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14. The divergence of critical opinion over the merits of *La Zandunga* were evident in the reviews of Mexico City's major dailies. *Imparcial* totally panned the film while *Excelsior* hailed it as a glorious moment in Mexican cinema. See *Excelsior*, March 22, 1938.

15. The eight films were: *The Girl from Mexico* (1939), *Mexican Spitfire* (1940), *Mexican Spitfire Out West* (1940), *Mexican Spitfire's Baby* (1941), *Mexican Spitfire at Sea* (1942), *Mexican Spitfire Sees a Ghost* (1942), *Mexican Spitfire's Elephant* (1942), and *Mexican Spitfire's Blessed Event* (1943).

16. Quoted in Rodríguez-Estrada, "Dolores del Río and Lupe Vélez," 487.

17. Parish, *The RKO Gals*, 624.

18. *La Opinión*, May 24, 1931.

19. *Ibid.*, May 15, 1932.

20. Ramírez, *Lupe Vélez*, 114.

21. *La Opinión*, January 31, 1931.

22. *Ibid.*, May 22, 1932.

23. Quoted in Seth Fein, "El cine y las relaciones culturales entre México y Estados Unidos durante la década de 1930," *Secuencia* 34 (Spring 1996), 167-68.

24. For more on the development of the Mexican film industry, see Emilio García Riera, *Historia documental del cine mexicano*, vols. 1-4 (Mexico: Ediciones Era, 1969); and Carl J. Mora, *Mexican Cinema: Reflections of a Society, 1896-1988* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989); Seth Fein, "Hollywood, U.S.-Mexican Relations and the Devolution of the 'Golden Age' of Mexican Cinema," *Film Historia* 4:2 (1994), 103-35.

25. *Cine-Mundial*, February 1940, 77-78.

26. Ramírez, *Lupe Vélez*, 113.

17

To Be or Not to Be Brazilian? Carmen Miranda's Quest for Fame and "Authenticity" in the United States

Darién J. Davis

Before the military dictatorship of 1964, Brazilian immigration to the United States was numerically insignificant. According to the U.S. embassy records in Rio de Janeiro, Brazilian travelers fell under three major categories: students, tourists, and artists. In this essay, cultural historian Darién Davis examines the North American career of the most famous artist of all, "the Brazilian Bombshell," also known as "the Lady in the Tutti Frutti Hat," Carmen Miranda. She came to the United States as a cultural ambassador under the auspices of the Good Neighbor Policy to improve hemispheric understanding during the World War II era, and chose to live outside of Brazil for the increased career opportunities available to her on Broadway and in Hollywood. Davis finds that Miranda's limited command of English, coupled with the film industry's tendency to portray generic Latin types, meant that her public persona was limited mainly to some version of the Bahiana, the rural woman of African descent from Northeastern Brazil. For her willingness to accept culturally indistinct, even inaccurate, roles and for her international popularization of an archetype deemed undesirable by Brazil's white elite, Carmen Miranda's success in the United States earned her much criticism back home.

Davis finds that Carmen Miranda used her music to strike back at her critics, thereby giving her a more overtly political and personal character than previously recognized. Furthermore, like Mexican film stars Dolores del Río and Lupe Vélez discussed in Chapter 16, Miranda found herself caught between two nations. All three Latin American women had to cope with ethnic and gender stereotypes held in the entertainment industry. All three also had to justify their success to critics in their home countries and used their positions to educate the American public about Latin American cultures at least in some small way. Davis's article contributes to the growing field of film history, and indicates the ambiguity

and tension that commercial success in the United States historically have meant for Latin American artists.

Historically, American popular music has developed as a result of cross-pollination and the importation of musical forms, rhythms, and instruments brought by diverse people who are displaced from their homelands. Today, the Portuguese- and Spanish-speaking populations in the United States have attained a critical mass that allows for the importation of Latin American musicians catering to these transnational audiences in their native languages. In the 1990s, Brazilian musicians such as Gilberto Gil, Caetano Veloso, Milton Nascimento, and Jorge Ben, and younger singers such as Marisa Monte and Daniela Mercury, have performed in Portuguese to sold-out audiences in major metropolitan areas on both the east and west coasts. However, this success is still a recent phenomenon; the current popularity of Brazilian music in the United States must be seen as the third stage in a long historical tradition of Brazilian-American cross-pollination that began in the late 1930s with the arrival of Carmen Miranda, and continued in the early 1960s with the bossa nova. This chapter places Miranda within the context of the literature on exiles by examining the relationship between her musical career in the United States and the impact of her work on her sense of *brasilidade*, or Brazilian-ness, in her adopted country.¹ Because Miranda's own sense of Brazilian-ness was closely related to her relationship to her compatriot fans, it is important to explore her changing relationship to Brazil during her stay in the United States from 1940 to 1954. Miranda, like many musical performers who leave their homelands to live and perform elsewhere, was a displaced artist who occupied an ambiguous cultural space in which she attempted to affirm her own national identity while satisfying her hunger to become a popular musical performer in the United States.

