

Citizens of nowhere: undocumented migrants in Regina Rheda's narratives

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Introduction¹

The United States and England. The end of the 1990s and the early 2000s. A middle-class filmmaker and someone who appears to have humble origins. A tourist looking to be granted Italian citizenship through her heritage and a man overstaying his visa. Rita Settemiglia and João. Both suffer the consequences of a world whose borders are becoming progressively more open to commodities and capital, but not quite as open to people. These two facets of the same reality—migration—experienced by Brazilians at the turn of the twentieth-century are represented in the work of Brazilian writer Regina Rheda: the novella *Pau-de-arara classe turística* [First World Third Class] from 1996, and the short story “O santuário” [The Sanctuary], which was first published in the volume *Pátria estranha* [Foreign Homeland] in 2002. Both narratives appear in the 2005 collection *First World Third Class and Other Tales of the Global Mix*, which also contains other stories by Rheda, translated by literary critic Charles Perrone. As the title of the English translation suggests, Rheda's work is preoccupied with the global movement of people as part of a global system of transnational relations. In this article, I propose a reading of *First World Third Class* and “The Sanctuary” as narratives of the experiences of Brazilian migrants amidst shifting North-South economic relations that complicate the notion of citizenship. In Rheda's stories in question, João's and Rita's journeys demonstrate how access to citizens' privileges in this context is dependent on, but not resolved by, the fulfillment of legal requirements established within national borders. As victims of economic displacement, they are *de facto* citizens of nowhere, like many of their counterparts in the countries to which they migrate.

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Brazilian migration at the turn of the twenty-first century

In the context in which Rheda's narratives under analysis take place, the turn of the twenty-first century, Brazil experienced the socioeconomic cost of the neoliberalization of its economy, which intensified after the election of Fernando Collor de Melo in 1990, and continued during the subsequent tenure of Fernando Henrique Cardoso. Neoliberalism advanced the transformation of citizen rights into commodities, as the increasing privatization of services once primarily provided by the state further limited access to basic citizen rights such as healthcare and education (LEHNEN, 2013, p. 9). Meanwhile, at a global level, financial crises generated high rates of unemployment and underemployment, not only complicating access to these citizen rights as commodities, but also creating new labor circuits in which the South supplies cheap labor to the North within and across national borders (SASSEN, 2011, p. 56). The trajectories of Rheda's characters capture the impact of these shifts on Brazilian society at the turn of the twenty-first century, specifically with respect to how they affected economic migration. If in their home country Rheda's characters had citizenship, that is, they were officially recognized as members of the nation, with the duties and privileges that this recognition entails, their actual access to these privileges was progressively more dependent on their consumer power. For the protagonist of "The Sanctuary," overstaying his visa in the U.S. meant an opportunity "to get ahead in life," thus implying that such an opportunity was not available for him in his home country. For the protagonist of *First World Third Class*, acquiring Italian citizenship was a chance to escape a reality that was shrinking the middle class to which she belonged. Like many during the time, João and Rita flee to other territories once that seems to be their only option.

Nevertheless, and like many others, living and/or working undocumented in foreign lands meant being part of a labor system that further exploited them, an exploitation facilitated by their fragile status as noncitizens. While João works at a sanctuary for rescued animals in exchange for room and board, Rita works as a nanny in similar conditions. In this way, if at home their citizenship granted them very little in terms of access to citizen rights due to their financial situation, their undocumented status abroad compounds the economic precariousness that forced them to leave their homeland to begin with and leaves them even further away from attaining their rights as citizens of anywhere. Furthermore, Rheda's fictional account of the Brazilian immigrant experience in the global North points to the possibilities and limitations of the formation of transnational identities in their path towards having access to citizen rights abroad.

