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War-Joy and the Pride of Not Being Rich:

Constructions of American and Brazilian National Identities
through the discourse on Carmen Miranda

por

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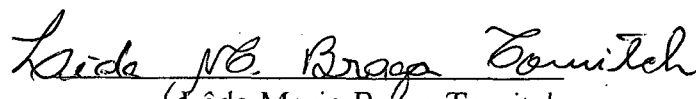
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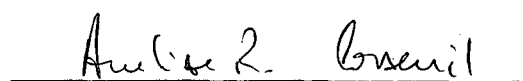
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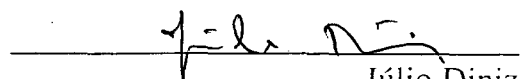
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Abstract

This dissertation presents an analysis of representations of Brazilian and American national identities circulating in the U.S. and in Brazil from the beginning of the twentieth century to the end of World War II. On the one hand, this study shows that the many images of American national identity circulating during the war, informed by the paradigm of ideals proposed by the founding fathers in 1776, and aimed at the possibility of leading a “better world” in the future, made up the idea of an hyperbolic *war-joy choreography*. On the other hand, it shows that, due to the lack of a historical paradigm of Brazilian national ideals, images of Brazilian national identity have been affected by a *tradition of self-doubt, self-pity, and resignation*, and that, in the 1930’s, there arose an association between “being American” and “being rich”, in opposition to “being Brazilian” and “being poor.” From this historical viewpoint, this research focuses on two films starred by Carmen Miranda — *That Night in Rio* (1941) and *The Gang’s All Here* (1943) — highlighting, among other complexities, the conflicting encounter between the industrial normatization of Hollywood productions and the deep indefiniteness that characterizes some cultural elements considered characteristically Brazilian. In so doing, it is possible to suggest a way to counteract the reductionism of many texts on Brazilian and American national identities, affected by presuppositions of national essence and by oversimplified notions of history as moved by causality and individual will.

Resumo

Proponho nesta tese uma análise de representações de identidades nacionais brasileiras e americanas que circularam nos Estados Unidos e no Brasil, do início do século XX até o final da segunda grande guerra. Quero mostrar, por um lado, que as imagens de identidade nacional americana propostas na época da guerra formaram a idéia de uma hiperbólica *coreografia da alegria da guerra*, guiada pelo paradigma proposto pelos *founding fathers* em 1776 e com objetivo de liderar um “mundo melhor” no futuro. Por outro lado, quero mostrar que, na falta de um paradigma histórico de ideais nacionais, as imagens de identidade nacional brasileira têm sido afetadas por uma *tradição de descrença, auto-comiseração e conformismo*, e nos anos 30 acabaram estabelecendo a associação entre “ser americano” e “ser rico”, em oposição a “ser brasileiro” e “ser pobre”. A partir dessa contextualização, pretendo analisar dois filmes com participação de Carmen Miranda — *Uma noite no Rio* (1941) e *Entre a loura e a morena* (1943) — destacando, entre outras complexidades, o encontro conflituoso entre a normatização industrial exigida pelas produções de Hollywood e a profunda indefinição que caracteriza elementos culturais brasileiros considerados nacionais. Com isso quero sugerir um caminho para uma superação do reducionismo de muitos textos sobre identidades nacionais brasileiras e americanas, afetados pelo pressuposto da essência nacional e por noções simplistas de verdade histórica com base na causalidade e na vontade individual.

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Introduction: Causality, Will, and National Essence

How that red rain hath made the harvest grow.
(Byron)

Ah! Um urubu pousou na minha sorte!
(Augusto dos Anjos)¹

Many popular jokes, which are retold in Brazil from generation to generation, have a common narrative structure along the same two steps: (1) an American or European cultural reference, either to a supposedly enviable, dependable technology (rockets, airplanes, cars), to a supposedly skillful, healthy or powerful well-known person (president, hero, sex symbol), or even to a famous landscape, is presented as a synthesis of a successful civilization; (2) the corresponding reference (mechanism, landscape or person) is presented in its Brazilian version, which has not worked at all, as if showing the failure of Brazilian civilization. One of those many jokes, circulating from the late 70's on, compares the Six-Million-Dollar Man, that bionic hero performed by Lee Majors in the homonymous American TV series, with Dr. Frankenstein's monster, from Mary Shelley's work, and suggests that the latter was actually a Brazilian creature, developed by the country's public medical system.

North-Atlantic cultural elements, when transferred to Brazil, commonly acquire a disdainful ethnic adjective like *caboclo* or *tupiniquim*.² A *tupiniquim* car, for instance, is a poor quality Brazilian-made car, as opposed to American, Japanese or

¹ "Oh! An urubu has landed on my luck!" From "Budismo moderno," 1912 (Anjos 87). Urubu is a black vulture, typical of Brazil, which eats animal or human carrion; it is popularly associated with death and bad luck.

² *Caboclo* is the one whose parents are white and indian. *Tupiniquim* (from *Tupinikim*) is a group of Tupi-Guarani people.

West European cars, which are necessarily better. Sometimes the term *tupiniquim* is ironically used to make a proudly nationalistic claim, as it is the case of a brand of “natural” health products, made either of the typically Brazilian *guaraná* plant or of *cachaça* (a sugarcane brandy), considered as the national drink. Such pride is clearly defensive, since it implies self-pity. Furthermore, it indicates a telling need for *compensation*, since it is part of a discourse that could be translated as: “in Brazil *we also* have nice things, which must be envied by all nations, such as good soccer, music, *guaraná* and *cachaça*.” In Brazil’s daily life, national pride and shame seem to balance each other, in an apparently endless dialogue which reveals a self-pitying assumption of Brazilian inferiority as a nation, at least in terms of social justice, industrialization, and cultural sophistication.

