brazilian children's literature has become well known outside of the country, thanks to authors such as Lygia Bojunga, Marina Colasanti, Ana Maria Machado, and Ruth Rocha, with translations into several languages.

Alfredo Bosi's *História concisa da literatura brasileira* (2014, *Concise History of Brazilian Literature*) has been most often used as an orientation to the studies of Brazilian literature; first published in 1970 it has appeared in more than forty editions. With the revisions in later editions, it covers contemporary literature until about 1980. There is not another similar book that complements or updates Bosi's text, although there are several recent studies that are focused on the new century, including Leyla Perrone-Moisés's *Mutações da literatura no século XXI* (2016, *Changes in Literature in the 21st Century*), which has more theoretical content and pedagogical concerns, and Beatriz Resende's *Contemporâneos: Expressões da literatura brasileira no século XXI* (2008, *Contemporaries: Brazilian Literary Expressions in the 21st Century*). Resende divides contemporary Brazilian literature into two approaches, the first being "presentificação radical" (radical presentification), in which she contends that there is an obsessive preoccupation with the present moment, in contrast with older works that valued history and past. The second approach she calls the "trágico radical" (radical tragic), about violence, isolation, and frustration in the current urban, marginal, and peripheral society. Luiz Ruffato's *Eles eram muitos cavalos* (2001, *They Were Many Horses*) represent this second approach with his treatment of suicide committed without any reason.

In his review of *Narrativas contemporâneas* (2012, *Contemporary Narratives*), edited by Gínia Maria Gomes, Bernardo Buarque de Hollanda (*UOL Educação*, 25 February 2014) pointed out the following main characteristics of the contemporary short story, which can also be applied to novels: (1) Usage of retrospective and prospective memory, (2) Self-analysis, (3) Intertextuality, (4) Telegraphic language, (5) Linguistic hybridism, (6) Labyrinthine images of the daily urban life, (7) Narrative polyphony, (8) Historiographic metafiction, (9) Eloquence of silence, (10) Precariousness of the modern individual, and (11) Fragmentation of the daily experience. In spite of such innovative features, chronology and linearity endure as the main structural element of the contemporary narratives, though Ruffato suggests that a new model is necessary to represent society justly, arguing against the way bourgeois society has been portrayed in previous centuries. In his book of *crônicas* *O romance morreu* (2007, *The Novel Is Dead*), Rubem Fonseca asserts that, actually, novels are not dying but that their readers are.

Fonseca's provocation leads us to reflect about what kind of literature is in demand in the twenty-first century, though such speculation is necessarily more anecdotal than statistical. Still, it seems clear that contemporary readers are interested in subjects related to everyday reality such as biographies, historic documentaries, diaries, letters, memoirs, and, obviously, self-help books. Facebook has established a new autobiographic space, serving as the "exteriorization of memory," creating a personal bond between writers and readers. Social media is perhaps one reason why the border between fiction and nonfiction has become very thin in the twenty-first century and why many authors in *DLB 384*, including Juva Batella, Silviano Santiago, and Carlos Trigueiro, have become interested in autofiction.

Language often seems less elaborate in literary writing in recent years, as contemporary authors employ language that readers are exposed to online in social media, blogs, and podcasts as well as in traditional media of television, cinema, and newspapers. In *Ficção brasileira contemporânea* (2011, Contemporary Brazilian Fiction) Karl Erik Schøllhammer mentions that a kind of linguistic realism is in vogue: "O uso das formas breves, a adaptação de uma linguagem curta e fragmentária e o namoro com a *crônica* são algumas expressões da urgência de falar sobre e com o 'real'" (The use of brief forms, the adaptation of a short and fragmentary language, and the love affair with the *crônica* are some expressions of the urgency of speaking about and with the 'real').

Interspersed in many twenty-first-century narratives are common themes: violence, a focus on the margins of society and urban space, the chaos of daily life, and the use of the fantastic. As Ana Paula Franco Nobile Brandileone and Vanderléia Silva Oliveira point out in their essay "A narrativa brasileira no século XXI: Ferréz e a escrita do testemunho" (2014, The Brazilian Narrative in the 21st Century: Ferréz and the Writing of Testimony), violence appears in many forms—alienation, prejudice, discrimination, intolerance, exclusion, segregation, physical assault, murder, rape and sexual assault, verbal assault, and moral aggressions—and is often unreported and not prosecuted. Writers from society's margins give voice to the socially excluded who live on the periphery of the great cities or in prisons. Increasingly, these narratives portray the individual from within, from what his/her feelings and sufferings are. The urban space, often shown as offering glamorous scenery, reveals sociocultural/socioeconomic diversity and recurrent conflicts.