Leaving the Global South

First World Third Class gives the reader a glimpse of the economic crisis that pushed Brazilians out of the country in the 1990s. The novella opens with a remark that sets the socioeconomic and political background of the story: “In the late twentieth century, Brazil experienced a phenomenon quite unprecedented in its five-hundred-year history. Many young middle-class Brazilians decided to swap their university diplomas for mops, their designer clothes for aprons, their cars for kitchen sinks, their prosperity for tips and Brazil for the first world” (Rheda, 2005a, e-book). There was, the narrator notes, hope that the jobs they would take abroad, despite being considered low-paying in their host country, would still pay above what they made in Brazil.

Unprecedented, indeed, was this emigration, as scholar Maxine Margolis notes in her work about Brazilian émigrés in different parts of the world. According to data gathered by Margolis, in the early 1990s, more than 80% of Brazilian immigrants in Italy had at least a high school diploma, while 12% of this population had college degrees. During the same period, 75% of Brazilians arriving in England had some college-level education and 8% were university graduates (MARGOLIS, 2008, p. 45).

Italy and England are the two countries where Rheda's protagonist, Rita, attempts to start over. Fitting the profile of the majority of Brazilian émigrés in the 1990s, she is a 30-year-old unemployed filmmaker with a college degree from the University of São Paulo, whose hopes of finding a job are dwindling. However, despite having a college degree and still holding some kind of middle-class status, not much of Rita's financial life resemble a middle-class lifestyle at the moment we are introduced to her. The book opens with her standing in line in front of a government office in hopes to apply for welfare benefits. In addition, the narrator notes that in order to afford the trip to Europe and the lawyer who works on her citizenship application, Rita had to rely on spending what is left of her severance pay and the proceeds from selling all of her furniture. If on the one hand, Rita does receive some kind of financial support through her severance pay, on the other hand, access to other benefits that provide a safety net are blocked by the economic crisis. As the narrator notes, Rita is not able to apply for these benefits because the workers in the office go on strike due to not having received a paycheck in months. Her alternative is to stand in another equally long line, that of the Italian consulate, where many other Brazilians with Italian last names are attempting, like Rita, to apply for Italian citizenship in order to leave Brazil.

The dire economic crisis - and its consequences for Brazilian citizens - is represented in the novella not only by the long lines in which Rita stands, but also by the presence of a number of informal workers selling everything from nail files to gum in front of the offices in question. The crisis is also embodied by the “moun-

tains of paper” sitting on Rita’s lawyer’s desk, from cases of Brazilians like the ones standing in line in front of the Italian consulate.

Rita’s precarious situation, in particular, is conveyed by her diminishing consumer power, as her living conditions indicate. In Brazil, she lives in a studio from where “you could often hear gunfights between cocaine pushers, then the sirens of police cars and ambulances” (RHEDA, 2005a, ebook). After selling almost all of the furniture she could fit in her limited living space, Rita purchases used winter clothes to take on her trip, thus indicating that her financial means were at that point rather limited.

In the case of Rheda’s “The Sanctuary,” although we know little about the protagonist’s background, there are indications that the characters have migrated due to economic reasons as well and that João potentially has a lower social status in Brazil than Rita. We learn that João, a Brazilian who partners with a Mexican called Juan, decided to stay in the United States while undocumented and that he is helped by a church that assists undocumented immigrants. João’s and Juan’s socioeconomic condition in their home countries can be inferred as humble also due to the fact that Rheda gives them generic names, which indicates that they are representative of a collective of disenfranchised citizens. The names in question are the Portuguese and Spanish versions of a name that is highly common in the Luso-Hispanic world, and that, particularly in Portuguese, is used in the expression “João-ninguém” to refer to an “average Joe” (“don-nadie” in Spanish). Due to their undocumented status, João and Juan have to bounce from one temporary and precarious job to another. During most of the story, we find them working at a rescue farm for abused animals, the Silver Sunshine Farm Sanctuary, in the state of New York. Later, Juan ends up working at a restaurant and João at an orchard.

