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MULTIMEDIA CELEBRITY, ONLINE NARRATIVE, AND THE PRINT MEMOIR: THE CASE OF *O DOCE VENENO DO ESCORPIÃO* BY BRUNA SURFISTINHA

ABSTRACT: The author explores the celebrity of Bruna Surfistinha, a sex worker in São Paulo who turned a popular blog about her life as a *garota de programa* ("call girl") into a best-selling print memoir. Surfistinha has used her online writing to circumvent the controls of what Ángel Rama has called "la ciudad letrada" ("the lettered city") to gain access to the privileges of authorship—namely, financial remuneration in the form of book sales and the authority bestowed on experts by the reading public. By breaking down the "association factor" that attaches a stigma to prurient writing and by being available at no cost to any online reader at any time, she is able to appeal to a broader public than would be possible through traditional print. The commercial enterprise of *O Doce Veneno do Escorpião* demonstrates the ability for self-representation of previously marginalized people in new media.

Keywords: *authorship, blog, celebrity, memoir, new media, representation, sex worker, Bruna Surfistinha*

RAQUEL PACHECO IS ONE of the estimated thirty-four million users of the social networking Web site Orkut in Brazil.[1] As a teenager in São Paulo at the turn of the millennium, Pacheco immersed herself in the Internet and used Orkut as a means of personal expression and communication with her friends. Pacheco ran away from home at the age of seventeen to enter prostitution as Bruna Surfistinha, a *garota de programa* ("call girl"). After three years of working in various brothels, she began to write a personal blog about her experiences. Her readership began among her friends, other sex workers, and even her clients, who were curious about how she evaluated their performances. Over time her readership began to include the general public; at its height the Web site attracted over fifteen thousand readers every day.[2]

This article explores the use of online narrative by Surfistinha and her decision to publish her blog in print as *O Doce Veneno do Escorpião: O Diario de uma Garota de Programa* (*The Scorpion's Sweet Venom: The Diary of a Brazilian Call Girl*; 2005). I argue that this memoir of her time as a sex worker demonstrates how information technology democratizes narrative and allows previously marginalized voices to self-publish and reach a broad

audience. I also contend that the paper publication of her memoir serves Surfistinha as a means to the legitimacy of authorship. By publishing a book, Surfistinha became a sex expert to the public, but she attained visibility to the book-consuming public through her Internet success. Ángel Rama notes in *La ciudad letrada* (*The Lettered City*) that structures of power, such as writing, change over time. Resistance to "la ciudad letrada" has historically taken the form of illicit writing. According to Rama, "[p]odría decirse que la escritura concluye absorbiendo toda la libertad humana, porque sólo en su campo se tiende la batalla de nuevos sectores que disputan posiciones de poder" (82) ("one might go so far as to assert that writing eventually looms over all human liberty, because new emerging groups can effectively assail positions of power only in its field"; [*Lettered City* 37]).[3] Graffiti is one example used by Rama to demonstrate how resistant writing represents the marginalized. Writing on the wall or in a personal blog is done without seeking permission, and both kinds of writing can be viewed by institutions of power as being outside the laws of authority.[4]

Pacheco's performance as the Internet sex celebrity Bruna Surfistinha and her use of the Internet to prepare the way for the print publication of her blog demonstrate an innovative narrative technique. Surfistinha proves that online narrative shows some of the revolutionary potential that Walter Benjamin hoped would be afforded by film.[5] Benjamin made the case that film, by separating the art object from an "aura" of uniqueness, became a potentially revolutionary tool. He proposed that multiplicity allowed for the masses to partake, whereas exclusivity was a prize for the bourgeois elite. It stands to reason that if the filmed multiplication of the work of art through technology might be a tool of class struggle, then the Internet, with its seemingly unlimited capacity to reproduce content at no cost, could also be a tool of class struggle. Furthermore, as the multiplicity of sources of content increases with new technology and traditional genre boundaries break down, heterogeneous representation and agency can only increase. As a case study, Surfistinha's memoir rejects phallogocentric representations of sex workers and of female writers in general. Her story would be impossible during the era of print dominance; instead it appears during a time of heterogeneous media where instant Internet celebrity can democratize access to publication.

Surfistinha became an international celebrity and one of the most widely read authors of recent Brazilian history before she turned twenty-one and without having completed her basic education. *O Doce Veneno do Escorpião* sold over 250,000 copies in less than three years and a film of her story is in production (Mattos). In 2006 she published a follow-up book, *O que Aprendi com Bruna Surfistinha*, which sold 18,000 copies. In 2007 she released a self-help sex guide, *Na Cama com Bruna Surfistinha*, as well as an online graphic novel version of *O Doce Veneno do Escorpião*. Her books have been

translated into several languages, and she was featured in a profile in The *New York Times* (Rohter). She has been interviewed on broadcast television variety programs such as *Superpop*, *Programa de Jô*, *Pânico na TV*, and *Boa Noite Brasil*. She made a special appearance at the 2006 VMB (Video Music Brasil) awards show. She has been interviewed in the erotic magazines *Sexy*, *Vip,* and *Playboy* as well as mainstream publications such as *Capricho* and *Época*, whose January 30, 2006, cover featured her photo. Although she has been much discussed in magazines, television, newspapers, and online, this study is the first to view her work and celebrity from the perspective of cultural studies in an academic forum.