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy (1933–1947) encouraged the pilgrimage of Brazilian entertainers in an effort, albeit ill conceived, to sensitize American audiences to Latin American cultural traditions. Unfortunately, the arrival of Brazilians like Carmen Miranda, Aurora Miranda, Ary Barbosa, and Aloysio de Oliveira did not overcome cultural barriers as anticipated, and in fact very often led to further misperceptions and stereotypes of Latin Americans in general and especially of Brazilians. In addition, the unique experience afforded to select representatives who were creating expatriate Brazilian music in the United States engendered antagonisms between those performers here and their Brazilian critics at home who bemoaned that the music was no longer "authentic." Moreover, critics labeled many Brazilian musicians who became successful in the United States "un-Brazilian," or worse, charged that these performers had become *americanizado*. Critics constantly hurled this epithet at Miranda. Yet her own struggles as a performer, artist, and

entertainer revolved around her attempt to balance her desire to achieve success and her sense of obligation to Brazilians everywhere.

While Brazilian migration to and settlement in the United States shows remarkable similarities with the "push and pull" patterns of other Latin American immigrants, Brazilians represent a most curious case for study.² The first Brazilians to arrive during the early decades of the twentieth century were temporary residents, predominantly from the upper class, traveling for leisure, or in some cases to study in one of the prestigious academic institutions. Foreign residence afforded them the opportunity to observe the differences between life in the United States and Brazil. For instance, the experience of renowned sociologist Gilberto Freyre as a student at Baylor College in Texas (1918–1920) and at Columbia University (1920–1922) allowed him to write comparatively about Brazilian and American culture at the time.³ According to Freyre, his desire to write about Brazil surged when he was in New York. He remembered "with bitterness the disrespectful phrase from two Anglo-Saxon tourists that spoke of the fearful Mongrel aspect of the Brazilian population."⁴ This offensive slur led Freyre to head a new wave of Brazilian scholarship that defended miscegenation, or racial mixing, as a creative force that should be celebrated.⁵ Since the late 1930s, Brazilian culture has continued to make its impression on the American national consciousness thanks to the creation of icons such as Carmen Miranda and Disney's parrot Joe Carioca.⁶ Of course, these representations tell perhaps more about American perceptions of Brazilians than about the people themselves, but behind them lies a trail of documents that affirms the small but growing Brazilian presence in the United States.

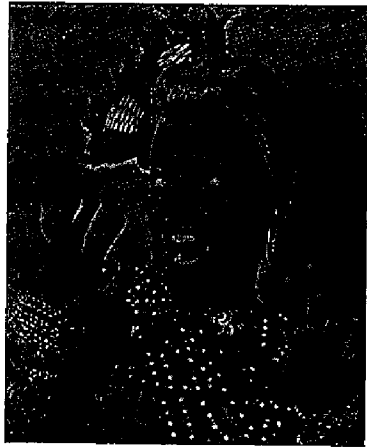
Carmen Miranda was not, in fact, Brazilian by birth. Born into poverty in Portugal in 1909, she moved to Brazil with her mother in 1910 to join her father, José Maria Pinto da Cunha, a barber who had already established himself in Rio de Janeiro. Although she retained a Portuguese passport for most of her adult life, Carmen grew up fully Brazilianized in the city's working-class neighborhoods, surrounded by popular music and dance. As a girl, she worked at various jobs including a stint at a millinery where she learned how to trim hats, an accessory that would later prove indispensable to her performances in the United States. As Carmen's voice gained attention from customers who heard her sing in the hat shop, she dreamed of becoming a movie star, and the opportunity for a wider audience soon presented itself.

Carmen's entrance into the epicenter of Brazilian popular culture during the populist regime of Getulio Vargas in the 1930s allowed her to showcase musical rhythms from the largely black and mulatto lower classes before a national audience. Her personal charisma and charm, combined with her ability to inject humor, satire, criticism, and laughter into her musical creations, allowed her to capture the support of the fans from the

popular sectors as well as from the growing middle class in a non-confrontational, non-threatening manner. By 1935, Miranda had won several national music competitions and had already been elected by her fans as “the Queen of Carioca Broadcasting,” “the Ambassadors of Samba,” and “the Queen of Samba.”⁷ However, by the end of the 1930s, Miranda, who had already conquered the Brazilian entertainment industry and performed in several movies, was seeking new opportunities. In an era when roles for all blacks and women of any color were limited, Miranda was able to make inroads into a male-dominated industry as a white female performer of black popular rhythms and forms such as the *batucada* and the samba.⁸ Her success gave her confidence and whetted her appetite for the challenges of a career in film that could reach a larger, international audience.

Although Miranda’s adaptation of “the Bahiana,” a typical black woman from the northeastern city of Salvador de Bahia, occurred by chance, that image played an important role in launching her movie career (Figure 12). Her professional relationship with the Bahian composer and singer Dorival Caymmi had brought her in direct contact with the musical tradition of Bahia, then considered the mecca of Brazilian music.