The narrator notes Brazil’s (and Mexico’s) social inequality by leading us into the protagonists’ minds and revealing their first impressions of the sanctuary when they first arrive there:

How many penniless Mexican families could live here, Juan imagined, looking out the window with envy at the pullet houses, pastures and stables where the animals slept soundly. João calculated how many dirt poor Brazilians could be fed with all the eggs, milk and meat submerged in all those feathers and hairs” (RHEDA, 2005b, ebook).

The protagonists’ perspectives point out the contrast between a life of abundance in the North and a life of scarcity in the South. This disparity reflects the connection between these two geographical areas with respect to the emergence of two global circuits of labor with the advent of globalization, as argued by Saskia Sassen in “Global Migrations and Economic Need” (2011). For Sassen, a managerial and professional circuit at the top, and a service circuit at the bottom cross the North-South divide in the form of migration and capital. Migration from the

South to the North is linked to the adjustments that developing economies had to undergo as a consequence of neoliberalism. The privatization of important sectors such as health and communications, along with financial crises, generated high rates of unemployment, forcing many in the South to migrate to global cities in the North. This process, Sassen notes, entails the creation of both highly specialized well-paying positions and low-paying service jobs (SASSEN, 2011, p. 76). Rheda's narratives under study capture these dynamics, focusing on the bottom circuit, since Rita, João, and Juan all migrate from the global South for economic reasons to work in the service sector in the global North. As "The Sanctuary" and *First World* indicate, the protagonists leave behind a country that fails to provide adequate living conditions for its citizens, thus pushing them outside its borders in search of opportunities to "get ahead in life." The idea of doing so for these characters entails, essentially, making money, thus signaling that, in a world where citizen rights are progressively being transferred from the state to the market (CANCLINI, 2001, p. 15), acquiring capital is the only way to fully access adequate living conditions. Nevertheless, as the stories show, the dream of attaining a better life abroad is rendered an illusion. Behind the promise of better days is a global labor circuit in which the workforce at the bottom exists to sustain those at the top. Although not addressing labor relations directly, the precarious conditions under which Rheda's characters live as undocumented migrants suggest the presence of this labor dynamic and the nearly impossible nature of fully exercising one's rights as citizens, no matter where, when positioned at the bottom of the labor economy.

Life in the Global North

If life in Brazil (and in Mexico, in the case of Juan) is financially difficult, in Europe and in the United States, Rheda's characters encounter even more challenges due to their status as immigrants. As non-citizens of the countries to which they migrate, and as undocumented workers, more specifically, they have to withstand precarious living conditions, job insecurity, overall instability, and sexual harassment, in Rita's case.

In terms of living conditions, João, as we have seen, lives at the farm where he works as a handyman. While the narrator does not provide descriptions of the space where João and Juan live, it is plausible to assume that it is humble. Regardless of the condition of their accommodations, the protagonists do not own this space, thus indicating that their financial situation is tenuous. Symbolically, the sanctuary evokes the idea of heaven, serving as a haven not only for the rescued animals, but also for the undocumented immigrants who work there. However, this heaven is one of only temporary refuge (six months) and minimal survival (semi-voluntary work in exchange for room and board), rather than one of possibilities of achieving the "American dream" (RHEDA, 2005b, ebook). Therefore,

rather than the land of opportunity, the United States appears as simply the land of exploitation: bouncing from job to job, all these characters are allowed to accomplish is to do low-paying work that supports North-American society, whether by providing less than ethically produced food or by contributing towards the dissemination of veganism.