The issue of access to the means of communication has been a central concern of cultural studies. Information technology allows for an increasingly heterogeneous group of writers to be read by a global public. Once Internet access is attained there is no cost associated with reading online content, nor is there any fee to self-publish in online blogs. The anonymity of the Internet allows for subversive discourse to avoid sanction by the state; the ease of access permits transgressive social and sexual messages to find traction. A free electronic media leads to a democratization of narrative production. Compared to the cost in money and time associated with the readers' search for print writing at a bookstore, the online reader can more liberally select what to read. There is, however, limited access to the Internet in Brazilian society, leading to what Maria do Carmo Rocha Matos calls "[o]s excluidos digitais"—a population of the digitally excluded, permanently outside of Internet communication and bereft of computers. There have been no studies that compare the rates of the "excluidos digitais" with those excluded from print. According to Brazilian national census data, in 2007 the highest rates of illiteracy coincided with middle-aged and older residents of rural areas. These same regions also have limited access to computers and the Internet. Among young people, the illiteracy rate in Brazil has dropped significantly.[6]

The hegemonic power of the lettered over the illiterate in Latin America is a central theme of Rama's book. I contend that the use of the Internet to create narrative does not reproduce the structure of inequality characterized by the print tradition of "la ciudad letrada." Online narrative provides an instant forum for expression and a readership for people who do not have access to print publishing. At the very least, the Internet has been the downfall of corrupt, powerful figures who would not have been caught had it not been for the viral nature of much online content. In Brazil, corrupt government officials such as Roberto Jefferson have been brought to justice by scandal-sheet blogs.[7] Global capital's stake in determining Internet practice is serious, but critics have yet to provide concrete evidence of any new medium's being responsible for the silencing of subaltern voices in the way that print media and national television have conclusively hegemonized discourse.

Joshua Meyrowitz contends that new media are providing the means to democratize writing. While not taking into account the specific case of Latin America, he perceives the global control of ownership of the means of literary production to be loosening. In a manner that seems to draw on the logic of Rama's "ciudad letrada," Meyrowitz suggests that electronic media will democratize literary production by broadening access beyond a privileged few:

> Changes in media, therefore, may also affect hierarchy by altering the accessibility of high status figures. Media that support the relationship between physical isolation and social inaccessibility will support hierarchical mystifications; media that undermine that relationship may work to lower many high status roles. (67)

He uses as an example the printing press's freeing writing from the religious control of scribes in the Middle Ages. He continues: "Because of differences in coding, electronic media have led to a breakdown of the specialized and segregated information systems shaped by print" (79). Those specialized systems include the bestowment of authority on published authors and also the financial benefits of selling print writing. Rocha Matos agrees about the democratizing effects of blog writing:

> A produção de interfaces cada vez mais simplificada e a possibilidade de acesso gratuito têm feito com que, a cada dia surja novos blogs na rede. Neste sentido podemos dizer que os mesmos vêm se configurando como um espaço virtual democrático, que permite dizer, deste os fatos noticiosos dos meios oficiais de comunicação até as banalidades da vida cotidiana das pessoas comuns. (n. pag.)
>
> The production of simpler interfaces and the possibility of free access have the effect that each day new blogs appear on the net. In this sense we can say that the same blogs configure a democratic virtual space that permits everything from the most important news from official media to the banalities of everyday life of the most common people.

Online writing mimics some of the controls of the lettered city to establish authority, and it mimics television's pervasive use of advertising as a source of revenue. Attempts have been made to force payment for online content, but in most cases online content remains free for anyone with access to a computer.

Like Meyrowitz, Debra A. Castillo has a more optimistic view of online narrative:

> Until recently, most discussions of such computer facilitated and computer conscious works have tended to variations on the theme of

> ideological demonization [. . .] oddly disconnected from the day-to-day experience of the growing number of online service users. (244)

Her position demands a realistic portrayal of innovative online content that joins, but does not replace, the increasingly heterogeneous forms of print narrative. In general, she states that in addition to changing technology, "[l]iterature too is exploring new ways of writing and requiring of its readers different kinds of reading and interpretative practices" (245). Without forgetting the origins of information technology in global hegemonic concerns, marginalized and subaltern voices use new media when traditional media are closed to them.