The diversity of twenty-first-century Brazilian literature was on display at the 2013 Frankfurt Book Fair. The focus was Brazil, and the slogan was "Ein Land voller Stimmen" (A Country Full of Voices), seeking to show the diversity but at the same time the universality of Brazilian literature. Luiz Ruffato gave the opening address at the fair, in which he called attention to the foreign perception of Brazilian culture and literature. On one hand,

Brazil is the exotic, playful country of carnival, capoeira, and soccer; on the other hand, it is a place teeming with urban violence and disrespect for nature and human rights. The first themes are the stuff of Chico Buarque's early lyrics, whereas the second belongs to books by such writers as Paulo Lins, whose novel *Cidade de Deus* (1997; translated as *City of God*, 2006) was transformed into the film of the same name and revealed the brutal underside of Rio de Janeiro.

Twenty-first-century Brazilian literature is no longer so much about a search for (univocal) national identity; it is more concerned with the recognition of the variety of its literary production. The twenty-first century to date is a period in which "isms" are in decline in spite of (or even because of) the influence of postmodernism. There has been a renewal in the study of Brazilian literature, its history, and critical thought, due to the increase of graduates in humanities with degrees in literature, who have engaged in the analyses of individual writers and texts—all of which should enhance awareness of literary production. Still Brazilian literature faces a language barrier and, consequently, obstacles to its dissemination.

Nevertheless, with the growth of globalization, there has been a process of internationalization of Brazilian literature; the frontiers have been expanded from South America to Europe and North America. In the United Kingdom alone, the anthology *The Babel Guide to Brazilian Fiction in English Translation* was published in 2001; *Granta: The Magazine of New Writing* published a special issue titled *The Best Young Brazilian Novelists* in 2012, and the FlipSide literary festival was founded in 2013 to bring together Brazilian and British writers. (The name is a take-off on the yearly Festa Literária Internacional de Paraty, FLIP—the international literary festival that takes place in Paraty, in the state of Rio de Janeiro.) In 2013 FlipSide published *Other Carnivals: New Stories from Brazil*, an attempt to widen the direction of Brazilian literature in the new millennium. In "Border-Crossing in Contemporary Brazilian Culture: Global Perspectives from the Twenty-First Century Literary Scene" (2016), Cimara Valim de Melo makes an interesting comparative study of the above-mentioned volumes. In her words, "globalization has widely affected Brazilian culture and the arts, not only creating standards to reach the global market, but also provoking an opposite dynamic. It has brought to light issues regarding the questioning of the country's past and present, besides individual and collective identity—recurrently raising transnational and universal issues, in a natural movement from local to global and/or from global to local." And as pointed out in *Granta*, with globalization, Brazilians now are "sons and daughters of a nation that is more prosperous and open, they are citizens of the world, as well as Brazilians."

The current literature of Brazil operates on the borders between times and spaces, urban and rural contradictions, past and present, individual and collective

life—while still often focusing on regions within the nation and trying to expand frontiers while embracing universal themes. This dynamism can lead to a wide range of paths. When making the initial selection of names for *DLB 384: Twenty-First-Century Brazilian Writers*, we came up with a list of more than enough worthy writers to fill three such volumes. The selection, then, of a limited number of authors to represent Brazilian literature in the twenty-first century is an impossibly difficult task. Many important writers are left out, and there is no claim to be made that the forty-six authors included in *DLB 384* are the most significant authors who have published works so far in the twenty-first century. We hope only to open a window that will allow the reader to begin to appreciate the complexity of the contemporary literary scene.