Veganism is especially important in the “The Sanctuary,” given that Rheda draws a parallel between the exploitation of humans (particularly of undocumented immigrant workers in this case) and the exploitation of animals. After watching a promotional video at the sanctuary, João concludes: “The good and inexpensive instead of the bad and expensive. ... Green beans instead of meat, chard instead of cheese. Tell me, Juan, would this or wouldn’t it help to end hunger among the poor?” This awareness leads them both to attempt to become vegans. In an interview with the magazine *ANDA*, published in 2009 and reproduced on her website, Rheda talks about how she views the connection between two recurrent themes in her work, transnationalism and veganism:²

Com o envolvimento na defesa animal, voltei a pensar mais seriamente nas outras lutas sociais por igualdade e justiça. Afinal, se “direitos animais” significa justiça para todos os seres sencientes, significa justiça também para os humanos, que são seres sencientes. [...] A luta pelos animais é muito mais dura, porque até mesmo o mais oprimido dos humanos acredita que está certo explorá-los. [...] Mas todas as formas de opressão estão inter-relacionadas e têm raiz na mesma visão de mundo excludente, autoritária e predatória.

In this way, the transformation of Rheda’s characters into vegans in “The Sanctuary” brings to the fore the exploitation of what David Nibert calls “devalued humans” (women, children, the disabled, and the poor). This exploitation, which has been in place for thousands of years, has been exacerbated by capitalism in order to continue to maintain the elites of the world, leading to unprecedented displacement and the killing of humans and other animals in order to achieve high levels of profit (NIBERT, 2002, p. 117). As economic migrants, João and Juan are part of this history of displacement and seem to be exploited, albeit unintentionally and indirectly, even when they are helped. If, on the one hand, the sanctuary provides some type of safety net to the immigrants that they welcome, on the other hand, its mission of promoting veganism and rescuing animals depends, at least in part, on the semi-volunteer work of undocumented immigrants with nowhere else to go.

In *First World*, Rita experiences the hardships of being an immigrant in a variety of ways. In London, she initially lives with her Brazilian friend Zeca and his English wife, Wendy. Conscious of the imposition she might mean to the couple, she controls her food intake “for fear of wasting her hosts’ money. Half an apple

² Rheda addresses these questions again in *Humana Festa* (2008), as well as in other stories in *Third Class and Other Tales of the Global Mix* (2005a).

and a large glass of creamy milk [...] that would keep her going for about four hours" (RHEDA, 2005a, ebook).

Wishing not to depend on anyone's favors, Rita moves out of Zeca's house and into the house of a Portuguese woman for whom she works as an au pair. In a similar situation to João's and Juan's, Rita accepts the job without legal authorization in exchange for room and board, in addition to a little money. She finds out soon, however, that the job actually meant little improvement over her stay at Zeca's. She ends up having to control her food intake as well, when she realizes that her boss "escorts" her food with her eyes, as Rita dishes up her meal.

With such limited resources provided by her job, Rita finds herself transforming her own body into a commodity. After getting tired of listening to music for free in bars, she realizes that "anything really good would cost money" (RHEDA, 2005a, ebook). Craving for some kind of entertainment that her limited consumer power prevented her from having, Rita resorts to sex with strangers as an escape from the exploitation that she faces at her job as a nanny, in which, as she finds out later, she can be easily replaced by another undocumented immigrant. Although she herself "shops" for a potential husband in newspaper ads, thus viewing others as commodities as well, she often becomes reduced to an exotic body to be consumed and discarded by different men abroad.

Her most critical instance of commodifying her body in the story is her attempt to convince the naturalized British customs officer Ian Weston to marry her. She meets Ian when going through customs upon arriving in England. Ian becomes a nightmare for Rita, harassing her continually after their first encounter. However, Rita's desperation to stay in Europe, preferably as a citizen, leads her to consider marrying the immigration officer. A particularly important metaphor that emerges from this plot development is a crowbar that she picks up at a hardware store the day when, tired of waiting for Ian to propose to her, she randomly asks him to marry her at that same hardware store while holding the tool in question. The narrator notes that "Rita went back to North Acton carrying the heavy crowbar. She had the tool she needed to come into the first world through the front door, even if she had to break in" (RHEDA, 2005a, ebook). In the quoted passage, the word tool has two meanings: the marriage to Ian, which would allow her to become a British citizen; and the crowbar, which represents her strategies to get access to the privileges of officially belonging to the global North. The idea of breaking in conveys a sense that Rita is a criminal, for being an undocumented worker and now for planning to enter a less than legitimate relationship in order to attain citizenship.