According to such a tradition of self-doubt, self-pity, and resignation, any national project is bound to fail. Socially the nation does appear as a failure for most Brazilians. From the beginning, Brazil has been ruled by powerful economic and/or military elite groups. Today the country has the world’s eighth biggest economy, with a GNP of about 500 billion dollars, but the distribution of wealth is the third worst in the world. In 1999, 45.3% of the total wealth was owned by only ten percent of the population.³ Land distribution is also historically scandalous, and only two percent of today’s land owners hold 60 percent of all the country’s arable land. Almost two thirds of Brazil’s population of 160 million people own no land to work on nor a regular place to live in.⁴ The general impression is that the country “did not work out,” and

³ The two worst wealth distribution are in Serra Leoa and Central African Republic (The World Bank). Brazil’s wealth distribution, calculated from the Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE), is in Hoffmann. I thank Prof. Francisco Ferreira for both pieces of information.

⁴ Movimento dos Sem Terra (Brazilian organized “Landless Movement”), through The Right Livelihood Awards

that it has not much more to lose anyway — thus somehow justifying Charles de Gaulle’s famous judgment that Brazil “is not a serious country.” Actually, one of the most common debates in Brazil turns around the idea of the country’s having already “missed the streetcar of history.” “Do you believe in Brazil?” is a common question among Brazilians, who may easily accept the idea that most things in the country are supposedly worse than they are “out there.”

In relation to the U. S., the chief attitude is to associate America with the rich, the winners, and Brazil with the poor, eternal losers — songs and jokes on it also abound. Here, that tradition of self-doubt, self-pity, and resignation incorporates another traditional question that has accompanied many generations of Brazilians: “since both countries were discovered at the same time, and colonized by Europeans, why have *they*, and not *us* succeeded as a wealthy country?” Such a question was tentatively answered, for instance, by a rigorous comparative right-wing analysis of historical developments in both countries, by Vianna Moog. However, rather than answering the question, Moog reiterates it. In his review of American and Brazilian historical data, he not only shows that social, religious, spiritual, and geographic American “advantages” started from the very beginning of both colonization processes, but he also praises “American civilization” as the most perfect society ever. One can also deduce the effect of those historical differences from many sources. Max Weber’s analysis of the relationship between (American) Calvinism and the “spirit” of capitalism is quite helpful for one’s understanding of the historical/philosophical bases for the building of American wealth; on the Brazilian side, Sérgio Buarque de Holanda

discusses, in *Raízes do Brasil*, the specificity of Portuguese Catholic colonization, indicating ways of understanding the problematic Brazilian social/economic development. Nevertheless, the haunting question remains, now reaching a metaphysical level: “but why has *fate* leaned towards *their* side, not *ours*?”

Such feelings of being condemned to failure, which are expressed by many Brazilians, have especially marked the difference between Brazilian and American national identities after World War II. During the war, there appeared an actual possibility of reducing the distance between both cultures and economies, since there was a decisive attempt by the American government to support Brazil’s technological, military and economic development. This attempt caused many reactions, from foolish applause to nationalistic protest. Due to Brazil’s strategic position for the defense of the Western Hemisphere against the Nazi threat, the Roosevelt administration promoted the Good Neighbor Policy, thus radically changing the “big-stick” attitude of former administrations, and gave Nelson Rockefeller high financial support and political autonomy to lead the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (OCIAA). In addition to the most intense cultural interchange ever seen between the two countries, the U.S. established air bases in Brazil’s Northeastern region (then the best geographical location for sending troops to Africa), while the Vargas administration succeeded in getting from the U.S. all the armaments needed for the modernization of the Brazilian armed forces, along with cheap loans and technological support for the country’s first steelworks, a key to its industrialization. Right after the war, however, such huge support vanished, the U.S. consolidated its position as one of the world’s two superpowers, the dream of Brazilian diplomacy of getting a place at

the United Nations' Security Council did not come true, and the distance between American and Brazilian increased once again, in terms of cultural, technological, economic and social development.

The main objective in this dissertation is to analyze some filmic and media discourses on the U.S., on Brazil, and on the relationship between both countries, especially those produced and circulating during WWII, both in Brazil and in the U.S., verifying the extent to which they helped establish the commonsense view which associates American national identity with rationality, wealth and success, and Brazilian national identity, in contrast, with fantasy, poverty and frustration.

The *corpus* of analysis, of which Carmen Miranda and the discourse on her assumes a central position, is divided in four sections, one for each chapter, as described below. Carmen Miranda assumes a central position since her image is hugely problematic in terms of national identities for the public: on the one hand, her well known *baiana* character in Hollywood films represented, among other things, both the idea of a tropical paradise in South America and the Good Neighbor Policy itself, with its demand for a profitable relationship between the U.S. and the rest of the continent; at the same time, in Brazil she represented, among other things, both a capitalistic paradise in the U.S. and the opportunity for a part of Brazilian culture to be seen all over the world; this in turn caused both pride and shame, according to different evaluations of the way Carmen's image represented Brazilian culture.

This approach can be helpful not only to draw attention to the reductionism of some views of American and Brazilian national identities, but also to challenge some traditional assumptions on nationalism and imperialism. In Brazil, it is true that the

attitude of deliberately blaming “Yankee imperialism” for the whole of Brazil’s misery fell into disuse long ago, but it is not hard to notice in many approaches at least two presuppositions which in my opinion may limit discernment and criticism. The first is the legitimization of causality and personal will as means of reaching a historical truth. Historians’ attempt to logically “explain” people’s attitudes as effects of expected “causes” may lead to a narrow view of the problem. First of all, historical subjects probably had reasons for their actions which they themselves ignored (from a Freudian point of view, for example, they might have been affected by the unconscious, from a Marxist point of view, by ideology etc). It might well be true, for instance, that the greatest interest of Nelson Rockefeller in promoting cultural interchange among the Americas and supporting the “education” of South American people was to increase the profitability of American corporations in the continent — including the Standard Oil Co., owned by the Rockefellers. By arguing along these lines, Antonio Pedro Tota tries to show how destructive Rockefeller was for Latin America. Nevertheless, by revealing Rockefeller’s economic interest as *the* truth, Tota overlooks other possibilities of interpretation which could (or not) prove Rockefeller’s historical role as much more harmful than he allows, whatever *intentions* Rockefeller could have had: he could even have been *sincere* in his good will toward a utopian understanding among peoples, imagining it as “good for all,” and still be harmful, his good-will itself, along with his ambition to create an utopia, his naïveté and arrogance proving even more symptomatic of his imperialist assumptions.