Just as different media privilege different genres of narrative, the Internet is particularly full of sexualized short stories (as well as more explicit forms of multimedia). Ken Plummer believes that sexual narratives are particularly well suited to the vehicle of new media and propagate in their new environment with unheard-of speed:

> Every invention—mass print, the camera, the film, the video, the record, the telephone, the computer, the virtual reality machine—has helped, bit by bit, to provide a veritable erotopian landscape to millions of lives. The media has become sexualized. (4)

This increase in sexual storytelling is facilitated by the ease of access and immediacy of new media. With a narrative that can be instantly erased, the "association factor" becomes a negligible risk for the viewer. Furthermore, Plummer argues, "[a]n intimate experience, once hardly noticed, now has to be slotted into the ceaseless narrating of life" (4). The phenomenon at work is a global one, according to Plummer, and online narrative production is particularly adapted to the spread of erotic stories. Plummer believes that the self-help genre has particularly popularized sexual storytelling in mainstream publications. This "erotopian landscape" is the background against which Surfistinha has been able to become wildly popular without the typical stigma attached to the purchase of erotic art or writing (4).

As online content, the salacious writing found on Surfistinha's blog is easily accessed by a general public that might be less likely to purchase an X-rated publication. With the advent of her celebrity, the writing goes from being seen as the domain of a prurient subgroup—the world of sex workers and of their pimps, pornographers, and clients—to the domain of society in general. Meyrowitz contends that "[b]ecause of a difference in the 'association factor,' people will watch things on television that they would be unlikely to read about in a book or magazine or to pay to see in a movie theater" (83). The immediacy of online content that can be hidden (if never discarded completely) limits any form of "association factor" for a reader. There is no physical evidence of a prurient interest. Thus, online reading

allows the public to view a much wider variety of subject matters than they would as print readers. Meyrowitz continues: "Since one needs to search for individual books, one tends to 'find' books on topics one already knows about and is interested in. Many electronic messages are chosen with less care and discrimination" (82). The lessening of the risk of the "association factor" and the simplicity of the Web search in finding prurient materials facilitate the rise of online sexualized narrative. Surfistinha's writing, although highly erotic, is not considered taboo in an increasingly sexualized media environment. Mattos has referred to Surfistinha as the Paulo Coelho of sex, conferring on her the same sort of broad cultural presence as that of the best-selling Portuguese author. Because she has published books in paper, her authority within "la ciudad letrada" becomes accepted by the broader public; this allows her to appropriate the role of social scientist on the topic of sex.

O Doce Veneno do Escorpião begins in medias res as a client arrives at Surfistinha's flat. In the sense of what Mikhail Bakhtin called "heteroglossia,"[8] the writing seems drawn from erotic pulp fiction. Surfistinha performs several sexual acts with the nameless client, and immediately the writing changes to an almost nonfictional tone as she describes the systematic performance of being a *garota de programa*—a high-class sex worker who works independently from her home. This erotic storytelling serves as an introduction to the text:

> Primeiro, montei de frente e, com ele todino dentro de mim, me virei de bumbum para ele. Não demorou muito até que ele saísse de mim e me pedisse para retribuir com a boca a gentileza. Chupei até ele gozar, com ele agarrando com delicadeza meus cabelos longos. (7)
>
> First, I got down and, with him entirely inside me, I pressed my ass against him. He didn't take long before he pulled out of me and asked if I would return the favor with my mouth. I sucked until he came, with him holding delicately onto my long hair.

In contrast, the sexual storytelling turns to a documentary voice explaining the procedure of a typical day of prostitution:

> A fila anda. Serviço prestado, pagamento feito (e conferido, de forma discreta, sem ele perceber, claro). Ele foi o primeiro cliente do dia. Tenho mais cinco pela frente. Com menos de uma hora entre um cliente e outro, mal tenho tempo de me-refazer. (8)
>
> The line moves. Service performed, payment made (and conferred, discreetly, without his noticing, of course). He was the first client of the day. I have five more to come. With less than an hour between one client and the next, I barely have time to get ready again.

The contrast between the prurient beginning and this business analysis is immediate. As the writing varies from fragment to fragment, the pronounced heteroglossia of Internet content is transcribed into the paper memoir.