The commodification of the immigrant body for others' (viewing) pleasure as a way to support oneself abroad is a recurring theme in the story. Besides Rita, Zeca himself, and a street performer named Baiana, whom Rita meets in Covent Garden, offer further examples of this commodification. In Zeca's case, he confesses to Rita that he feels like he is his wife's property, comparing himself to other of

her belongings: the car, the house, the family, the country, the language (RHEDA, 2005a, ebook). He feels this way because in England he is financially dependent on his wife, in a reversal of patriarchal gender relations of labor that, from his sexist perspective, can be rather humiliating. Beyond gender relations, racism also shapes Zeca's experience as the husband of an Englishwoman. While he is "well-educated" and has "good manners," Wendy's family finds it difficult to accept him because "he possessed the unpardonable defect of not being Anglo-Saxon." As immigrants from the global South, both Zeca and Rita can be read as the embodiment of a kind of neocolonial relations with the global North, represented by Wendy and her family, on the one hand, and Maria, the Portuguese woman for whom Rita works, on the other.

In Baiana's case, the commodification of her body takes place through her informal job as a street performer. The narrator describes her as "a dark dancer, her hips locked but her arms free, [who] shook the latter more than the former" and "seemingly slim but [with] photogenic breasts and hips. Her skin was a satiny chocolate color and she had a Greek nose. She gesticulated a lot when talking, hugging and shoving all the oxygen around her" (RHEDA, 2005a, ebook). Per this description, Baiana stereotypically embodies the exotic foreigner. As such, she teaches rhythms not just from her home country, but also from a variety of other areas of the globe, from Brazilian *frevo* to flamenco, and belly dancing. She also does massages, plays the *capoeira* instrument *berimbau* in subway stations in London, and does miming and ballroom dancing shows in Covent Garden. Like many Brazilian immigrants in England, Baiana overstayed her tourist visa and became an undocumented worker, using her "exotic" Afro-Brazilian features — mixed with other races, as attested by her Greek nose—as her livelihood.

Transnational identities

In both stories under study, Rheda portrays the expression of transnational solidarities, which are a component of the concept of citizenship, as Sassen points out in "Towards Post-National and Denationalized Citizenship" (2002). Surveying studies on citizenship, Sassen notes that the latter is not experienced as unitary. Rather, it entails "various aspects, from formal rights to practices and psychological dimensions" (SASSEN, 2002, p. 5). Two forms of transnational citizenship highlighted by Sassen help us understand Rheda's portrayal of the relationships and feelings that her characters have towards other members of the transnational networks to which they come to belong. These forms are the affective connections between members of a transnational civil society and a "global sense of solidarity and identification" (SASSEN, 2002, p. 7).

In terms of affective connections, "The Sanctuary" touches on a central identity issue for Brazilians residing in the United States: their relationship to Lati-

nos/Hispanics³. “The Sanctuary” suggests that as immigrants in a global economy, Brazilians may form coalitions with Latinos whenever they face shared struggles of undocumented life in the US. Rheda’s narrative in question presents a reflection on both the possibilities that this coalition opens up as well as the limitations that constrain it. Her story signals potential shifts in the relationship between Brazilians and Latinos at the time when the narrative takes place, which are likely linked to changes in the patterns of Brazilian immigration at the turn of the twenty-first century.

Although still predominantly middle-class based, Brazilian migration to certain areas of the US became more diverse during the early 2000s, including migrants with a working-class background from rural and small urban areas from regions other than the Southeast (MARGOLIS, 2008, p. 60). While in the 2000s the identity of Brazilians living in the United States remained largely informed by a complex transnational interpretation of race, gender, ethnicity, class, and nation, Brazilians living in certain areas of the U.S. became more inclined to identify with Hispanics.⁴ Bernadete Beserra’s research on Brazilians living in the Los Angeles area, for example, points out that, although many of her interviewees reproduced the dominant racist discourse about Latinos/Hispanics in the United States, some of them came to acknowledge the limitations of their social mobility in North-American society. They seemed to understand that they would always be politically limited, that is, face greater difficulty in fighting for citizen rights, if they did not form alliances with Latinos (BESERRA, 2000, p. 18-19).