Besides the legitimization of causality and personal will as means of reaching historical truth, the second limiting theoretical presupposition, which is usual in

Brazilian approaches to national identity, is the essentialization of that very national identity, of what being a Brazilian is and what it is not, i. e., the national as a category definable *a priori* — it is especially visible, for instance, in the we/them dichotomy, common to most of these approaches.⁵ One of the most hotly discussed issues, since Carmen Miranda's first performance in the U.S., in May 1939, is the extent to which she appropriately represented Brazilian culture, as if "Brazilian culture" were something defined with a minimum consensus. Most theorists of nationalism, from Ernest Renan to Gopal Balakrishnan, and perhaps all of them, agree at least on one point: that nation can not be defined *a priori*. As Hobsbawm points out, a nation is any group of people big enough, whose members consider themselves as a nation. Each nation, as it is known from 1780 on, was officialized, or legitimized as such, *after* the joining together of different cultural elements (usually by force). What is or is not "national," thus, also depends on legitimization. As Raúl Antelo summarizes it, "the idea of the national does not allow us to isolate objects we can really call national. There are no such objects. . . . It is the officialization of the national which thus confuses *national* and *natural*, and in the last analysis, *national* and *real*" (5-6).

Actually, as discussed in Chapter 2, the definition of what is authentically Brazilian is at issue much before May 1939, as it still is nowadays, but at that time it was especially complicated. There was already a strong tendency — partially encouraged by Brazilian modernist writers and artists, some of them employed in the offices of Vargas's dictatorship, and by intellectuals such as Gilberto Freyre — towards regarding popular culture as the great source for an authentic Brazilian

⁵ I refer to Tota, to Carmen Miranda biographies, and to most Brazilian reviews on films starred by her — all of them listed at the end of this dissertation.

identity. But even within such a trend, there was no consensus. As Simone Pereira de Sá points out, differences were found by intellectuals among many “popular cultures,” for instance, between urban and rural ones (42-47). In addition, even within what was considered urban popular culture there were different “authenticities”: in Rio de Janeiro, there were at least two conflicting concepts of the authentic samba, represented, for instance, by Carmen Miranda on one hand, and Brazilian samba composer Noel Rosa on the other.⁶ At the same time, of course, there was Carmen Miranda herself, who was not only intensifying the debate around Brazilian nationality, but actually helping make it even more complicated. The most visible representative of Brazil for the rest of the world was a Portuguese-born green-eyed woman who was brought up in a poor neighborhood in Rio, singing popular tunes for rich audiences, in *baiana* costumes.⁷ And her huge success, as also argued in Chapter 2, was in good part due to Brazil’s “Americanization.”

On the other hand, some American authors also share those two presuppositions of historical analysis — causality and individual will as means to historical truth, and the essentialization of the national. They tend to privilege problems of race, ethnicity, sex or gender in their deterministic analysis of Brazil, without having first learned about Brazilian historical specificity, especially regarding race or ethnicity and sex or gender. A major example can be seen in the article “‘The Lady in the Tutti-Frutti Hat’: Carmen Miranda, a Spectacle of Ethnicity,” by Shari Roberts. Roberts’s research of

⁶ For a good biography of Noel Rosa, see Máximo and Didier.

⁷ “Baiana” is the woman who was born in Bahia, a Northeastern state. Later on, in the sixties, this very confusion, i. e., the way Brazil could be perceived by foreigners through Hollywood films, was incorporated by Caetano Veloso and other artists in another proposal for Brazilian identity, the so called *Tropicalismo* (see Veloso, *Verdade tropical*).

American reviews of Carmen's performances is careful and extensive, and her analysis of such texts is meticulous and rich, involving some good insights, such as: (1) Carmen's uniqueness as the only Latin American female star in the U.S. being simultaneously sexy and comic, and (2) the possibility of an active interpretation of Carmen's irony about herself, which can be helpful for some fans "to identify with her as one way to negotiate or cope with their own minority status in society" (18).

Roberts's research on Brazilian reviews and historical texts, however, misses some important aspects of Brazilian historical specificity — let alone slipping in some historical errors, such as saying that Carmen's Hollywood performances failed to wow the audiences or reviewers South of the Border" (8). As mentioned above, it was not possible to pick up, in Rio, one "original samba *de morro*" which could have "evolved into the mellower samba popularized by singers such as Miranda from the 1930s forward" (12-13) — neither are "singers such as Miranda" a thoroughly unproblematic category. In an interview released in 1941, Carmen refers to some racists in Brazil who objected to her idea of the *baiana* character: "'You can't put theez dress, *they say*, because theez dress only Negroes put.'"⁸ This was enough for Roberts, overlooking the heterogeneity of attitudes toward race and racism in Brazil, to suggest that Carmen imagined "an anthropomorphized Brazil" telling her not to use the Negro dress, "thereby highlighting the way Brazil has traditionally denied its own black population and traditions" (13). It is technically impossible to identify the author of the objection to Carmen's costume, or to contextualize it more precisely. The reference she used, "they say," may refer to a whole range of Brazilian racists, or even to only one person.

⁸ Zeitlin. Cited in Roberts 13 (my italics). The text highlights her accent, as it was common in the American press at the time.