We are pleased to include authors who are in formative stages or midcareer and whose production is centered in the new century. We also opted for some disciplinary breadth by including authors such as Evanildo Bechara, Brazil's best-known writer on Portuguese language and linguistics, and Zuenir Ventura, a premier journalist. Both belong to the Brazilian Academy of Letters, which nowadays includes many writers who are not literary authors. We include Chico Buarque, an author better known as a singer-songwriter but whose novels have attracted critical attention. We chose to include director and screenwriter Nelson Pereira dos Santos because of the increasingly fluid boundaries between verbal and visual art, explored in the last century by the concrete poets. Whereas many late-twentieth-century authors wrote for television only to supplement their incomes, several twenty-first-century authors, some profiled in this volume, have found writing for the small screen and in new media a favorite outlet for their creative skills. We have included authors from a variety of states and regions, some of whom incorporate regional particularities into their work while also interrogating "regionalism." Some of these authors are important insofar as they have fostered literary developments in their localities by supporting institutions, promoting events, and publishing literary magazines and blogs. Finally, a diverse range of

ethnic origins, religious/spiritual backgrounds, and generations are represented, and, again, many of these writers are informed by and problematize these variables of "identity."

Where will the authors of this volume be in twenty years? Will they be part of the canon? What will a "canon" be in twenty years? Will these writers be famous or forgotten and resting in the background? Whatever the outcomes may be, we believe that examining the lives and careers of these writers at the cultural juncture will be illuminating.

—Monica Rector and Robert N. Anderson

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Paulo Lins

(11 June 1958 –)

Giulia Riccò
Duke University

BOOKS: *Sobre o sol* (Rio de Janeiro: Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, 1986);

Cidade de Deus (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1997); translated by Alison Entrekin as *City of God* (New York: Black Cat, 2006);

Desde que o samba é samba (São Paulo: Planeta, 2012);

Era uma vez . . . Eu!, by Lins, Maurício Carneiro, Beo da Silva, and Eduardo Lima (São Paulo: Planeta do Brasil, 2014).

PRODUCED SCRIPTS: *Orfeu*, by João Emanuel Carneiro, Carlos Diegues, Lins, and others, motion picture, Cine-Source / Globo Filmes / Rio Vermelho Filmes, 1999;

Minha Alma, by Lins and Kátia Lund, music video, 2000;

“O cunhado do cara” and “Correio,” by Lins and Lund, television, *Cidade dos Homens*, TV Globo, 2002;

Quase dois irmãos, by Lins and Lúcia Murat, motion picture, Taiga / Ceneca / TS Productions, 2004;

Maré, Nossa História de Amo, by Lins and Murat, motion picture, Limite / Gloria Films / Lavorágine Films, 2007;

Suburbia, by Lins and Luiz Fernando Carvalho, television, TV Globo, 2012.

Paulo Lins became known internationally when his novel *Cidade de Deus* (1997; translated as *City of God*, 2006) inspired the award-winning film adaptation of the same title in 2002. But Lins’s searing achievement, his idiomatic portrayal of the brutality of the crime-ridden streets of the poor neighborhoods of Rio de Janeiro, is beyond replication in any other medium or language, as Alex Bellos recognized in his review of the English translation of the novel for *The Guardian* (15 July 2006): “The reason the English version has taken so long to appear is that the book was previously regarded as untranslatable. The thick Rio slang—musical, dirty, funny and full of

grammatical errors—has no Anglo-Saxon equivalent. Alison Entrekin has made a brilliant and worthwhile attempt at conveying the meaning and the context of the dialogue, but her part-cockney, part-hip-hop gangsterspeak is, inevitably, a black-and-white impression of Lins’s high-definition colour. The many references to domestic popular culture and geography will also be lost on anyone who doesn’t have a detailed knowledge of Brazil.” More than a powerful statement about society—though it is that as well—*Cidade de Deus* is a Brazilian work of art.

Paulo Cesar de Souza Lins was born on 11 June 1958 in the downtown neighborhood of Estácio de Sá in Rio de Janeiro. Estácio is a historically Afro-Brazilian enclave known for helping to usher samba music into mainstream Brazilian society. Lins’s father was originally from Bahia, a state in northeastern Brazil, and worked as a house painter; his mother was a domestic helper. Thanks to one of his father’s clients, they moved into the newly designed public housing project *Cidade de Deus* (City of God) when Lins was seven years old.