A series of memories about Surfishinha's childhood, adolescent sexual explorations, and her subsequent decision to become a sex worker is printed in a smaller font and is interspersed with large-font fragments of sexual storytelling and practical descriptions of a sex worker's daily life. This is the main difference between her blog writing and her memoir. Whereas the blog writing lightheartedly jumps from anecdote to escapade, the memoir fragments are sad and accusatory in tone, both critical of herself and of how others treated her. As an adopted child, she differed racially from her parents and siblings. She saw them as whiter, thinner, and more attractive than she. In the memoir of her youth, she describes her confrontation with the taboos and fears that the conservative national gender codes had taught her. She imagined her first attempt at sex: "[S]angraria horrores, como uma torneirinha de sangue" ("I would bleed horrors, like a whirlpool of blood"; 18). She is also aware of her very personal reasons for being a sex worker, "[j]usto eu, que sempre me expressei pelo uso de marcas de grife, que compensavam minha gordurinha e minha syndrome de patinho feio" ("me, who always presented myself with name brands to compensate for being a bit fat and for having the ugly duckling syndrome"; 18). Shame, taboo, and the pleasure of transgression play important roles in her decision making.

Surfistinha is struck by the contrasting messages of taboo associated with street prostitution and the advertisements in newspapers for highly paid call girls (22–23). Her father declares her impending doom if she becomes a sex worker, "Puta . . . Vagabunda . . . Piranha . . . uma quase sentença de morte: Toda puta tem Aids. Eu lamento muito que vá morrer sozinha, aidética" ("Whore . . . trash . . . piranha . . . almost a death sentence: All whores have AIDS. I regret that you will die alone from AIDS"; 83). Of course, the father does not condemn the clients of prostitution (and Surfistinha lives in fear of encountering her father or one of his acquaintances at her work). She decides to run away from home after a period of soul-searching. She comes to the logical conclusion that prostitution is her best option: "Vi que minha inexperiência seria um obstáculo intransponível. Todos os caminhos me levavam à única coisa que uma garota como eu poderia fazer" ("I saw that my inexperience would be an insurmountable obstacle. All roads would take me to the only thing a girl like me could do"; 82). As a financial decision to ensure her independence and also as a personal choice to use her sexuality openly, she states, "achei no meu corpo, entre as pernas, a chave da liberdade e o meu ganha-pão" ("I felt in my body, between my legs, was the key to my liberty and my survival"; 15). Taking the work name of Bruna and later nicknamed Bruna Surfistinha, she considers herself an example of feminist liberation.

For three years, Surfistinha works as a *garota de programa*. She spends her first earnings on a cell phone and later pays for her own breast augmentation surgery, rationalizing it as a business investment. Materialism and dependency become major themes of her narrative. She begins to spend much of her earnings on the drugs endemic to the subculture around prostitution. Her job takes her to the underground swingers clubs of São Paulo. While it is a dangerous world that she enters, she makes it clears that it is a quotidian business of sex for money. Surfistinha is able to support herself and live as she pleases, sex being a trade she finds rewarding: "Ía ser a chance de descubrir até onde o sexo podia-me levar" ("It was the chance to discover just how far sex could take me"; 24). She insists that Bruna Surfistinha is a performance in a form of self-marketing: "A Bruna é minha personagem. E eu gosto muito dela, embora seja diferente de mim, mas ela é bacana porque é ela que paga todas as minhas contas" ("Bruna is my character. And I like her a lot, even though she is different from me, but she is cool because she pays my bills").[9] Explaining the rational decision making that went into becoming Bruna Surfistinha is a central concern. She provides the logic behind her choice to preempt other voices speaking for her. The alternative to her speaking is to allow institutional voices, such as doctors or social scientists, to explain for her.

One of Surfistinha's central concerns is that sexual writing and public conceptions of the life of a call girl glamorize or demonize what for her is a normal, daily routine. Her story itself plays with the temptation of voyeurism in exploring taboos and the economic and social realities of prostitution: "Transas enlouquecidas, surubas, muitos homens (e mulheres) diferentes por dia, noites quase sem fim. O que pode ser excitante para muitas garotas como eu, na efervescência dos vinte anos, para mim é rotina" ("Crazy sex, fantasies, many different men (and women) each day, nights without end. What would be exciting for many girls like me, in the effervescence of being twenty, for me is routine"; 10). The narrative frequently endeavors to dispel stereotypes about Brazilian sexual practices and the life of sex workers. After exploring Brazilian sexual variants, Surfistinha describes many of the traditional taboos about sex and uses her personal experience as an educational tool in her writing. She categorizes a wide variety of sexual practices that "garotas de programa" perform in their general line of work and presents the perspective of the sex worker in her dealings with clients. In one instance she states: "Estar com dois homens a minha disposição me deu uma incrível sensação de poder" ("Being with two men at my disposal gave me an incredible feeling of power"; 44). Her insistence on a first-person perspective of the sexual practices she offers disrupts the male clients' perspective as the definitive descriptor of the world of prostitution. She frequently mentions how diverse her clients are, ranging from groups of high school boys to celebrities (whom she declines to name), old men, couples,

playboys, men who want to be dominated, and men who just want her to be their girlfriend for the evening (48). She is emphatic that the majority of her male clients are married (86). The common theme of most of these encounters is that beyond the sexual act, the men and women who seek her services want to converse with her.