Turning such imaginary interlocutor into an “anthropomorphized” representative of a whole racist country sounds a little careless and arbitrary.

When analyzing the formation of some stereotypical images regarding Brazil and Carmen Miranda, which departed from realities that can be historically documented, Roberts takes at least one of those images for granted. She suggests that *baianas* who established the *candomblé* temples of Rio in the sixteenth century “were stereotyped within Brazil as women with shawls, turbans, and *flirtatious ways*” (13, my italics). Not only is the history of *candomblé* in Rio (and Bahia) thus oversimplified, but the association between the women and the stereotype is at least risible. Women in *candomblé* are generally old, and highly respected not only for their age, but also for their religiousness, and the social ascendancy that they exert on their communities. Regardless of costume, if a *baiana* stereotype did acquire any “flirtatious ways” at all, it probably happened, in part, *after* Carmen Miranda’s performances in Hollywood, and *after* the success of the song “O que é que a baiana tem?”, which inspired her to adopt the *baiana* character early in 1939. By supposing the opposite Roberts seems to have been affected herself by the stereotype, usually accepted in the U.S., and actually reinforced by Carmen, which suggests Brazilians as a people naturally obsessed by sex.

The sexual stereotype may also have inspired Busby Berkeley in the famous number “The Lady in the Tutti-Frutti Hat,” in his film *The Gang’s All Here* — the number ends with Carmen under that huge banana hat, which occupies almost the whole screen. Right after the film premiere, in December 1943, the obvious sexual allusions of the number were remarked on by a reviewer: “One or two of his

[Berkeley's] dance spectacles seem to stem straight from Freud and, if interpreted, might bring a rosy blush to several cheeks in the Hays Office" ("At the Roxy").⁹ Much more recently, in 1983, Allen Woll chose the number as "the most erotic production number of the 1940's" (117). Sex is the most obvious way of interpreting moving women's legs, bananas and strawberries harmonically interacting on screen, but what is curious is what is missing here: why not question in the first place the association of Brazilian elements in the scene with sex? Why is Carmen Miranda's body considered — much more in the U.S. than in Brazil — a "hypersexualized *visual* presence" (Roberts 11)?

According to Roberts, Carmen's outfits "suggest female sexuality in excess, revealing and accentuating her *sexually invested body parts* — the navel, breasts, and legs" (Roberts 15, my italics). But it is curious that Betty Grable's costumes in *Down Argentine Way* (also performed by Carmen) equally accentuate the navel, breasts, and legs — much more than Carmen's, particularly the breasts. Alice Faye's night-dress in the "A Journey to a Star" number of *The Gang's All Here* is also suggestive of a "female sexuality in excess." Most American pin-ups, from Grable to Sharon Stone, have their *sexually invested body parts* strongly highlighted in Hollywood (more than Carmen): a good part of Carmen's sexual supportiveness resided in the "gay rolling of Carmen Miranda's insinuating eyes," as noted by a *Life Magazine* reviewer of her performance on Broadway, back in 1939 ("Broadway Likes Miranda's Piquant Portuguese Songs"). Rather than an exaggerated sexuality, what turns Carmen into

⁹ The "Hays Office" refers to Will Hays, head of Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, Inc., who formulated a morality code, mostly accepted by Hollywood studios in the 1930's and 1940's, which restricted the use of images and words considered immoral.

“the Other” in relation to the WASP norm is her ambivalence, as I argue in Chapter 3: her image is strange, eccentric, not “natural;” her character is always a foreigner; she is sexy and comic, as Roberts herself noted; wearing turbans, she is neither blond nor brunette, as the Brazilian title for *The Gang’s All Here* (*Entre a loura e a morena*, “Between the Blonde and the Brunette”) highlights.

In sum, in the last 60 years, texts on Carmen Miranda and national identities, including academic essays and a huge amount of press comments, both in the U.S. and in Brazil, constrain their discussion to only a few issues, thus greatly reducing the problem. On the one hand, most Brazilian commentators seem to combine those two presuppositions mentioned above — causality and individual will as means to historical truth and the essentialization of the national — with what is here named as the Brazilian tradition of self-doubt, self-pity, and resignation. In so doing, they usually reinforce innocuous “polemics” such as that, circulating in her biographies, and in the Brazilian press at the time, which opposes Carmen’s personal talent to the Good Neighbor Policy as an “explanation” for her success, or that about whether she was encouraged in her career mainly by her will to make money or by some gift or artistic impulse.¹⁰ The very silliness of such “polemics” also indicates the acknowledgement of a mythical dimension in Carmen as a sort of “national hero,” since she was the only artist in Brazil who was able to “make it” in Hollywood.

On the other hand, combining those same two presuppositions with a certain obsession for dealing with race and sex problems, American commentators tend to take for granted some stereotypes they were expected to point out and analyze as such.

¹⁰ The latter “polemic” is especially dealt with by Martha Gil-Montero.

They also reinforce innocuous polemics, such as that on whether or not Carmen invented her character all by herself; or that around a picture, circulating in 1941, which clearly shows her with no panties while jumping into Cesar Romero's arms. In addition, *victimization* is another aspect of the repetitive discourse on Carmen. Taking into account her addiction to drugs and her death at the age of 46, Carmen is also usually seen in both countries as a victim of the Good-Neighbor policy, of the Hollywood studio system, or of her husband, an agent who allegedly exploited her professionally.