The research mentioned above suggests that many Brazilian immigrants, at least in certain areas of the US, may want to distance themselves *culturally* from Latinos, but they understand that there are important reasons for being *politically* associated with the category in question. In other words, like Latinos of different nationalities, these Brazilians reject being lumped together into a common category, revealing some attachment to their national identity, often expressing their racial and class prejudice. However, at the same time, they begin to identify with certain transnational groups for the purpose of not only continuing to exist as immigrants in the US but also to fight for certain citizen rights.

³ These terms are used interchangeably in this article to refer to the imagined population of individuals of Hispanic origin living in the United States. However, it is important to acknowledge that, historically, the terms refer to different groups: whereas “Hispanic” was created by the Nixon administration to refer to individuals who have a connection to the Spanish language or a Spanish-speaking culture, the word “Latino” was meant to refer to people of Latin origin, including French, Italian, and Portuguese. In spite of this difference, the terms have been increasingly used interchangeably within the United States to refer to Hispanics. As a consequence, Brazilians in the US, in general, would not identify with the term Latino.

⁴ For the impact of complex relations between race, gender, ethnicity, class, and nation on the identity of Brazilians in the United States, see Judith McDonell’s and Cileine de Lourenço’s “Brazilian Immigrant Women: Race, Ethnicity, Gender, and Transnationalism.” For data on Brazilians’ increasing identification with Hispanics in Florida, see Rosana Resende’s study “Tropical Brazucas: A Preliminary Study of Brazilians in South Florida.”

In this way, the alliances entered by many Brazilian immigrants with Hispanic groups in the U.S. seem to corroborate the idea of *Latinidad* as a shifting concept, much in the way that Marta Caminero-Santangelo frames it in *On Latinidad: US Latino Literature and the Construction of Ethnicity* (2007). According to the author, the concept in question is not monolithic, and should be understood in terms of “multiple *latinidades*, which reach across national origin lines but need not account in some comprehensive way for *all*” (CAMINERO-SANTANGELO, 2007, p. 215). Similarly, Cristina Beltrán calls for an understanding of *Latinidad* as rhizomatic, in a Deleuzean sense: fluid and organic, without a fixed center, and proliferating randomly, which means that new connections can be shattered only to reappear later as well as start at unexpected points. Beltrán considers this rhizomatic structure valuable in that it allows for decentered, opportunistic, and expansive agency (167).

Both Caminero-Santangelo and Beltrán’s views have a common perception of *Latinidad* and Hispanic identity as operating within what French philosopher Michel de Certeau calls *Tactics* in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1997). He defines the term in relation to the concept of *strategies*. While the latter refers to the manipulation of power by subjects that exert control in some kind of institution (an army, a business, etc.), the former pertains to the opportunities for those who are controlled to exercise agency (DE CERTEAU, 1997, p. 37). The kind of *latinidad* described by Caminero-Santangelo and Beltrán is, ultimately, a political identification that operates tactically: it is a coalition that emerges around a specific socio-political issue, but that is not permanent and does not have a fixed configuration.