In 1938, Caymmi had moved to Rio de Janeiro where he met Miranda through the efforts of Almirante, an important popular musician in his own right, on the set of the film *Banana da Terra*. Caymmi allowed Miranda to perform his *samba-bahiano*, “O que é que o bahiana tem?” (What is it that the Bahian woman has?), in which she responded to the question by listing a host of ornaments including a silk turban, golden earrings, trimmed sandals, all of which adorned the singer’s body and transformed her into an exaggerated version of a white Bahiana. In *Banana da Terra*, Carmen Miranda not only became the Bahiana but also danced for the first time, making her a complete performer.⁹



Carmen Miranda’s self-promotion as “La Bahiana” catapulted her to international stardom but limited her roles in Hollywood and drew criticism from Brazilians worried about their nation’s image abroad. Photograph by W. Eugene Smith

Carmen’s dazzling Bahiana performance at the Cassino da Urca attracted the attention of Broadway theater impresario Lee Shubert in February 1939. After seeing her show, Shubert offered Miranda a contract to perform in the United States, and she left Rio on May 3, 1939.¹⁰ Thirteen

days later, she stepped onto American soil to begin a new career in a land where people did not understand her language, and where she was far away from the popular classes that had inspired and embraced her. Luckily for Miranda, she had managed to convince Shubert and the Brazilian government to allow the Bando da Lua to travel with her so that she was not performing alone. She understood that without Brazilian musicians she might not be able to perform her tunes successfully, and therefore agreed to take a cut in her own pay in order to cover the wages of her band. Still, doubts lingered. How would she perform before this new audience? How would her music change? And how would she fare as Brazil’s cultural ambassador under these trying circumstances?

The relationship between official national representation and commercial entertainment is not easily reconciled, particularly when an artist like Miranda finds herself in a context in which the aesthetic demands of the new audience are fundamentally different from those of the audiences that supported her in Brazil. Nevertheless, Miranda was ecstatic to be in the United States. She had captured the hearts of Brazilian audiences and now had the opportunity to conquer those of North Americans as well. Already, Miranda had succeeded in ways that she had never imagined, but her arrival provided her with a major challenge. How would she present herself to the American people? Almost immediately, Miranda’s commercial instincts dominated her sense of national representation, and she began performing for the American press. According to Helena Soldberg, Brazilian director of the docudrama *Bananas Is My Business* (1995), “not knowing a word of English, she throws around a few words she has learned, and suddenly she sounds like a bimbo. This is not *our* Carmen. This impression would stay forever with the Americans. This is the Carmen that they will love.”¹¹

The undeniably white singer-dancer Miranda had evolved into the Bahiana by adopting for herself the archetype of a black woman from Bahia, thereby making the image accessible and palatable to her nation’s sophisticated urban elites while inviting the rural folk into the national consciousness. In reality, an actual black Bahiana performer would never have been paid to sing or perform in any stylish club in Brazil, much less flown to New York to perform on Broadway. By expropriating popular black symbols, Carmen was simply doing what white musicians and entertainers in both Brazil and the United States had done for decades. She was, however, the first South American to take this success across international boundaries. The North American entertainment industry welcomed her outlandish image, and further modified it to entertain millions during the tumultuous World War II years. Leaving Brazil as a cultural ambassador, Carmen promised her audiences that she would not forget her roots: “In my numbers everything will be there: *canela* [cinnamon], *pimenta* [pepper], *dendê* [coconut palm oil], *cuminho* [cumin]. . . I’m

taking *vatapá* [Bahian chicken and shrimp stew], *caruru* [a dish of mustard greens, or similar leafy vegetable, cooked with fish or jerked beef], . . . *balangandas* [jewelry], *acarajé* [Bahian fritters].¹² Indeed, American entertainment critics would agree that Miranda provided all the necessary ingredients for a memorable performance, but the extent to which it was authentically Brazilian was debatable. Many of her transplanted sambas ultimately became unrecognizable, drawing her Brazilian identity into question and allowing her critics to attack her in the area in which she was most vulnerable.