This research attempts to present some of Carmen's performances, and the discourse on her, within a broader historical frame of reference — including elements of the arts (including dance), industry, and the military, in the cultural universe of World War II — in order to argue that the problem of defining national identities through the discourse on Carmen Miranda is not that simple after all. In addition, of course, this research counterargues those two presuppositions. Rather than explaining facts by electing some logical causes, and attributing *intentions* to heroes and villains, this research presents an analysis of historical data, reports on facts, and cultural productions, in several fields, searching for possible relations between those and some notions of national identity circulating at the time. Rather than *aprioristic* definitions of what is and what is not *national* in each case, I will bear in mind three hypotheses: (1) national identities are constantly negotiated among groups of people and generally legitimized by means of the exercise of power, violent or not; (2) such negotiations in the U.S. have been made around a unique national paradigm of ideals, proposed in 1776, and widely invoked in its assumptions of social inclusiveness, economic

liberalism, and democracy; while (3) negotiations in Brazil follow no such paradigm, and national projects have in general been proposed, discussed, and enforced by elite groups.

The texts and other cultural productions that are analyzed suggest, or by their internal logic rely on, representations of a whole nation. Such representations are expressed by several means, of which the three main ones are: (1) national symbols already established (national colors, flags, anthems etc); (2) features, cultural values and behaviors taken as *national* (Brazilian hospitality, American ingenuity etc); (3) allegories for national projects appropriated from other countries (a healthy white woman in a Phrygian cap, representing the idea of the Republic, a French symbol used in Brazil). In order not to evade the complexity present in national representations, it is necessary not to lose sight of what should be obvious: *one country* does not represent itself or other countries; rather, representations of a country are proposed, from within or without, by people who are affected or not by national bonds with that country, under certain historical conditions, going against or aligned with certain political streams of the time, and approved or disapproved by their authors' compatriots and/or by foreigners. In brief, this dissertation attempts to analyze national representations from an extra-nationalistic theoretical point of view. For organizational reasons representations have been divided according to their objects and their authors' nationalities, making them fit the objective of each chapter, as follows.

In Chapter 1, I analyze representations of the U.S. and of Americans, proposed by some Americans who were arguing for the country's involvement and victory in World War II — a movement supported by Franklin Delano Roosevelt, as well as by

good part of his government, and also, after Pearl Harbor (December 7, 1941), by the most powerful sector of the press, along with many of its sponsors. Most representations help to establish the image of what can be called an “American war-joy choreography,” i.e., the idea of a joyful choreographic movement taking over the country towards a shining future of wealth, freedom and happiness through victory in World War II. The representations here analyzed may be classified in three cultural fields which are closely related: (1) reports on the war and military actions, including the visual contents of newspapers and magazines; (2) reports on the defense industry, also including visual elements; and (3) artistic productions related to images of American national identity, to the war, or to the defense industry, many of them produced by the military.

The rise of an intense and joyous interchange among those three fields of representations of America — reports on the war, reports on the defense industry, artworks on both subjects — can be seen as presenting two cultural paradigms in common, both of them coming from the same national project: (1) the so called American values, which were initially established by the “founding fathers,” and (2) the drive to rationalization of production, following a line previously established in the realm of American industry by Taylorism and Fordism, in a process attributed, in good part, to “American ingenuity,” combined with democracy and economic liberalism. As it is argued at the end of the chapter, the idea of an American war-joy choreography is also visible in some of Busby Berkeley’s kaleidoscopic numbers, which can make *The Gang is All Here*, a film usually considered “escapist,” a good representation of America at war — the film is analyzed in Chapter 4.

Symmetrically, Chapter 2 is focused on an analysis of some representations of Brazil and Brazilians as proposed by Brazilians, but now considering a longer span: from the Proclamation of the Republic, in 1889, to the end of World War II. Now the national representations to be analyzed are found chiefly in popular songs, but also in the press, in the three republican national projects (“Jacobin,” positivist, and liberal), in architecture and city planning concepts underlying Rio’s “renovation” in the first decade of the twentieth century, and in modernist works of art and literature.

Each Brazilian national project referred insistently to parameters imported from North Atlantic modernity — chiefly from France and the U.S., and I want to suggest that what is here defined as a Brazilian tradition of self-doubt, self-pity, and resignation was established by expectations and frustrations relative to those parameters. By analyzing representations of Brazil and Brazilians as proposed by Brazilians, I argue that such tradition persisted in widespread assumptions of popular culture, chiefly samba, as well as in some habits and cultural values attributed to the poor, as a source of national authenticity. Thus, it is possible to propose that the accusation against Carmen Miranda’s “Americanization,” made by an elite audience at the Cassino da Urca (Rio) in 1940, together with her response to it through the samba song “Disseram que voltei americanizada” (“They say I came back Americanized”), indicates the establishment of a national identity based on the stark association of Americans as rich, and Brazilians as poor.

In Chapter 3 cross-cultural representations of some images of Brazil and Brazilian national identity as produced by Americans are analyzed. Such representations circulated with the support of Rockefeller’s OCIAA — images coming

from some works by the Disney studios, and from some OCIAA ideas for intensifying cultural interchange between the two countries. The chief object of analysis in chapter 3, however, is the Fox film *That Night in Rio*, by Irving Cummings, along with some Brazilian responses to it. These representations of both countries and peoples can be quite complicated, more so than a simplistic-sounding association of Americans with the rich and Brazilians with the poor, already hinted at in this Fox production. In *That Night in Rio*, Don Ameche plays two roles: a Brazilian *baron* and an American comic actor (Carmen Miranda's boyfriend), who works in a Rio night club, where he usually impersonates the baron. Among other complicating consequences of such an impersonation, which involve national identities, the American production deals with the idea of *ambivalence* while pursuing a positive representation of Brazil and Brazilians.

The central object of analysis in Chapter 4 is Busby Berkeley's *The Gang's All Here* (1943), a film in which representations of Brazil and Brazilians, America and Americans, proposed both by Brazilians and Americans, appear irredeemably intertwined, chiefly in those kaleidoscopic moving figures characteristic of Berkeley's choreography. Even though its opening sequence and its best-known number, "The Lady in the Tutti-Frutti Hat," starred by Carmen Miranda, are accepted as deliberate, explicit representations of Brazil and Brazilians, the conditions and the historical context under which they were produced — as discussed in the first three chapters — can be seen as clear expressions of that American war-joy choreography, of Brazilian Americanization on one hand, and the authentication of popular culture as national on the other, and to the apotheosis of the Good Neighbor policy itself.