Cidade de Deus and other housing projects such as *Cidade Alta* (Upper City) and *Vila Kennedy* (Kennedy Village) that arose in the 1960s were designed for the urban poor. Harsh rainfalls and dangerous mudslides had destroyed the earlier favelas (shantytowns), and their inhabitants found themselves without adequate housing. In order to provide housing for hundreds of displaced citizens, the government sought the help of the Alliance for Progress, an organization founded by U.S. President John F. Kennedy in the 1960s to promote social and economic development in Latin America. Although *Cidade de Deus* and the other *conjuntos habitacionais* (housing estates) were originally intended to ameliorate the living conditions of the poor, they made them worse in many respects. By constructing housing developments in isolated territories on the outskirts of the city, officials exacerbated the problem of economic and racial segregation, creating conditions that not only allowed these

communities to become subject to higher rates of criminal activity but also, ironically, to become largely ungovernable by the powers of the state.

In an interview with historian Heloísa Buarque de Hollanda, Lins expressed his belief that it was because of this shift in the urban geography and regulation that drug gangs such as Comando Vermelho (Red Commando) flourished:

Nas favelas originais, tinha briga de capoeira, tinha briga de navalha, morria muito gente, mas não chegava em Copacabana. . . . E quando você sai da favela e vai para o conjunto, você tem que ter documentação pra ter casa, você vira cidadão. Se não pagar impostos, você vai perder a casa, e por aí vai. Foi aí também que surgiu o Comando Vermelho, a Falange Vermelha.

(In the original favelas, there were capoeira fights, knife fights, many people died, but it did not reach Copacabana. . . . And when you leave the favela and go to the projects, [because] you must have documents to obtain a house there, you become a citizen. If you do not pay taxes, you will lose your house, and there the story goes. It is also there that Red Command, the Red Phalanx, emerged.)

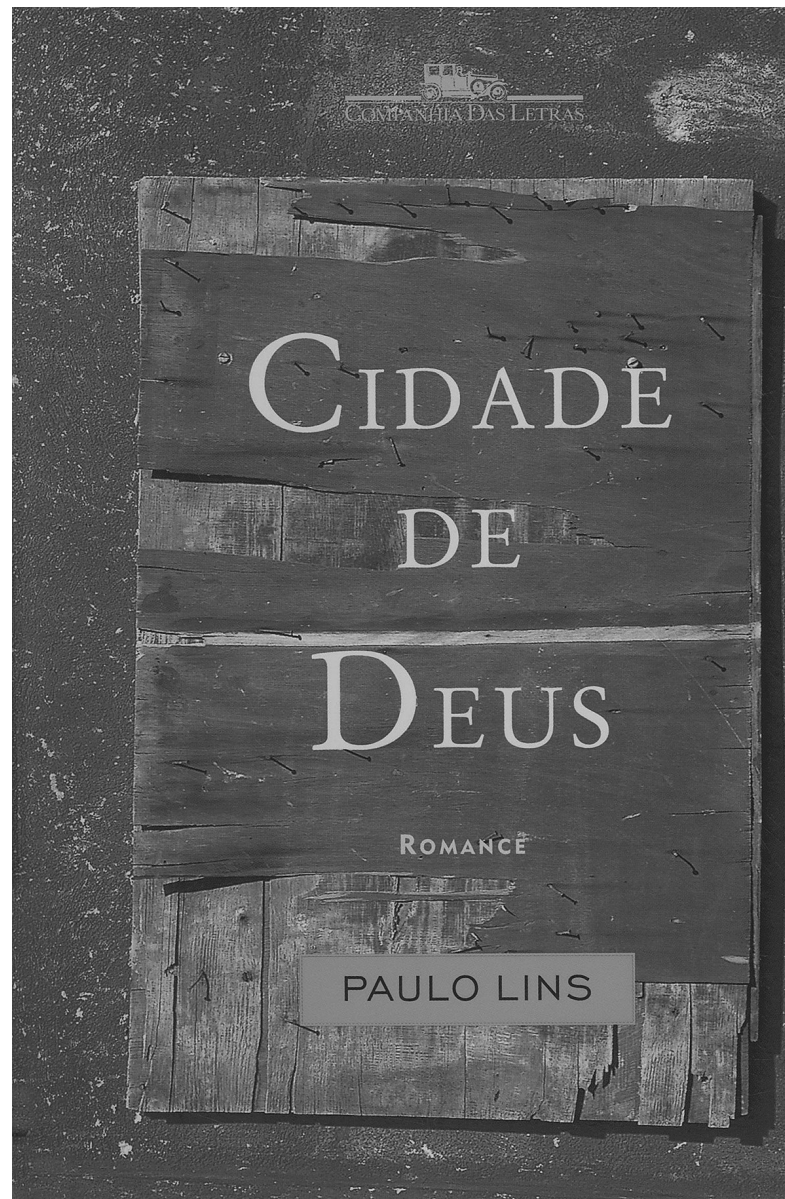
Between his early childhood in Estácio and his early adulthood in Cidade de Deus, Lins had been deeply traumatized by the violent events he had witnessed firsthand. In an interview with Ana Paula Alves Ribeiro and Francisco César Manhães Monteiro, he confessed: “I learned at a very young age to live with violence. For example, learning to hit, to quarrel. You know? . . . I had always lived in violence.” In the midst of this violence, however, Lins was able to find beauty in the lyrics and the melodies of samba songs. He was a passionate listener to Gilberto Gil, Caetano Veloso, and the emerging Música Popular Brasileira (Popular Brazilian Music, MPB). While he was growing up, the only contact he had with art was through music. Lins became a well-known *sambista* (samba player), and he wrote the lyrics to several samba songs that helped neighborhood organizations from Cidade de Deus to win the world-famous Carnival parades of Rio de Janeiro. Being a *sambista* also granted him a modicum of safety, for he gained the respect of the thugs and criminals that dominated the streets of the favela.