As Hollywood exported its films throughout the region, many Latin American entertainers found themselves receiving unprecedented attention. The State Department Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs under Nelson Rockefeller created a special Motion Picture section aimed at utilizing the media in promoting an ambiguous but friendly alliance between the hemisphere's northern and southern neighbors.¹³ In addition to Carmen Miranda, other Latin American stars who emerged in this era included Carlos Ramírez, César Romero, Desi Arnaz, Dolores del Río, Carmen's sister Aurora Miranda, and the Disney cartoon figures of Joe Carioca and Panchito, the Mexican rooster. A whole host of Latin American stars joined their North American counterparts to produce an elaborate cornucopia of entertaining films designed to amuse and elicit laughter from the war-weary audiences, often without specific references to the national cultures from which the stars came. Indeed, one of the legitimate criticisms of the cultural practices inherent in the Good Neighbor Policy was that it contributed to the creation of a generic Latin American culture in which fun-loving people danced and sang indiscriminately to sambas, Mexican hat-dances, and rumbas. This so-called Latin music played a pivotal role in gaining Hollywood acceptance for Latin American artists, yet it also diluted their national distinctiveness. For example, in the musical comedy *Springtime of Youth*, Sigmund Romberg wrote a song called "In Brazil," with a chorus inexplicably written in Spanish even though Brazil was a Portuguese-speaking country, and instrumentation that seemed more Cuban than anything else. The great Hollywood musical therefore provided an ambiguous vehicle for the dissemination of Latin American culture among U.S. audiences. The era of internationalized Latin American styles meant that Miranda's performance of Brazilian music would become a cross-border hybrid as well.¹⁴

Carmen Miranda's first record in the United States was "South American Way," written by Jimmy MacHugh and Al Dublin especially for her in the musical *The Streets of Paris*. "South American Way" was part of a new genre of songs that Abel Cardoso calls *abrasileiradas*, or Brazilianized melodies. According to Abel Cardoso, Miranda and the Bando da Lua apparently adapted the original English composition to a samba rhythm,

and Aloysio de Oliveira wrote the Portuguese lyrics.¹⁵ Although the song represented a joint collaboration of a sort, the lyrics pandered to American audiences while producing a one-dimensional view of the fun-loving, laid-back, and identifiably lazy "South American way." Miranda injected humor into the performance and into the recording by pronouncing "south" as "souze," an American slang word for a state of drunkenness. Although written mainly in Portuguese to maintain a sense of authenticity, the song contained English verses to ensure that the audience received the basic message. Thus, Carmen's first Brazilian-American hybrid was born:

Ai ai ai ai
E o canto do pregoneiro
Que com sua harmonia
Traz alegria
In South American way

Ai ai ai ai
E o que faz em seu tabuleiro
Vende pra ioió
In South American way

E vende vatapá
E vende caruru
E vende mungunzá
Vende umbu

No tabuleiro tem
Oi tem tudo tem
E só não tem meu bem
Berenguedem

Ai ai ai ai
Have you ever danced in the tropics?
With that hazy, lazy like,
Kind of crazy like,
South American way

Ai ai ai ai
Have you ever kissed in the moonlight?
In the grand and glorious,
Gay notorious,
South American way

In the 1940s, "South American Way" was not only an outright propaganda piece that provided an accessible and easily digested image of South America, but it was also a show tune that created a niche for Miranda in the North American entertainment industry. The fact that Carmen dressed as the Bahiana to perform this tune in both the musical *The Streets of Paris* and in her first movie, *Down Argentine Way!* indicates the extent to which she was willing to expropriate Brazilian popular class symbols and

project them as representative of the generic "South American way" that she conveniently embodied. Henceforth, her performances, compositions, and musical recordings in the United States would be limited to this model.

In *Down Argentine Way* (1940), Miranda starred with Betty Grable, Charlotte Greenwood, and Don Ameche. Director Irving Cummings gave Miranda a small role in which she performed four songs dressed in some variation of the Bahiana. Not surprisingly, the songs were indicative of Carmen's rapid transformation from "the Queen of Samba" to Hollywood performer of hybrid Latin numbers. In addition to "South American Way," Miranda sang the Brazilian compositions "Mamãe o Quero," "Bambu Bambu," and "Touradas em Madrid" in a Hollywood setting of Buenos Aires that recalled the generic Latin images. A *New York Times* review reported that the movie would certainly promote neighborliness thanks to the appearance of "the beautiful Miss (Betty) Grable and a couple of peppery songs from Carmen Miranda."¹⁶ The film may have had a silly plot, but the reviewer predicted that it was bound to be a success because of the sensual presence of its stars. For North American directors, sensuality and exoticism were two key components central to Miranda's on-screen appeal.

After fourteen successful months in the United States during which she won over female and male audiences alike, Miranda returned home on July 7, 1940. Cannily dressed in green and yellow, the Brazilian national colors, Miranda was greeted by thousands of fans who led her in a festive parade through the southern zone of Rio de Janeiro.¹⁷ However, not everyone was happy with her success in the United States. The São Paulo paper, *A Folha da Noite*, registered the opinion of many who objected to her particular representation of Brazil: "So that's how Brazil shines in the United States: with a Portuguese woman singing bad-tasting black sambas. It is really like that! And so that's how it should be. Because there really aren't many people in this country who are worth as much as that Carmen, that great and excellent Carmen who left to sing nonsense abroad."¹⁸ The upper classes were particularly concerned with their image abroad and wanted Miranda to emphasize their European heritage rather than their African-ness.