Therefore, this research suggests some different possibilities of reading national identities in Brazil, and in the U.S., in the context of the Good Neighbor Policy, not only through the discourse of and on Carmen Miranda, but also through other cultural elements, while disregarding presuppositions of national essence or historical causality.

The American War-Joy Choreography

*A wonderful time — the War:
when money rolled in
and blood rolled out.
But blood
was far away
from here —
Money was near*
(Langston Hughes)

At the eve of World War II, in September, 1939, the U.S. was still facing some consequences of the Depression, with about 10 million unemployed — more than 17% of the labor force. In August 14, 1945, after the announcement of Japan's unconditional rendition, millions of euphoric people invaded the streets of most American cities to celebrate not only the end of the war, but also the country's position as the world's strongest economy. "We had saved the world from an evil that was unspeakable. We had something no other country had. We were a God-sanctioned invincible holy power, and it was our destiny to prove that we were the children of God and that our way was the right way for the world. . . . Good times were going to go on and on; everything was going to get better. It was just a wonderful happy ending."¹

Images of a happy country *after* the war are easily understandable, but such images appear also *during* the war, and even *about* the war. In the war time, many had great expectations of a world much better than before the Depression in the case of the Allies' victory. Even before Pearl Harbor, more and more Americans started to see that they could benefit from the war. In 1939, Congress approved a budget of \$1,5

¹ Interview with Laura Briggs of Jerome, Idaho. Cited in Harris et al. 255.

billion for defense — which in 1943 would reach \$81 billion — and allowed Americans to sell armaments to the British. The defense industry promoted then an explosion of employment, creating a boom that started to affect many regions. At the same time, American farmers benefited from good weather and new agricultural policies. An intense optimism was growing, together with the notion of Americans as the people who could overcome the Nazi threat and lead the world, while disseminating “American values”. In 1936, 95% of the American population were isolationists, i.e., they thought the U.S. had nothing to do with the possible war in Europe; in 1941, even before Pearl Harbor isolationists were already only 30%.² Internationalist (anti-isolationist) discourse got more and more space in the press, with an intensely patriotic appeal. One of the best examples of it is a *Life* magazine editorial, written in February 1941 (10 months before Pearl Harbor) by Henry Luce, director of the powerful Time-Life group:

In 1919 we had a golden opportunity, an opportunity unprecedented in all history, to assume the leadership of the world. . . . We did not understand that opportunity. . . . We killed it. . . . Once we cease to distract ourselves with lifeless arguments about isolationism, we shall be amazed to discover that there is already an immense American internationalism. American jazz, Hollywood movies, American slang, American machines and patented products, are in fact the only things that every community in the world, from Zanzibar to Hamburg, recognizes in common. Blindly, unintentionally, accidentally and really *in spite of ourselves*, we are already a world power. . . . America is already the intellectual, scientific and artistic capital of the world. . . . We must undertake now to be the Good Samaritan of the entire world (Luce).

After Pearl Harbor, when even the most adamant isolationists like Henry Ford abandoned that position, optimism regarding an American future through victory at war met with no resistance at all. Practically the whole press, along with the advertisers, supported it, and American music, films, plays and visual arts were more

² Transcribed from Capra's documentary *Why We Fight*, vol. 7.

and more dedicated to fighting. After a typical dance for soldiers, with girls being hired as dancing partners (and instructed to avoid personal involvement with soldiers), Lucy Greenbaum, a *New York Times* reporter, declared that American forces in WWII were “*the dancingest Army and Navy ever.*” Dancing was part of military life, as testified by a soldier: ““The boys told me I had to dance to be a success”” (Greenbaum).

In addition to the decisive role of the home front, with people “doing their bit” — saving fat, for instance, for the defense industry to turn it into black powder — there was a huge and joyful interchange between artists and the military. Fine war posters were distributed in barracks and defense plants, songs on war were broadcast all over, spectacles and films on the war and the defense industry were released, Hollywood stars made national tours, either doing shows for soldiers or dedicating spectacles to improving war bonds sales. The “dancingest military ever” were directly involved with art productions: soldiers painted “nose art” on airplanes, military specialists closely supervised Walt Disney’s production of dozens of didactic films for training soldiers and “how to” films for new weapons,³ while some 300 soldiers from Camp Upton performed the comic revue *This Is the Army*, Broadway’s number one hit in July, 1942, with proceeds earmarked for the Army Emergency Relief Fund.⁴ In brief, in war time the presence of artists in the barracks was nearly as common as the presence of the military in studios and on stages.

³ Such films combined cartoon and live footage. One of them, for which some artists of Disney’s staff learned to fly, seeking to “simulate real flight,” showed details of piloting under different conditions (fog, lightning, ice etc). Another one, on navigation rules, reproduced a real disaster (at Hallifax, 1917), which could have been avoided by the observance of the rules. Another one was a kind of filmed moral fable, with the characters acting within a Nazi’s head, arguing for the privilege of reason over emotion. See “Walt Disney goes to war.” See also Shale.

The military, the defense industry workers (from the most unskilled to industrialists), and artists of several trends, together with the home front, gave the impression of one single, well organized national community joyfully working together toward victory at what was considered a “good war,” like “a stream of khaki [that] grows into a mighty flood” (Baldwin). This chapter foregrounds the argument that a good deal of representations of America and American national identity circulating during World War II, in the press, radio, books, songs, films and posters, helped to compose the image of an *American war-joy choreography*, an image associated to the war effort, characterized by a joyful choreographic movement taking over the country, supported by the hope for a shining future of wealth, freedom and happiness, in a new world led by the U.S.. Such an image is also visible in Hollywood musicals, especially in those kaleidoscopic choreographic numbers by Busby Berkeley.