Surfistinha describes her clients in the tone of a psychologist or sociologist and then categorizes them and even writes anonymous descriptions of their sexual performances. These prurient descriptions of sexual encounters, as in the initial fragment of *O Doce Veneno*, are placed into an album narrative between the confessional style of her childhood memories and the business of sex descriptions. Each type of heteroglossic writing is periodic but unfixed. There are no chapter numbers, nor is there an obvious organizational schema at work. Her narrative style is conversational and flows from one idea to the next, mimicking the daily observations of her blog. In the second half of the memoir, sample blog selections of "programas" are listed by day and number of clients, but not by month or year. The chaos of the interspersed fragments reflects the variety of Internet content in general and forces the reader to play a more active role in deciding what to read and in what order.

In the sections in which Surfistinha describes the business of the sex industry, her character presents itself as a cultural liaison to the broader public. She reveals little-known facts and offers advice to prospective clients: "A rotina das garotas de programa tem um lado bem pouco glamouroso" ("The routine of the call girls has a very unglamourous side"; 45). She also describes the repeated use of dirty sheets to economize the cost of laundry in the brothel. These vignettes take the reader on a "behind-the-scenes" tour of the inner politics and processes of the brothel as it exists in São Paulo.

In one series of vignettes, Surfistinha describes the differences between brothels of higher-class "garotas de programa" with high-volume brothels known as the "Vintão" (because they only charge 20 *reales*) for more working-class clients:

> Negócio de alta rotatividade, muitos quartinhos individuaís, luxo zero – idem de higiene. [. . .] A trapada e rapidinha, 10 ou 15 minutos: programas expressos, dez reais para a o cafetão, dez reais para a garota. (48)
>
> Business of high volume, many individual rooms, zero luxury not to mention hygiene. [. . .] The deal is quick, ten to fifteen minutes: express programs, ten *reales* for the boss, ten *reales* for the girl.

Revealing the processes of the sex industry as a professional, Surfistinha is circumventing the conventional power of traditional sexual experts—doctors and social scientists. Plummer suggests that, in general, hegemonic, established voices are losing their sway over individual voices with the rise of new media: "The professional formal elite worlds of doctors and lawyers had been

telling different stories about these others' experiences, but now they come under challenge" (60). Rather than depending on scientific facts, her personal experience breaks down the hegemonic male power that would describe sex work for her. Surfistinha is a case of a new media writer undermining the phallogocentric domination of sexual knowledge.

In spite of her ability to translate experience into authority about sex for her reading public, it is more difficult for her to use her online narrative to achieve the other typical benefit of publication: financial recompense. While she is replete with liquid assets from sex work, she is excluded from the benefits of legal wage earning. As her earnings are illicit, Surfistinha is able to neither invest her money nor deposit amounts of small bills into a bank account:

> Como não conseguia abrir conta em banco nenhum (tente fazer isso com 18 anos, sendo garota de programa, sem profissão reconhecida e sem endereço fixo, a não ser o do privê), ficava andando com o dinheiro dentro de um saquinho, na maior insegurança. (47)
>
> As I couldn't open a bank account (just try to do that when you are 18, are a call girl with no recognized profession and no fixed address, brothel notwithstanding), I was left carrying the money in a sack, in terrible insecurity.

As a sex worker, even simple public practices of citizenship are next to impossible, such as having an official profession, opening a bank account, or establishing a legal address. More complicated financial matters, such as owning property or health insurance, are even more distant from her day-to-day reality. Beyond her problem with money, the more specialized practices of citizenship, such as taking on authority as a published writer or practicing psychology, are well beyond her reach. As a sex worker, Surfistinha is outside the sanction of the state and of society.

In these stories about the sex industry, Surfistinha performs the service of being a sex expert. There is a similarity between her desire to be a writer, excluded from "la ciudad letrada" for being an undereducated sex worker, and her desire to be a psychologist. She would not able to become a professional psychologist had her celebrity not allowed her to function as a sexual-help expert in radio, television, and online appearances: "Queria ser psiquiatra, mas sei que não conseguiria nunca entrar em medicina" ("I wanted to be a psychiatrist, but I know that I could never enter medicine"; 39). She describes her work as being like that of a sex therapist: "Eles vem até mim para realizar suas fantasias. Funcionamos como terapeutas" ("They come to me to realize their fantasies. We function as therapists"; 76). Her descriptions of the various fetishes she enacts for clients use the language of self-help writing, allowing readers to learn more about the varieties of sexual experiences among Brazilians. Nonetheless, this sexual social science is written from the perspective

of willing participant and jargon-speaking expert. In one case she provides explanations for behavior of the men who seek domination and ask her to become "Bruninho" instead of Bruna:

> Já enrabei também muito cara bombado de academia, que posa de macho, tem preconceito contra homossexuais, mas que, no fundo, no 'vamos ver,' tem tara por ficar de quatro, ser dominado. Acho que eles não têm coragem de procurar um homem e se sentem menos bichas se forem comidos por uma mulher. (78)

> I have already been with many an educated guy, acting macho, prejudiced against homosexuals, but who, in the end and when it counts, is begging to get on all fours and be dominated. I think that they don't have the courage to find a man and they feel less gay if they are penetrated by a woman.