To other enemies, Miranda was not Brazilian enough. Though she had grown up in Rio and had lived there all of her life, the fact that she retained a Portuguese passport, apparently out of respect for her parents, did not sit well with her nationalistic critics.¹⁹ When journalist Damasceno de Brito asked about her nationality, Carmen replied that she considered herself Brazilian, "more carioca, a sambista from the favela, more carnavalesca than a singer of fados."²⁰ Miranda never felt Portuguese, and as Martha Gil Montero reports, she found the Portuguese immigrant community's adoration of her rather strange. She had risen to international attention performing popular music clearly associated with blacks in Bra-

zil. Nevertheless, sensitive to pressure from her critics, Miranda did apply for a Brazilian passport before returning to Hollywood, but her request was denied; not until two years before her death did the Brazilian government finally grant her citizenship. Paradoxically, it was the harsh Brazilian criticism coupled with new opportunities to perform that drove Miranda away from her homeland and back to the United States, where she remained for almost fourteen years. Success, money, and prestige aside, the Brazilian critics' reaction was crucial to Carmen's identity transformation in the United States. Their unexpectedly severe response to her success abroad had caused Miranda to doubt her ability to fulfill the promises made to her Brazilian fans, which in turn led her to question her own commitment to her country.

Carmen's love affair with Brazil, and her own sense of *brasilidade*, depended upon her compatriots' approval. Ironically, the first song to catapult her to the status of national icon in 1930, "Tai" (I did everything for you to like me), encapsulated the relationship that Miranda had with her Brazilian fans. During her return tour of Brazil in 1940, she utilized her music to address the criticism leveled at her by the press. "Voltei pro morro" (I came back to the hills), "Diz que tem" (She says that she has it), "Disso que eu gosto" (That's what I like), "Disseram que voltei americanizada" (They say that I've become Americanized), "Ginga Ginga," "Blaque Blaque," "E um quê a gente tem" (It's one that the people have), "O dengo que a nega tem" (The umph that the black woman has) all affirm Miranda's sense of Brazilian-ness, often in exaggerated language and through a celebration of music, food, and national customs.

Most important among her recordings was "Disseram que voltei americanizada," in which she tried to convince audiences of her commitment to Brazil:

How can I be Americanized?
I who was born with samba
and who lives in the open air
dancing to the old *batucada*
all night long!
The *malandro* balls
are my most preferred.
I still say *Eu te amo*
and never *I love you*.
As long as there is a Brazil
during mealtime
I will only have shrimp
in sauce with *chuchu*.²¹

At the same time, in an interview with *O Globo*, one of Rio's leading newspapers, Carmen staunchly declared that she was "100% Brazilian."²² These affirmations of her identity failed to recapture her popularity among certain sectors of the Brazilian public. Nonetheless, "Disseram que voltei

americanizada" would later become the unofficial hymn of many Brazilian musicians who moved abroad, and who were likewise accused of betraying their national roots for fame in the United States.

On her return to the United States in October 1940, she performed in another Schubert production, *Sons o' Fun*, in New York before moving to Los Angeles. In 1941 she embarked on a frenzied schedule that included appearances in films, on the radio, and in nightclubs and theaters. Despite the multiple media through which Carmen reached her audiences, she became best known to both Americans and Brazilians alike as a film star. Obviously, Brazilians back home could not see her live performances in theaters or nightclubs where her numbers were much more imaginative and spontaneous and where she showcased more authentic Brazilian rhythms. In these more intimate forums, she was able to perform with fewer restrictions. She delighted in playing with her Brazilian band, since, as she reported to the press: "You know very well how Brazilian music becomes Cubanized or Mexicanized when it is played by American orchestras."²³

Between 1941 and 1947, she appeared in nine Hollywood films: *That Night in Rio* (1941), *Weekend in Havana* (1941), *Springtime in the Rockies* (1942), *The Gang's All Here* (1943), *Four Jills and a Jeep* (1944), *Greenwich Village* (1944), *Something for the Boys* (1944), *Doll Face* (1945), and *If I'm Lucky* (1946). Though her role as a sensual and exotic personality from South America emerges in all these films, Carmen also subverted U.S. stereotypes when she parodied herself in films such as *Doll Face* (in which her character refuses to become just another Carmen). Her comedic exaggeration, coupled with her use of food and outrageous fashion, gave her image a humorous and ironic edge.²⁴ This strategy is particularly evident in *The Gang's All Here* in which, according to Shari Roberts, Miranda "lampoons both U.S.-Latin American trade relations and notions of feminine sexuality . . . through the casting of Miranda as the overseer of countless enormous swaying phallic bananas buoyed up by lines of chorus girls who dance above other girls, who have oversized strawberries between their legs."²⁵ It is easy to understand why her image as the Bahiana and its various incarnations seemed especially made for the silver screen.²⁶

It is likely that Miranda's decision to perform hybrid tunes that mixed English and Portuguese, or Portuguese tunes with simple and easily remembered lyrics, mirrored that of another contemporary Latin performer whose authenticity was often questioned. The expatriate Spaniard Xavier Cugat reportedly justified his flamboyant style with uncomplicated compositions for American audiences because, as he said, "Americans know nothing about Latin music. They neither understand nor feel it. So they have to be given music more for the eyes than for the ears. Eighty percent visual. The rest aural."²⁷ The Hollywood musical seemed based on this

very assumption, and thus Latin American numbers were usually accompanied by an extravagant visual spectacle. Within this genre, Miranda excelled.

