



**Body Parts on Planet Slum**  
 Women and *Telenovelas* in Brazil  
 Lisa Beljuli Brown

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**Rights Held:** World

**Description**

**A fascinating look into how women use soap operas to reconfigure suffering, pleasure, sexuality and embodiment.**

'*Body Parts on Planet Slum* offers provocative, unexpected insights that link Brazil's glitzy *novelas*, or daily soap operas, to the harsh social realities of urban life in Bahia. Reflecting on their suffering, survival strategies and Christian values, it reveals how women at the bottom of the socioeconomic spectrum find their lives unpredictably mirrored, and happy endings realized, in glamorous television dramas. It is a must-read.' —*Marguerite Itamar Harrison, Associate Professor of Portuguese and Brazilian Studies, Smith College*

'Pairings of sociology and psychoanalysis tend to go the way of reductionism: the empirical field is narrowed to fit the prescriptions of psychoanalytic theory, or else the theory is utilized with little fluency. Neither is the case in Lisa Beljuli Brown's brilliant analysis, in which lived experience and conceptual sophistication sit alongside an informed and sensitive politics to illuminate the topics of *telenovelas* and poor women's lives in the *bairro*.' —*Dr Derek Hook, Department of Psychosocial Studies, Birkbeck College, University of London*

'This bold study, moving between feminism, media studies and a social theory of global poverty [...] demonstrates that the diet of *telenovelas* destroys and yet sustains the women who constitute the poorest of the urban poor in the most "African" of Brazil's provinces.' —*Liz Gunner, 'Psychology in Society'*

Based on a year's research from within a Brazilian slum, this study follows a series of unemployed women who watch up to six hours of *telenovelas* a day, often in the midst of arduous physical labour in the home. The women suffer in relation to their bodies, but simultaneously invest in a masochistic glorification of suffering that links their lives to the soap operas, revealing disturbing valuations of the female body that traverse reality and fiction. Through its exploration of this daily integration of real suffering and fictional glamour and wealth, *Body Parts on Planet Slum* reveals how fantasy and social exclusion can together induce a form of psychological survivalism, enabling these women to reconfigure the central features of their existence – their suffering, pleasure, sexuality and embodiment.

**Readership:** Written in an accessible style, this book will appeal to both academic and general readers interested in popular culture, gender, poverty, development, urbanization and informal settlements.

**Contents**

Foreword; Introduction; Chapter 1. Theodicy and Ideology: 'Everybody Needs an Ideology to Live'; Chapter 2. The Meek Shall Inherit the Earth; But in the Meantime They Shall Watch *Telenovelas*; Chapter 3. Suffering Soaps; Fragmented Bodies; Chapter 4. The Politics of the Vagina; Chapter 5. The Redemptive Womb; Chapter 6. The Invisible Back; Final Feliz; Illustrations; Table: Women Respondents; Glossary; Bibliography; Index

**About the Author**

**Lisa Beljuli Brown** is Lecturer in the Department of Sociology at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa. She gained her PhD in social and political sciences from the University of Cambridge.

This volume also features a Foreword by **Juliet Mitchell**, Professor of Psychoanalysis and Gender Studies at Jesus College, University of Cambridge.

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