After serving in the Brazilian navy, Lins enrolled in the literature program of the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, UFRJ). He was one of the first inhabitants of Cidade de Deus to go to university. His love for music and samba translated into a predisposition and a tal-

ent for poetry. He quickly became acquainted with the major trends in the world of contemporary Brazilian poetry, which, at the time, was going through turmoil because of the feud between the *concretistas* (concretists) and the *marginais* (marginals). The former dominated the media and literary circles, leaving little public space to other poetic styles. Lins actively participated in this debate. Early in his academic career, he joined the Cooperativa de Poetas (Poets’ Cooperative), and in 1986 he published a book of poetry titled *Sobre o sol* (Above the Sun), largely inspired by concrete poetry. Lins graduated from UFRJ in 1986, with a degree in Portuguese language and literatures.

While this academic experience within poetry circles was an important one for Lins, it was chiefly his work as a research assistant for anthropology professor Alba Zaluar, based at the Universidade Estadual de Campinas (State University of Campinas), also known as Unicamp, that set him on a path toward international fame. Professor Zaluar was conducting anthropological research on the criminality of Cidade de Deus, and she needed research assistants that were actually living in the favela. Lins’s friend Lourdinha (Maria Lourdes da Silva) wanted to take part in the project and convinced Lins to accompany her into the favela, as he explained to Ribeiro and Monteiro: “A Lourdinha queria participar e eu namorava a Lourdinha. E, como era difícil ela ir para lá entrevistar bandido e eu conhecia tudo quanto era bandido . . . comecei a acompanhar a Lourdinha e acabou que . . . ficou só eu e ela durante dez anos com a Alba” (Lourdinha wanted to participate and I was dating her. And, it was hard for her to go there [City of God] and interview thug[s] and I knew all of these thugs . . . I began to accompany Lourdinha and it ended up that . . . only Lourdinha and I were left during the ten years with Alba).

A portion of Lins’s duties as a research assistant was to create, based on the interviews he did in Cidade de Deus, an ethnography that Professor Zaluar could use in her research. Realizing that Lins had no experience with this writing form, she asked him to write something more autobiographical instead. Zaluar then brought Lins’s work to the celebrated literary critic Roberto Schwarz. Lins recounted this process to Buarque de Hollanda: “Roberto lê, liga pra mim, e me chama a São Paulo porque queria conversar comigo. E sentou e falou assim: ‘O seu poema está muito legal, mas você deve escrever um romance’” (Roberto reads it, calls me and invites me to São Paulo because he wants to talk to me. He sat down and told me: “Your poem is really good, but you have to write a novel”). Schwarz encouraged Lins to use his own experience as



Cover for the 1997 novel that brought Lins international acclaim (University of North Carolina Libraries)

well as the interviews he conducted for Zaluar to write what became the internationally acclaimed novel *Cidade de Deus*. Schwarz knew that Lins was going to write a novel that was innovative in both form and content, and for Schwarz the subject of the novel, the urban poor, was one that desperately needed to be addressed in Brazilian literature. He believed Lins had the capacity to deliver a novel that would vividly convey the brutal violence of the favela to the Brazilian middle-class.