Carmen was caught up in the Hollywood game much like her American counterparts, who either played one-dimensional roles offered by the studios with which they had contracts or found no opportunity at all. Still, Miranda did choose to return to her stereotypical roles after the failure of *Copacabana*, in which she starred with Groucho Marx. North Americans seemed to love the Bahiana, and that seemed to be her only commercially viable forum of expression. A famous *Life* magazine article in July 1939 reveals that audiences enjoyed her performance because of her personal charisma and her electric body language, which interpreted the Portuguese lyrics for them.²⁸ Such songs as "Co, Co, Co Co, Co, Co, Co, Ro" (1939), "I Yi, Yi, Yi, Yi, I Like You Very Much" (1941), "Chica Chica Boom, Chic" (1941), "Cae, Cae" (1941), "Chattanooga Choo Choo" (1942), "Up Upa" (1945), and "Tico Tico" (1945) were among others that contain playful uses of monosyllabic words. Their titles alone suggest that the spirit of the songs was much more important than the composition itself. Her English recordings included light upbeat fox-trots, sambas, and rumbas typical of the era, and were often sung with other popular entertainers in the United States, including the Andrews Sisters. Her recordings with American performers such as "Cuanto Le Gusta" (1947), "The Wedding Samba" (1949), and "Yipsee-I-O" (1950) all occurred after the making of *Copacabana*, when she was searching for new ways to express herself after the war.

Her final three movies, *A Date with Judy* (1948), *Nancy Goes to Rio* (1950), and *Scared Stiff* (1953), reveal that Miranda had already begun to become passé. The war had ended, and the Office of Inter-American Affairs no longer needed Hollywood to forge neighborliness. Carmen had enjoyed a remarkably long career, especially considering that her roles remained static and relatively unaltered for over a decade in an industry where movie stars come and go. By the 1950s, however, Carmen Miranda increasingly resorted to self-parody. In some cases, she settled for inferior roles, and her declining appeal at the box office was all too apparent. In *Scared Stiff*, for example, Jerry Lewis gave an exaggerated impersonation of Miranda, after an act in which Miranda herself appears in the film. It was a box-office flop.²⁹

With the development of the television industry, Carmen also began to appear as a guest artist on a number of shows as some variation of the Bahiana. On the popular *NBC Texaco Star Theater* hosted by Milton Berle, she appeared as a native from a land called Texacabana. In that episode, Miranda sang "Chica Chica Bum" while Tony Martin, another guest on the show, performed "Aquerela do Brasil" in English and Spanish. Already by this time, female and male impersonations of Carmen had

become common, and the show ungraciously concluded with Berle's own comical takeoff on the Bahiana. Her last public performance occurred in 1955 on the Jimmy Durante Show, as she continued to gauge her appeal to the newly emerging television audiences. Miranda died at her home in Beverly Hills the morning after taping the show, generating conflicting reports of the cause of death, which ranged from exhaustion, drinking, drug dependency, and heart problems.³⁰

On August 13, 1955, the largest crowd recorded in Brazilian history to date attended the burial of Maria del Carmo Miranda da Cunha in the cemetery of St. John the Baptist in Rio de Janeiro.³¹ The United States afforded Miranda the opportunity to fulfill her life-long dream of becoming an international movie star, but, as Martha Gil-Montero so aptly put it, "she knew that she had conquered Hollywood, that she would be successful, that she would earn money, but that she would never belong. She was not going to turn into an American."³² Miranda could not have predicted that her U.S. success meant that her countrymen would consistently question her Brazilian-ness. To American audiences she was unmistakably "the Brazilian Bombshell," but for her critics back home, she had lost all authenticity and had become Americanized.

She worked in a racist film industry that accepted her in the studios but was not so relaxed off-screen, and her colleagues Harold and Fayard Nichols insinuated that racism played a role in Miranda's choice to avoid the "out-of-studio" social scene.³³ In fact, many white Brazilians have also remarked that they sensed sharper racial tensions in the United States than they had ever experienced at home. In the 1930s that harsh realization must have been particularly painful for Carmen, given her nation's officially preferred world-view that celebrated Brazilian racial democracy and downplayed racial inequalities and conflict in that country. Ironically, those same racial inequalities allowed white performers such as Miranda to expropriate black Brazilian rhythms and use them to dominate the popular music scene. At the same time, Carmen lived in a relaxed social environment where black, white, and mulatto musicians and composers surrounded her. Black and mulatto musicians and composers such as Assis Valente, Dorival Caymmi, and Synval Silva had inspired her, and she in turn had given opportunities to many rising stars such as Caymmi and Angela Maria.