This chapter first explores some aspects of that joyful interchange of people, ideas and methods among the arts, the armed forces, and the defense industry. There is no contradiction in such interchange, since artistic production can use the same kind of rational organization as military and industrial activities. Secondly, the chapter presents an analysis of representations of America and Americans, as proposed by some Americans, and coming from three different cultural fields: (1) reports on the war and military actions at war time, including drawings, graphs, cartoons, illustrations in general; (2) reports on the defense industry, also including visual elements in the press; and (3) artistic productions of the time involved in a definition

⁴ *This is the Army* had a Hollywood version, with Ronald Reagan, in 1943, directed by Michael Curtiz.

of American national identity, and regarding the war, or the defense industry. This analysis, which will be divided in two parts, indicates that, though in different fields, all those representations have in common at least two assumptions, described as follows.

The first common assumption is that all of these activities involved in the war tend to *a glorious goal*, sometimes referred to in the press at the time as “destiny.” All Americans allegedly had, as highlighted by Luce, a concrete chance to fight together, in order to finally overcome the Depression, to free the world from the Nazi threat, and to lead a free world in the future. In order to follow their “destiny”, they were strongly encouraged by the traditional “American values”, as formulated by the “founding fathers,” who in turn followed assumptions from the French Enlightenment: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”⁵

So, World War II, the “good war,” was thus presented as the most decisive fight between good and evil ever seen in human history. I suggest that this notion of a glorious goal to be achieved through a good war provided the “war-joy” in the image of a national choreography. There really was joy about the war, sometimes even euphoria. Many testified that the war effort opened their horizons, giving them great expectations for the near future.

⁵ From the *Declaration of Independence*, as transcribed into the National Archives and Records Administration website (<http://www.nara.gov/exhall/charters/declaration/declaration.html>).

The second common assumption underlying the representations here analyzed is a great confidence in Americans as a people who would use *the right method* of reaching that glorious goal. Combined with taylor-fordist methods of industrial production, "American ingenuity" would be the proper tool for performing "miracles" operated by the defense industry. By 1944, for instance, one 30-ton four-motor B-24 bomber flew from a Ford's plant in Michigan almost every hour. Reporters, some of them very patriotic and euphoric, knew that such industrial efficiency would make a difference in the war — as it actually did.

Grids

Before analyzing representations of America and Americans in light of these common assumptions — Americans' glorious goal and their right method — it is necessary to discuss the joyful interaction of people, ideas and methods among the arts, the armed forces, and the defense industry. Such a conjunction is not surprising at all. The three kinds of activity — military, industrial, and artistic — may have much more affinity with one another than is usually supposed, especially when collective artistic productions are taken into account. It is true that artistic production also relies heavily on emotion, impulse and intuition, whereas in the military and industrial fields these are secondary (or even repressed) factors; likewise, art works have vague concrete objectives, if any, and their approval or disapproval depends on esthetic values, which are always highly debatable, whereas objectives and quality parameters of industrial and military activities are much more precise. However, in the artistic field, it is hard to deny the demand for rational planning and organization of spectacles, and for efficient, rational training of artists.

The affinity between artistic productions and military and industrial activities is particularly clear in the case of choreography. One can think, paradigmatically, of military parades, with their choreographic movements to brass and drum music, but the affinity is at a deeper level. By the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as Michel Foucault points out, disciplinary mechanisms spread over Europe. Models of organization specific to certain institutions became general formulas for each field of human activity. For the military field, for instance, “the regulations characteristic of the Protestant and pious armies of William of Orange or of Gustavus Adolphus were transformed into regulations for all the armies of Europe.” A similar change happened in the industrial field, where “[t]he discipline of the workshop . . . more and more . . . treats actions in terms of their results, introduces bodies into a machinery, forces into an economy” (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 209-10).⁶ Discipline, in brief, decisively affecting educational systems (the Jesuit model of organization), was turned into a high social value, while a disciplined body, able to work smoothly with others in a collective organization, became an asset.

Choreography was reportedly born in France, precisely in this historical context. It was proposed in 1700, by Feuillet, as “l’art de décrire la danse par caractères, figures et signes démonstratifs,”⁷ and established as a technique of planning

⁶ On the one hand, Foucault (*Discipline and Punish*) associates that spread with the increase of population and production in the classical age, which established the need for control (especially of diseases and crimes); on the other hand, he suggests the formation of disciplinary society, and the correspondent increase in social normalization, as the basis for the constitution of the modern individual, as one identified by the position he/she occupies in a grid, within a network of power relations where power is transmitted while exercised by and over each individual. Foucault argues that disciplinary mechanisms provided a general model for institutions to reach better results and their own maintenance, so that it became more and more “natural” to think of discipline and of spatial organization (of grids) for any activity.

⁷ Feuillet (1660-1710) is the reputed inventor of the Feuillet dance notation; he is known by his work *Chorégraphie, ou l’art de décrire la danse par caractères, figures et signes démonstratifs* (“The art of describing dance by means of characters, figures, and signs) (1700). Cited in Bremser.

and writing movements for human bodies, and putting those movements into practice by means of discipline, supervision and the organization of space. Still in the same context, dance acquired its social importance. On the one hand, it became clear that “[l]essons [of dance] liberate the body from instinctive muscular habit,” helping it to acquire an “extreme physical versatility controlled by rigid discipline;” on the other hand, “[b]eginning in the mid-nineteenth century, a very few ballet schools — notably the Russian — shared security and prestige equal to other national-service academies. Russian state pupils were uniformed; on their collars, naval cadets wore anchors; army students, crossed sabers; aspiring dancers (and musicians), Apollo’s lyre” (Kirstein 4-5). Choreography, thus, may be seen as part of the same rationality, proper to modernity, which shaped military and industrial activities.