Lins, who until then had only written poetry, found himself attempting the daunting task of trans-

posing the reality of the favela into the medium most cherished by the bourgeoisie, the novel. *Cidade de Deus* took years to come to light, for it developed alongside the project with Zaluar, which itself lasted ten years and depended on precarious funding. In the interview with Buarque de Hollanda, Lins revealed his methodology and how he trained himself to become a novelist:

Na realidade eu reescrevia os romances que admirava. Eu pegava os capítulos e ia fazendo mutações no texto. . . . Fiz isso com muitos romances. No

Crime e Castigo, o Dostoiewski começa o romance planejando e contando como ele vai matar a velha proprietária avarenta da casa onde morava o personagem central. Eu fui pegando todos só os trechos em que ele bolava esse assassinato, dividi em vários e coloquei no computador. E botei isso em “Cidade de Deus” no episódio do sujeito que mata por vingança o filho, porque ele era preto e o filho nasceu branco. Essa parte é igual a do ‘Raskonicov.’

(In reality, I would rewrite the novels that I admired. I would take the chapters and would do mutations in the text. . . . I did this with many novels. In *Crime and Punishment*, Dostoyevsky starts the novel by plotting and telling us how he is going to kill the central character’s old skinflint landlady. I collected all the excerpts in which he was working out this plan, I divided them and put them in the computer. And I slipped them into *City of God* in the episode of the character that kills the son out of revenge because he was black and the son was born white. This part is the same as that of “Raskolnikov.”)

When asked what the major influences for writing *Cidade de Deus* were, Lins identified three important masterpieces of Brazilian literature: José Lins do Rego’s *Fogo morto* (1943, *Dead Fire*), Graciliano Ramos’s *São Bernardo* (1934, *Saint Bernard*), and João Guimarães Rosa’s *Grande Sertão: Veredas* (1956; translated as *The Devil to Pay in the Backlands*, 1963). Lins explained that Rego’s novel resonated with what he was trying to accomplish with *Cidade de Deus*, despite its rural setting, because it was a tragedy. *Fogo morto*, he told Ribeiro and Monteiro, depicts “uma tragédia, um Brasil doente, um Brasil que se acaba, que tudo mundo fica louco, todo mundo morre” (a tragedy, a sick Brazil, a Brazil that is ending, where everybody goes crazy, where everybody dies). Lins found a similar sense of sorrow in Ramos’s work. And he deeply admired Rosa’s capacity to play with the possibilities of language and claimed that Rosa had the largest influence on his efforts to craft the poetic language of *Cidade de Deus*.

The language of *Cidade de Deus* reflects the colloquial lingo spoken in the favela. The narrator, who recounts three different stories, set respectively, in the 1960s, early 1970s, and late 1970s, speaks in the third person and guides the readers through the horrific crimes taking place in the streets of *Cidade de Deus*. These stories offer a detailed and overpowering analysis of what life looked like in the city’s housing projects. Lins has acknowledged the autobiographical nature of the novel, stating that he witnessed personally many of the events mentioned in the book. When it was published in 1997 by Compan-