Gender roles are a particularly weak component of any given sexual encounter recounted by Surfistinha. The open sexual philosophy espoused by the narrative includes "Dez mandamentos da Bruna Surfistinha" ("Ten commandments of Bruna Surfistinha"). In the case of unfulfilled sexual desire, she suggests the reader consult a professional.

The typical problems associated with prostitution are also obviated in her memoirs and Web writings. While she describes her addiction to cocaine as a serious problem, it is a secondary issue that is resolved after she endures "um *bad trip*" and decides to quit. She never mentions violence and there is no pimp who controls her. She states: "Até hoje, nunca tive problemas com clientes agresivos" ("Up to now, I never had problems with aggressive clients"). While she admits that other girls have been ill used, she herself is a sex worker not by necessity, but by choice: "[G]osto do que faço, não nego" ("I like what I do, I won't deny it"; 112). She describes her business practice and brags that she is so successful that "[c]om esse jeito de trabalhar, ja me permito folgar nos finais de semana. Com todo mundo não e assim? Porque com uma garota de programa seria diferente?" ("with my knack for this work, I now give myself weekends off. Isn't it the same for everyone? Why should it be any different for a call girl?"; 113). While her job is to break taboos and fulfill sexual fantasies (in some cases to fill in as a girlfriend for lonely men at social events), she sees herself as just another professional woman in Brazil. This narrative forces the reader to normalize the sexual acts whose prohibition drew the reader to the book in the first place and also to accept the concept that sex can be work. These contradictory forces of sexual normalcy and sensationalism create a moral ambiguity in the writing; it is a feminist validation of degendered sexuality and women's empowerment as well as a misogynistic sexual fantasy of women's bodies as sex objects.

Surfistinha saw her online blog as a means of personal expression rather than as a way to earn a living. As a middle-class youth in São Paulo, she grew up with the Internet at home: "Sempre fui maluca por navegar na Internet e tinha descoberto a febre dos blogs" ("I have always been crazy about navigating the Internet and had discovered a passion for blogs"; 84). After beginning her career as a sex worker, Surfistinha explains:

> Decidi procurar no Google por blogs de garotas de programa, só para ver como era a vida, o dia-a-dia de outra menina como eu, comparar. Na Internet tem de tudo, não tem? Surpresa: não encontrado! (84–85)
>
> I decided to search Google for blogs of call girls, just to see what their day-to-day life is like for a girl like myself, to compare. The Internet has some of everything, right? Surprise: Nothing!

Seeing the lack of Internet content about the life of "garotas de programa" gave her the idea to begin writing in her blog a diary of her work, complete with "cotações," or a grading rubric for her clients, with grades of "transa mecânica" ("mechanical sex"), "namoradinho" ("romantic sex"), or "putaria" ("whoring"). These descriptions became a central attraction to the fans of her blog.

During the years (2004–05) in which her blog writing and her life as a sex worker coincided, Surfistinha noted that her growing Internet celebrity manifested itself as increased interest on the part of clients and as the occasional gift from an adoring fan (121). As with most blog writers, there is no simple mechanism by which a person can support herself from what is accepted as free content. Internet culture in general has been consistently critical of attempts to charge for content, and in the case of Brazil and Latin America in general, Internet piracy is a matter of course. Her Web site, unlike the print publications of her writing, does not provide royalties.[10]

Internet content is a temporary medium displayed on a screen that can also include sound. It can be layered and mixed by content creators and users into constantly updated versions and streams of communication. A personal Web site like Surfistinha's works effectively with the synergy of an album by mixing media such as music, video, photos, and text. Increasingly complex, the site experienced increasing traffic from visitors. Her Web site did not catch on with a broader audience until she began to post photographs:

> Com as fotos conquistei a credibilidade das pessoas que não acreditavam que aquele blog era de uma garota de programa de verdade. Eu recibía varios emails de pessoas duvidando de mim. Muitos, inclusive, achavam que era um homem fantasiando tudo aquilo. (89)
>
> With photos I conquered the credibility of people who didn't believe that this blog was from a real call girl. I received various e-mails from

> people who doubted me. Many even believed that I was a man fantasizing all of this.