Despite Miranda's wild and exotic image on screen, she lived a relatively quiet life and preferred her home to nightclubs. Indeed, it had the feeling of a Brazilian enclave. She lived with her mother and sister Aurora, and their house was open to other Brazilian residents in Los Angeles as well as to strangers who were passing through. Carmen never became a North American, nor was that ever her desire. Despite her unwritten commitment to Brazilians to celebrate and promote their music and culture,

Carmen Miranda was in the United States because her Bahiana image had become a commercially viable product that grossed millions of dollars for the entertainment industry. Investors within the industry attempted to capitalize on the "Latin craze," and Miranda willingly participated. However, she no longer exercised almost exclusive control over her "product," as she had in Brazil. In a new environment, among strangers who were driven by a different sense of aesthetics and who spoke a different language, Carmen's hybrid songs, which exposed many Americans to Latin American-like music, also contributed to the creation of Latin American stereotypes that remain present in the United States today.³⁴

Like Miranda, the generation of musicians who followed her to the United States in the 1950s and 1960s were obliged to affirm that they, too, had not become Americanized, by living and working constantly in dialogue with their memory of Brazil. The opposite also holds true; Brazilians in the United States, called *brazucas*, continue to fascinate those back home. In 1994 the popular soap opera *Pátria Minha*, a Rede Globo production, depicted the problems of adjustment of two Brazilians, Pedro and Ester, who had lived in New York for eight years but ultimately went back to Rio to begin their lives anew. The return, or at least the myth of the return, remains constant in the consciousness of many immigrant groups. Like other Latin Americans, many Brazilians feel that they will go to the United States and come home with enough money to lead a better life.³⁵

Intellectuals, musicians, and other entertainers were instrumental in laying the foundations of a Brazilian-American identity from the 1930s to the 1960s. Brazilian musician Caetano Veloso, who is largely responsible for resurrecting Carmen Miranda as a Brazilian icon during the 1970s, had this to say about her legacy in a recent essay for the *New York Times*: "For generations of musicians who were adolescents in the second half of the 1950s and became adults at the height of the Brazilian military dictatorship and the international wave of counterculture—my generation—Carmen Miranda was first a cause of both pride and shame, and later, a symbol that inspired the merciless gaze we began to cast upon ourselves. . . . Carmen conquered 'white' America as no other South American had done or ever would, in an era when it was enough to be 'recognizably Latin and Negroid' in style and aesthetics to attract attention."³⁶

For Veloso and other musicians contemplating a career abroad, Miranda's pioneering experiences continue to loom as a point of reference. Miranda helped establish and transform the relationship between Brazilian musicians and American producers that now has created several remarkable transnational collaborations. In Veloso's words: "To think of her is to think about the complexity of this relationship: 'Olodum' on Paul Simon's album, the collection of Tom Zé's experimental sambas

released by David Byrne, Nana Vasconcelos and Egberto Gismonti, Sting and Araoní; Tania Maria, Djavan, and Manhattan Transfer, Milton Nascimento. Carmen is everywhere."

One of the winning entries in the 1995 literary competition promoted by the Brazilian-American newspaper *The Brazilians* reinforces Carmen Miranda's pioneering experience in the dialogue between Brazilian national identity and the condition of foreign residence. "Nós os brasileiros SEM BRASIL" (We, the Brazilians without Brazil) speaks of identity in a new land and the challenges to the immigrant; "Oh, sorrow that vacillates between 'who I am' and 'where I am' / Empty my mind and transform me into a river of longing." But the poem also calls on Brazilians abroad to celebrate *brasilidade* in their new home:

And together, we will laugh so much, oh, so much
That we will cry from homesickness with tears, so lost and lonely,
Tears that resemble us because we are Brazilians without Brazil.³⁷

The conflicts that Miranda experienced in the United States that centered on her sense of national identity and her relationship with her homeland were magnified because of the attention of the media, particularly film. Nonetheless, her experience provides an example of the challenges of strangers in new lands everywhere.