One can read the oscillation between approximation and distancing that characterizes João and Juan’s relationship to one another (TOSTA, 2012, p. 314), as representative of the multiple *latinidades* of which Caminero-Santangelo speaks and their tactical unfolding. Although not formally organized, João and Juan come to share a transnational perspective on broader socio-political issues due to their condition as undocumented immigrants, as their remarks about hunger and poverty in their respective countries and their openness to veganism show. This common ground expresses itself through a linguistic coalition, exemplified by the code that they establish between themselves in order to be able to communicate, given that João cannot speak English and that they cannot speak each other’s native languages, i.e. Portuguese and Spanish. The narrator refers to this code as *Portunhol*, “a mish-mash of Portuguese and Spanish” (RHEDA, 2005b, ebook). Nevertheless, their coalition is not without tension, especially due to João’s prejudiced views of Mexicans and Mexican culture. At times João calls Juan “damned Mexican” (RHEDA, 2005b, ebook), referring to his nationality in a derogatory tone. Later, João reacts with disgust to Juan’s offer to cook chicken mole for his Brazilian friend. In his broken *Portunhol*, João says that “chicken doesn’t go with chocolate” and that mole is “comida de maricón” (RHEDA, 2005b, ebook). In the end, they go their separate ways: while Juan washes dishes in a Chinese restaurant, João takes care of gardens and orchids. However, they both have been transformed by their

relationship, which allowed them not only to learn about veganism by way of facilitating each other's access to the sanctuary, but also by reflecting about their shared realities in the global South. As the narrator notes, both of them make an effort (albeit João more so than Juan) to continue to practice veganism, thus indicating the emergence of an awareness about circuits of (capital) exploitation.

These characters' fate — that is, this awareness on the one hand, and their continued work in low-paying service jobs, on the other — raises the question of the limitations and possibilities for Latino/Hispanic — or immigrant, in general — of rhizomatic alliances of the type that João and Juan develop. While their connection provides the opportunities for important individual changes, their coalition is limited by the little to no improvement in their conditions as undocumented workers. In this way, the short story suggests the potential challenges in turning tactical alliances for survival into effective strategies of political change.

The second of the aforementioned forms of transnational citizenship highlighted by Sassen —the formulation of global solidarities and identifications— manifests itself in *First World* through Baiana's sentiments with respect to how she views herself as a citizen. She reframes her undocumented status as being a "citizen of the world," which she sees in a positive light. However, the novella renders her view rather utopic by contrasting Baiana's feelings with her living conditions and with the daily life of anonymous immigrants who Rita observes in her strolls through London and Rome. The narrator's description of Baiana's actual living conditions reveals that "being a citizen of the world" in the case of an undocumented worker like her means living in rather precarious conditions: in an abandoned house without electricity, with a few possessions that include several "pieces of furniture she had rescued from the trash" (RHEDA, 2005a, ebook). Aligned with Baiana's sentiment of being a citizen of the world is the goal of her "London Samba School:" to promote harmony among all races (RHEDA, 2005a, ebook). This harmony is indeed lacking in Europe, as Rheda shows. Instead, what Rita finds all around her is exploitation of immigrants in low-paying service jobs while fearing the police and being the target of prejudice, thus living in a state that is far from harmonious or integrated. At McDonald's, for example, the protagonist finds African immigrants preparing hamburgers and mopping the floor, while at a hardware store, she checks out with an Indian cashier. In Rome, she meets an Irish girl who makes a living as a sex worker. Rita also encounters Africans, Filipinos and Polish at a church food bank, where a police officer cautions her about Moroccan "pickpockets and purse snatchers" (RHEDA, 2005a, ebook). In this way, while Rheda points out the possibility of global identification that emerges from twenty-first century migration circuits, she also notes the socioeconomic space to which immigrants working at the bottom of labor circuits are relegated.

Final thoughts

In *First World Third Class*, Rita's dream of starting anew in Italy is interrupted by a technicality in the bureaucratic process of applying for citizenship: a missing "t" in her last name, which makes it so the name on her birth certificate does not match her Italian family's last name. A similar situation is brought up at the end of the narrative, when we find out that one of Rita's friends was able to change her last name from "Abruzi" with one "z" to "Abruzzi," with double "z," to match her Italian family's documents. In other words, this friend is able to do exactly what Rita attempted to do but that was denied to her: to double one letter on her last name so that she could prove her Italian heritage. But our impressions that this official recognition would bring a life of prosperity abroad for Ms. Abruzi are soon dispelled when we find out that her new citizenship status far from leads her in the direction that she hoped for. Another one of Rita's friend, Teca, explains in a letter that Rita receives about their friend's name change:

