In 2014, Brazil will host the Soccer World Cup and, two years later, the 2016 Summer Olympics. The country has started bolstering its infrastructure in preparation for these events. In Rio de Janeiro, where the Olympics will be headquartered, the government has begun building and renovating sports facilities, such as the Maracanã Stadium. In addition to these changes, authorities are also endeavoring to “clean up” the urban centers where athletic competitions will occur. Many of these cosmetic improvements, aimed at promoting Rio’s “postcard” reputation, hide the fact that the city is also plagued by a myriad of social woes, such as criminal gangs that control many of the city’s low-income communities. Several of these neighborhoods are located along the “Linha Vermelha” (Red Line), the popular denomination for the João Goulart Expressway that links the city’s middle- and upper-class Zona Sul to its international airport. As such, the Linha Vermelha offers the first glimpses of the city to its foreign (and to many national) visitors.

The juxtaposition between the expressway and the poor communities that—in certain places literally border it—emblematizes the material and symbolic divisions that characterize Rio de Janeiro. On the one hand we have the flux of travelers making their way into the “Marvelous City.” On the other, there are the residents of neighborhoods such as Vigário Geral, Maré, and Parada de Lucas—names that have become synonymous with drug trafficking and other forms of criminality. Taxis, executive buses, private cars, and limousines zoom...
by the at times ramshackle houses along the Linha Vermelha. In an effort to spare the expected international guests from these not-so-picturesque sights, Rio’s city administration has begun erecting soundproof barriers between the Expressway and its adjacent districts. The fence, composed of panels measuring thirty meters in length and three in height, will cover 7.6 kilometers and will encircle entire communities (such as Maré). This infrastructure project communicates the notion that Rio’s lower-income districts, considered by its more affluent denizens as dangerous terrains, should be in effect cut off from the city proper. Not surprisingly, the metaphor of the “divided city” has become prominent in recent cultural production dealing with Rio de Janeiro. Films such as José Padilha’s Tropa de elite I and II (2007 and 2010, respectively) portray a city demarcated by invisible and yet violently palpable borders. But are there alternatives to this imagining/experiencing of Rio de Janeiro and, by extension, of many Brazilian metropolises?

In this chapter I discuss how Marcus Vinícius Faustini charts the city of Rio de Janeiro and, through this physical and discursive movement, creates territories of agency for the narrator-protagonist of Guia afetivo da periferia (Affective guide of the periphery, 2009). The protagonist-narrator’s journeys counteract the symbolic construction of Rio de Janeiro as a “divided city,” partitioned along socioeconomic lines. Rather, Guia afetivo da periferia concentrates on communal spaces and constructs narrative bridges between the metropolis’s different socioeconomic and cultural terrains. Constructing metaphoric bridges and traversing them, the narrator of Guia afetivo da periferia establishes himself as a citizen of the entire urbe, not a subject relegated to its geographic and figurative outskirts. Accordingly, it can be argued that the narrator of Guia afetivo da periferia performs what Engin F. Isin and Greg M. Nielsen call “acts of citizenship,” transformative communal and/or personal actions (2). By theorizing citizenship in terms of acts or agency, they advocate viewing citizens as agents of change rather than merely as passive holders of rights and obligations. In other words, Guia afetivo da periferia enacts the city. These urban enactments are a mode of insurgent citizenship. Because Guia afetivo da periferia demonstrates how sociocultural agency can be claimed through the act of reappropriating the city, the book differs from the novels discussed in previous chapters. Instead of focusing primarily on differentiated citizenship, Faustini’s text concentrates on insurgent practices, communicating a new perception of citizenship—the “right to have rights”—that is, an expression of changed socioeconomic conditions in post-2003 Brazil.