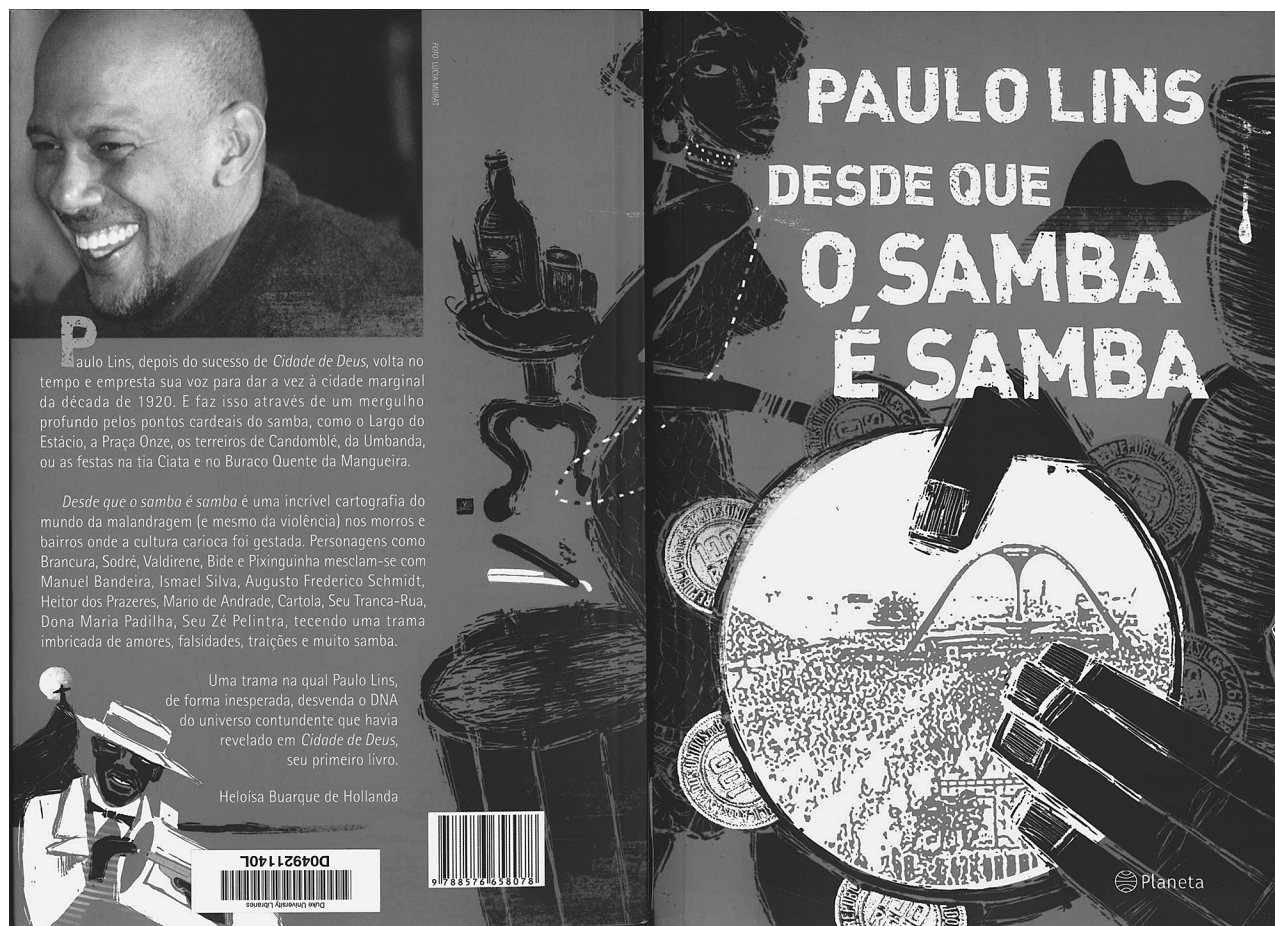
hia das Letras, one of the major publishing houses in Brazil, the novel directed the attention of the media and the public to the problem of police brutality (many scenes in the novel depict the dispassionate use of violence by law enforcement agents) and the legacies of slavery (the three hundred characters that populate the book are, like the majority of Brazilian citizens, of African descent).

An early version of the manuscript of *Cidade de Deus* came into the hands of documentarist João Moreira Salles, who was working for Lins’s publisher. Salles and director Kátia Lund visited Lins at his home to explain that they wanted to make a film out of his book. The movie of *Cidade de Deus*, directed by Lund and Fernando Meirelles, which toured international film festivals in 2002 before being released in Brazil that same year, became an instant success, and in 2004 it was nominated for Academy Awards in multiple categories, including cinematography, film editing, directing, and writing (adapted screenplay). Lins did not contribute to the adaptation of the screenplay, which is principally the work of Brazilian screenwriter Bráulio Mantovani, because, as he told interviewer Larry Rohter, he could not bring himself to cut scenes out of his novel.

Lins did, however, turn to screenwriting. He wrote the script for Lund’s music video for the song *Minha alma* (2000, *My Soul*) by the reggae/rock band O Rappa. The video focuses on the murder of a young man in the favela of *Cidade de Deus*, and the whole affair is filtered through the perspective of a child, who, the viewer learns, is the victim’s younger brother. Also in collaboration with Lund, Lins in 2002 wrote and directed two episodes of the TV Globo series *Cidade dos Homens* (*City of Men*), loosely inspired by the novel *Cidade de Deus*.

Following the success of these small-screen projects, people in the film industry began to contact Lins to commission screenplays. Lins welcomed the opportunities. He told Ribeiro and Monteiro that writing for cinema and television “é muito mais fácil de fazer e você ganha muito mais dinheiro” (is much easier and you make much more money).