The fact that the public would doubt that a sex worker would write a blog speaks to the tradition of marginalization and silence surrounding sex workers. For Surfistinha to be accepted as a writing subject, she had to provide photographic evidence on her Web site. Photographic and later televised evidence of her gender was necessary to prove her story to a public that mistrusts the authenticity and truthfulness of the Internet and of sex workers. Her authority is also questioned because of the tradition of print narrative written by men about sex workers in Latin America.[11] It is ironic that the very controversy surrounding her gender created her immense popularity. She credits this online debate with making her Web site so popular (89).

Several times, hackers wrote false entries on her blog, although she always found a way to re-establish her authority by updating security or changing to new Web sites. The possibility of hackers' changing the content of a print publication is extremely unlikely; even if a false attribution were made on a pirated publication, the number of pirated versions of print writing would be necessarily limited. It takes a publishing apparatus to shepherd an author's manuscript through the process of editing, redaction, printing, transit, and commerce, finally to reach the hands of consumers. In online writing, however, a hacker can gain access to a site and upload new content or change or delete existing content at will, as was the case with Surfistinha. In a perverse way, hacking is a form of reader interaction impossible in print. The reader usurps control over the text. The instantaneous nature of online publication makes the effect of hacking immediate and conclusive. Surfistinha feared for her fledgling celebrity: "Fiquei com medo de que essa pessoa escrevesse algo que me comprometesse" ("I was afraid this person would write something that would compromise me"; 88). When she established her own Web site, her technical problems with hackers ended and she was able to expand her writing and include photos. The ownership of her domain name became a claim to her authenticity. Over one thousand Orkut users claim to be Bruna Surfistinha in their profiles. Her decision to appear on television was another way of proving her authenticity to a doubting public:

> [I]a mostrar meu rosto para que acreditassem que eu existia e era eu mesma (sim, tinha um monte de Brunas Surfistinhas falsas começando a pipocar por aí usando o meu nome, como a tal Samara, que se passou por mim no Orkut). (95)
>
> I was going to show my face so that people would believe that I existed and was who I said I was (yes, there were a ton of fake Bruna Surfistinhas popping up, using my name, like that Samara that posed as me on Orkut).

While "la ciudad letrada" and the nationalist rule of law ordered literary production in the twentieth century, the possibility of impostors was reduced. The control that publishing houses exert over literary production is too great for an impostor posing as João Guimarães Rosa to fool anyone. However, the ease of Internet publication and the loosening of control on literary production allows for anyone to assume a false name. Therefore, no money is lost by Surfistinha, but she is not able to use the courts to stop fakes.

After her appearance on the popular television variety show *Superpop*, she notes that her landlord stopped harassing her for bringing men to her apartment. As a typical sex worker, she suffered mistreatment and prejudice from the phallogocentric society. However, as a celebrity, "[p]assaram a me respeitar mais" ("they began to respect me more"; 96). For Surfistinha, one of the greatest rewards for operating her Web site is taking advantage of the double standard that Brazilian society holds for perceived members of the elite, albeit by means of the brief celebrity of the Internet. She is aware that her celebrity will pass quickly, as information technology becomes obsolete: "[M]eus 15 minutos de fama, que pena: esses minutinhos vão passar e eu vou continuar aqui, sendo eu mesma" ("My fifteen minutes of fame, what a shame: these minutes will pass and I will still be here, being myself"; 99–100). At the end of the memoir, she declares her impending retirement from prostitution to start a family with her boyfriend and to enjoy her celebrity as a national sex expert. She calls her years as a sex worker "uma fase pela qual tinha que passar. Sem arrependimentos" ("a phase through which I had to pass. Without regrets"; 131). She is now a married author of nonfiction and a media personality. João Pedro, Surfistinha's new husband, was married to Samantha Moraes when they began seeing each other. In the ensuing scandal, Moraes began a competing blog and authored a memoir sharing her side of the story, titled *Depois do Escorpião* (2006).

Throughout the narrative, Surfistinha expresses a pragmatic critique of her position. The book and the Web site are experiments, both creative and financial, and do not take away from her overall objective to use her body to become self-sufficient. Being a sex worker, for Surfistinha, is a choice that does not taint her ability to be a normal wage-earner, wife, and mother in the future. She insists that the benefits of citizenship are not exclusive to the clients of prostitution.

At the end of the book there is a special section, sealed on purchase by cellophane tape, called "As Historias Proibidas da Bruna Surfistinha" ("The Forbidden Stories of Bruna Surfistinha"; 135). The sealing of this chapter, printed in white letters on black paper, suggests an experience of entering the sexual unknown. The chapter itself serves as a kind of conclusion to the book and offers sex advice to couples looking to experiment. The salacious promise of opening the seal and reading these "forbidden" stories is a marketing ploy, much as the book itself is a marketing ploy. Surfistinha reformatted her free,

online writing to create a paper publication with Panda Books and became an author of a best-seller. Following her Internet success, she was able to publish books in a variety of media, begin work on a feature film of her story, and appear as a sex expert in a variety of venues. This book is a demonstration of a marginalized subject finding a public for her writing by using the technology of global capitalism and using public attention to take advantage of the rewards normally offered to print authors.