She told me that even with her Italian passport she had one helluva tough time in Italy before she could get a job. It took her seven months to get a job as a receptionist at a hotel, and we're talking about someone who studied architecture at the University of São Paulo and who speaks several languages. She came back after a while because she had had enough. (RHEDA, 2005a, ebook)

The report on Rita's friend's experience reinforces the narrative's suggestion that being a citizen and being a consumer are intrinsically connected in the era of globalization. In other words, holding citizenship means less anywhere in the world for those at the bottom of the global labor circuit, who lack the capital to afford housing, leisure, and other basic rights. While undocumented immigrants such as Rita, João, and Juan may face more severe hardship for not holding a citizenship status abroad, holding such status in one's birth place or attaining it elsewhere means little when it comes with unemployment and, consequently, with a lack of access to commodities.

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Resumo/Abstract/Resumen

Cidadãos de lugar nenhum: migrantes não documentados nas narrativas de Regina Rheda

Ligia Bezerra

Este artigo apresenta uma análise da representação de migrantes brasileiros em duas narrativas da escritora Regina Rheda: a novela *Pau-de-arara classe turística* (1996) e o conto “O santuário” (2002). Com base no trabalho de Saskia Sassen sobre os circuitos globais do trabalho na virada do século XXI, argumenta-se que Rheda representa os migrantes brasileiros em questão como “cidadãos de lugar nenhum”. Os personagens adquirem esse *status* na medida em que crises econômicas resultantes da agenda neoliberal transformam as relações de trabalho entre o sul e norte do globo, limitando seu acesso a condições básicas de cidadania em seu próprio país. Ao mesmo tempo, sua condição de trabalhadores não documentados nos países para onde migram os relega à exploração e, portanto, acentua a precariedade de sua situação enquanto cidadãos.

Palavras-chave: circuitos laborais, migração, relações norte-sul.

Citizens of nowhere: undocumented migrants in Regina Rheda’s narratives

Ligia Bezerra

This article presents an analysis of the representation of Brazilian migrants in two narratives by writer Regina Rheda: the novel *Pau-de-arara classe turística* (1996) and the short story “O santuário” (2002). Taking as a point of departure Saskia Sassen’s work on global labor circuits at the turn of the twenty-first century, I argue that Rheda represents the Brazilian migrants in question as “citizens of nowhere.” Her characters acquire this status as economic crises resulting from a neoliberal agenda transform work relations between the South and the North of the globe, limiting their access to basic citizen rights in their own country. At the same time, their condition as undocumented workers in the countries to where they migrate relegates them to exploitation and, therefore, stresses the precariousness of their situation as citizens.

Keywords: labor circuits, migration, North-South relations.

Ciudadanos de ningún lugar: emigrantes indocumentados en las narrativas de Regina Rheda

Ligia Bezerra

Este artículo presenta un análisis de la representación de emigrantes brasileños en dos narrativas de la escritora Regina Rheda: la novela *Pau-de-arara clase turística* (1996) y el cuento "O santuário" (2002). Basado en el trabajo de Saskia Sassen sobre los circuitos globales del trabajo a finales del siglo XX y comienzos del XXI, se argumenta que Rheda representa a los emigrantes brasileños en cuestión como "ciudadanos de ningún lugar". Los personajes adquieren ese estatus mientras las crisis económicas resultantes de la agenda neo-liberal transforman las relaciones de trabajo entre el sur y el norte del globo, limitando su acceso a condiciones básicas de ciudadanía en su propio país. Al mismo tiempo, su condición como trabajadores indocumentados en los países adonde migran los relega a la explotación y, por lo tanto, acentúa la precariedad de su situación como ciudadanos.

Palabras-clave: circuitos laborales, migración, relaciones norte-sur.