In 2004 Lins had his debut as a feature film screenwriter with *Quase dois irmãos* (*Almost Brothers*), directed and cowritten by Lúcia Marat. This film tells the story of an unlikely friendship between two men—one black, one white—over the course of several decades: Jorge and Miguel, childhood friends whose fathers shared a mutual love for samba in the 1950s, reconnect in the 1970s when they find themselves housed in the same prison of Ilha Grande, one for bank robbery and the other for political subversion. After a falling out in prison, they meet one last time in present-day Rio de



Front and back covers for Lins's second novel (Duke University Libraries)

Janeiro, where one has become a drug kingpin and the other a congressman. For his work on the film, Lins was given the award for best screenplay in 2005 by the Associação Paulista de Críticos de Arte (São Paulo Art Critics' Association).

Lins published his second novel, *Desde que o samba é samba* (Since Samba Is Samba), with Planeta Press in 2012, fifteen years after *Cidade de Deus*. Lins completed this well-researched work of historical fiction about the ways samba allowed Afro-Brazilians to assimilate into Brazilian society with the support of a Guggenheim scholarship and a Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (German Academic Exchange Service, DAAD) award. Lins, in an interview with Marco Sanchez, stated that with *Desde que o samba é samba*, he wanted to “escrever sobre como o negro se inseriu na sociedade brasileira. . . . Essa inserção se deu através da cultura, mais especificamente do samba e da umbanda. No entanto a cultura negra só ganhou força quando começou a ser organizada em um grande centro urbano, no caso o

Rio de Janeiro” (write about how black[s] integrated themselves in Brazilian society. . . . This integration is done through culture, more specifically through samba and Umbanda. Meanwhile, black culture only gained strength when it began being organized in a large urban center, as in the case of Rio de Janeiro).

Desde que o samba é samba is a masterful re-creation of the neighborhood Estácio at the beginning of the twentieth century. Lins often makes references to lyrics and real-life figures in the history of samba. For example, Lins includes Ismael Silva, one of the founders of samba, and he deliberately portrays his homosexuality, an aspect of his life normally overlooked. By portraying the father of samba as homosexual, Lins aimed to encourage Brazilian society to overcome its prejudices about homosexuality.

With *Desde que o samba é samba*, Lins returned to his sambista roots. While he might be a writer, he explained to one interviewer, he really is a “sambista de coração” (sambista at heart). But Lins's book is also about giving credit where credit is due. Samba

is internationally acknowledged as a Brazilian invention, but its African origins are often ignored. With this book Lins sought once again to bring the realities of poor, urban black people to the attention of the public and the media. And he succeeded again in doing so at an international level: in 2013 he presented the book before a global audience at the International Book Fair in Frankfurt, Germany, where Brazil was the guest of honor that year. He was, however, one of the few black writers selected to participate, and he lamented to Sanchez that

os negros não estão em posições de destaque, mas em classes sociais inferiores. Essa lista é o resultado disso. A maioria dos escritores no Brasil são brancos, como a maioria dos médicos, empresários e políticos. Existem grande escritores negros no Brasil, mas a seleção foi um reflexo do nosso mercado literário.

(blacks do not hold any prominent positions in [Brazilian] society, but [they populate] the inferior social classes. This list [of writers] is the result of that. The majority of writers in Brazil are white, just like the majority of doctors, entrepreneurs, and politicians. Great black writers do exist in Brazil, but the selection was a reflection of our literary market.)

Lins's speech closed the International Book Fair, and he joined Luiz Ruffato and other Brazilian authors in using the forum as an opportunity to highlight the pervasive and structural violence of Brazilian society.

Lins's ability to adapt to different literary forms and his commitment to politically conscious cultural production is on display again in his most recent work, a graphic novel titled *Era uma vez . . . Eu!* (2014, *Once upon a Time . . . Me!*), which he wrote in collaboration with Maurício Carneiro, Beo da Silva, and Eduardo Lima. *Era uma vez . . . Eu!* seeks to raise awareness about environmental issues and climate

change by centering the story on a diminutive green creature called Trash. With this and his other work—whether it is poetry, novels, or screenplays—Paulo Lins refuses to relinquish his commitment to truth-telling and insists on showing how culture opens the possibility for both for individual social mobility and collective social transformation.

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