After ending her career as a sex worker, her posts became increasingly a personal diary of her day-to-day affairs, and her readership dissipated. As she suspected from the beginning, her fifteen minutes of fame came and went. The Web site is not currently available, but recently it was mostly links to Web site sales of diverse projects such as *O Doce Veneno*, a comic book version of *O Doce Veneno*, and information about the upcoming 2009 release of the film, *O Doce Veneno*. It is no longer the site of prurient chronicles of the life of a "garota de programa," unless the reader searches through archives of posts going back several years. Today, it is an online diary of a celebrity. One of thousands of marginalized sex workers in São Paulo, Pacheco successfully gained access to Brazilian national literary production and her performance of Bruna Surfistinha became her *ganha-pão* ("bread-earner"). During the brief years of the apex of her cultural visibility, Surfistinha was a sexually, textually, and technologically complex female icon who made use of the genre of the print memoir as part of her media presence.

Surfistinha has used her online writing to circumvent the controls of "la ciudad letrada" to gain access to the privileges of authorship—namely, financial remuneration in the form of book sales and the authority bestowed on experts by the reading public. By breaking down the troubles of the "association factor" and by being available at no cost to any online reader at any time, she is able to appeal to a broader public than would be possible through traditional print. The commercial enterprise of *O Doce Veneno do Escorpião* demonstrates the rise of erotic narrative in a medium particularly well suited to the anonymous viewer. Surfistinha's considerable financial success in selling more than 250,000 copies of her memoir is facilitated by the capitalist nature of publishing houses. Her print memoir was only made possible by online readers visiting her eponymous Web site. Without the Internet, Surfistinha would be little more than a statistic compiled by social scientists. Her Web site brought a marginalized voice to an international public. Sex workers in Brazil have been poorly treated by phallogocentric institutions and national media that make them out to be voiceless victims of drugs, violence, and disease. Her success demonstrates an optimal scenario for self-representation with information technology in an era of globalization and Internet content.

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1. Information regarding the demographics of Orkut can be found at www.orkut.com or via its parent company, Google.

2. This Web site has changed servers several times since 2004; currently www.brunasurfistinha.com is not available. Statistics about its users are mentioned in São Paulo's *Folha Online* book review of *O Doce Veneno* from November 8, 2005.

3. All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

4. In São Paulo there are currently public works of graffiti paid for by the city to decorate the empty canvas of urban concrete. The turn to legitimacy of graffiti parallels the increasing legitimacy bestowed by the public on personal blogs. As Rama would point out, these are new sectors disputing with established institutions of power.

5. In "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Benjamin held that art, individually produced by an artisan, contains an aura of singularity in its time and place, whereas the mass-produced object of art has no such singularity and can therefore be utilized by the masses in class struggle.

6. The 2007 Brazilian national census conducted by the Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística revealed that illiteracy rates in the country were down 0.4 percent from 2006. Youths aged fifteen to seventeen had an illiteracy rate of 1.4 percent, while in the 25 and over category, the rate increased to 12.5 percent. See Belchior.

7. Rocha Matos states:

> Ainda uma idéia irreverente teve o publicitário Ricardo Serran Lobo. O publicitário construiu um cyberdiário com um nome sugestivo: (www.vizinhodojefferson.blogger.com.br). Como era vizinho em Brasília do então deputado Roberto Jefferson (denunciante do escândalo do mensalão), acompanhou de sua janela a vida do parlamentar durante a CPI que culminou com a cassação do deputado em questão, bem como a de outros parlamentares envolvidos.
>
> The publicist Ricardo Serran Lobo had still another irreverent idea. The publicist created a blog with a suggestive name: (www.vizinhodojefferson.blogger.com.br). As he was a neighbor in Brasília of the then-delegate Roberto Jefferson (who made the first accusation of the monthly payment scandal), he watched the delegate from his window during the scandal investigation that ended with the delegate's firing as well as that of other politicians involved. (n. pag.)

8. In *The Dialogic Imagination*, Bakhtin used the term "heteroglossia" to describe the variety of narrative tones and voices used in a text (263).

9. Quotation from an online post on www.brunasurfistinha.com/index.php?cat=26.

10. Surfistinha did benefit from sales of ad space on her Web site. Nevertheless, without the printing of *O Doce Veneno*, her main source of income would have remained prostitution.

11. I refer to the practice of male authors creating prostitutes as main characters in their novels (for example, Federico Gamboa's *Santa* [1903]).

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