Notes

1. George Black, *The Good Neighbor* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988); George Hadley-García, *Hispanic Hollywood: The Latins in Motion Pictures* (New York: Carol Publishing Group, 1993); Martha Gil-Montero, *Brazilian Bombshell: The Biography of Carmen Miranda* (New York: Donald I. Fine Inc., 1989).
2. See Maxine Margolis, *Little Brazil: An Ethnography of Brazilian Immigrants in New York City* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), for a discussion of Brazilian immigration to the United States.
3. For a discussion of Freyre's racial democracy and Luso-Portuguese tropicalism see Gilberto Freyre, *Portuguese Integration in the Tropics* (Lisbon: Tipografia Silva, 1961). Of course, Freyre's myth of "racial democracy" has since been debunked.
4. Lewis Hanke, *Gilberto Freyre. Vida y obra. Bibliografía antología* (New York: Instituto de las Españas en los Estados Unidos, 1939), 8.
5. Gilberto Freyre, "O homem brasileiro: Formação étnica e cultural," *Estudo de problemas brasileiros* (Recife: Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, 1971): 167-78.
6. *Carioca* is the term which refers to people from Rio de Janeiro in Brazil.
7. Carmen Miranda Folder, Museu da Imagem e do Som, Rio de Janeiro.
8. Gil-Montero, *Brazilian Bombshell*, 31.
9. *Ibid.*, 52-57. That same month she recorded the smash hit "O que é que a bahiana tem" with Dorival Caymmi.
10. *Ibid.*, 59-70; Abel Cardoso, Jr., *Carmen Miranda: A cantora do Brasil* (São Paulo: Cardoso Junior, 1978), 129-33.
11. Helena Soldberg, *Carmen Miranda: Bananas Is My Business* (1995). Italics are mine to emphasize the Brazilian claim to Miranda.
12. Cardoso, *Carmen Miranda*, 140.
13. Black, *Good Neighbor*, 60-71.
14. For a general history see John Storm Roberts, *Latin Tinge: The Impact of Latin American Music on the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).
15. Cardoso, *Carmen Miranda*, 474-76; "The Streets of Paris Moves to Broadway," *New York Times* (June 20, 1939), p. 16; "High Mark in Low Comedy," *New York Times* (June 25, 1939), section 9, pp. ix-1.
16. "Down Argentine Way with Betty Grable at the Roxy," *New York Times* (October 18, 1940), amusement section, p. 25.
17. "Rio Hails Carmen Miranda," *New York Times* (July 11, 1949), p. 6. See *O Globo* (July 7, 1940), p. 2. See also Cardoso, *Carmen Miranda*, 167-74.
18. Quoted in Cardoso, *Carmen Miranda*, 163. "E assim que o Brasil brilha?" *Folha da Noite*, January 30, 1940, p. 3. See also the magazine *Careta* for September 28, 1940.
19. Gil-Montero, *Brazilian Bombshell*, 215-16. Carmen reportedly held on to her Portuguese passport until 1953. She had requested a Brazilian passport in 1948, but the authorities did not grant her one until 1953 so that she could complete a European tour to showcase her music.
20. Damasceno de Brito, *O ABC de Carmen Miranda* (São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1986), 69.
21. Unless otherwise noted, all of Carmen Miranda's recordings can be found in the archives of the Museu da Imagem e do Som, Rio de Janeiro. EMI, Brazil has also released the most comprehensive compilation of Miranda's recordings in a five-part CD entitled *Carmen Miranda* (1996).
22. See *O Globo* (July 7, 1940), p. 2.
23. Alex Viány in *O Cruzeiro* (November 13, 1948), as quoted in Cardoso, *Carmen Miranda*, 195-96.
24. Shari Roberts, "The Lady in the Tutti Frutti Hat: Carmen Miranda, A Spectacle of Ethnicity," *Cinema Journal* 13:3 (Spring 1992): 15.
25. *Ibid.*
26. *Ibid.*, 12. *Copacabana* was a United Artists production directed by Richard Thorpe in 1947. Unlike the earlier shows, this film did not do well at the box office.
27. Storm Roberts, *Latin Tinge*, 87.
28. "Broadway Likes Miranda's Piquant Portuguese Songs," *Life* (July 17, 1939), 34. Also see Shari Roberts's discussion of Miranda's use and misuse of both English and Portuguese to render a comical, exotic performance in "Lady in the Tutti Frutti Hat," 10-11.
29. George Marshall, *Scared Stiff* (Paramount, 1953); Soldberg, *Bananas Is My Business* (1994); Gil-Montero, *Brazilian Bombshell*, 211-12.
30. Television recording, The Museum of Television and Sound (New York City).
31. Soldberg, *Bananas Is My Business*; Cardoso, *Carmen Miranda*, 29-30; Carmen Miranda Folder, Museu da Imagem e do Som, Rio de Janeiro.
32. "Interview with Martha Gil-Montero," *Carmen Miranda: The South American Way* (New York: A&E Television Network, 1996).
33. "Interview with Harold and Fayard Nichols," *Carmen Miranda* (A&E).
34. In the decades following Carmen's death, Brazilian musicians continued to travel to the United States, contributing to American popular music. Bossa nova—the new wave of Brazilian music—which had developed in the late 1950s around

Rio de Janeiro, made its official appearance in the United States on November 21, 1962. Antonio Carlos Jobim, one of bossa nova's major ambassadors, felt compelled to defend himself against accusations of becoming Americanized while he lived in New York.

35. "O American Dream Brasileiro," *Momento* (2:11): 5-9.
36. "Carmen Miranda," *New York Times* (October 20, 1991), section 2, p. 34.
37. Paulo Caldeira, "Nós os brasileiros SEM BRASIL," *The Brazilians* (May 1996), 7. Translations are mine.

Suggested Readings

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