By the same token, it is possible to extend the concept to the affinity of industrial and military activities with spatial representations in general, and thus with several artistic fields, not only with choreography. Mechanisms of disciplinarization that spread in the classical age had in common the organization of spaces based on the idea of *grids*. Discipline is made possible by the “Principle of elementary location or *partitioning*. Each individual has his own place; and each place its individual.” In military action, as well as on shop floors (and in prison, at school, in hospitals, companies, or in sports etc), spaces are designed in such a way as to associate each individual with a section of a map, an intersection of a line and a column, avoiding the random formation of groups. This organization allows supervisors “[t]o know where and how to locate individuals.” In sum, “[d]iscipline organizes an analytical space” (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 143). In addition, in such spatial organization for

discipline, positions are generally not fixed. “[T]he elements are interchangeable, since each is defined by the place it occupies in a series, and by the gap that separates it from the others” (145), which allows individuals to be moved through positions, according to their performance or behavior.

It is clear enough how grids work in military action; it suffices to imagine the formation of a platoon. On the shop floors, especially on an moving assembly line, workers might not be seen, at first, as rigorously positioned in a grid, but the principle of elementary location is clear, i.e., the attribution of one specific position to each individual along the lines of conveyor belts, the organization of an analytical space, and the hierarchization by means of interchangeable positions. This application of the idea of disciplinary grids to curved lines of people, allowing hierarchization, also appears in choreography (as well as in the disposition of musicians in an orchestra). There is one more element about grids that allows them to be seen not only in designs of disciplinary institutions, but in drawings as well — in spatial representations in general, thus in several artistic fields, which is the analytical organization of the surface for drawing.

Rosalind Krauss recognizes in grids the property of dealing both with the concrete and the fictional. On the one hand, in disciplinary institutions, as a means of organizing space for many human activities, the grid is the geometric structure on which human bodies will move and work; it implies rationality, logic, science, materiality. On the other hand, as an abstract, non-realist, unnatural figure itself, the grid when pre-imposed on a figurative drawing or painting, organizing the space for representation, indicates fiction, illusion, art, “spirit.” As an organizing visual

structure, the grid might be seen even as a tool for “explaining” vision itself, “as an emblem of the infrastructure of vision.” Krauss stresses that treatises on physiological optics written on the nineteenth century were generally illustrated with grids. “Because it was a matter of demonstrating the interaction of specific particles throughout a continuous field, that field was analyzed into the modular and repetitive structure of the grid.” So it is not surprising, for Krauss, that in modernist abstractionism grids themselves were painted, thematizing both visual structures and the interplay between the “concrete” and the “abstract,” world and art, the “real” and the “fictional,” the represented and the representation.⁸ Grids may be seen even in narratives and poetry, if one reads them, for instance, considering images provided by their tropes, or in a structuralist fashion, rearranging sequential features into a form of spatial organization.

Still considering the twofold (concrete/abstract) aspect of grids, it is curious to see, as suggested by Foucault, spaces drawn for disciplinary institutions, both real and ideal: “real because they govern the disposition of buildings, rooms, furniture, but also ideal, because they are projected over this arrangement of characterizations, assessments, hierarchies” (148). In this sense, when one sees military platoons, marching in a parade, as emblems of discipline and power, the grid they form helps emphasize their emblematic character, their dimension as a sign, their action on the level of representation. This becomes especially clear in those well-known demonstrations of the Nazi army in huge spaces, all those platoons headed for Hitler’s pulpit: as a single *re-presentation*, this image alluded to the *presence* of a terrifying, concrete evil in Europe. In *Why we Fight*, for instance, Frank Capra, together with the

⁸ Rosalind Krauss quotes artworks by Jasper Johns, Agnes Martin, Robert Ryman, Mondrian, Joseph Cornell, Albers, Kelly, and LeWitt.

Disney studios, responsible for the animations, clearly used this emblematic character as a powerful rhetorical tool to summarize, for American soldiers, the dimensions of the Nazi threat.

By the same token, the huge production of representations of the U.S. and of Americans in war time can be seen as a demonstration of the capacity for organization and discipline in the artistic field, as well as in the armed forces and in the defense industry. It is not surprising to find an increasing amount of behind-the-scene films, from the 1930's on, showing demanding directors, obsessed with quality, and people working under industrial modes of production, each one with his/her role, function and position — *Babies in Arms*, *42nd Street*, or Busby Berkeley's *Gold Diggers of 1933* and *Gold Diggers of 1935* are good examples of such films. The efficiency of Broadway and Hollywood systems were clearly felt as exciting, in terms both of industrial organization and artistic quality.

In this context, the Disney Studio, usually referred to as a “fun factory,” is perhaps the best example of a synthesis between playful imagination and industrial efficiency. Some reports of the 1930's describe the studio by using metaphors such as a “smooth running piece of machinery,” a place in which “[y]ou never know whether you're in a factory or an art studio,”⁹ or a place in which “a twentieth century miracle is achieved: by a system as truly of the machine age as Henry Ford's plant at Dearborn, true art is produced.”¹⁰ In the *Organization Manual* for the studio, printed on May 16, 1938, there is a number/letter grid in which “every employee could locate

⁹ Nugent. Cited by Watts, 174.

¹⁰ “The Big Bad Wolf.” Cited by Steven Watts, 167.

himself,” and which “defined work responsibilities and authority relationships” (Watts 168). Walt Disney, for whom the greatest hero ever was Henry Ford,¹¹ showing a similar temperament and several affinities with him, was “childishly enchanted by factory methods.”¹² He used to say that animation in his studio was produced “much as an automobile goes through an assembly plant,”¹³ but, deepening the comparison, he said that moving parts of his own plant “were more complex than cogs — [they were] human beings . . . who must be weighed and fitted into [their] proper place . . . Hundreds of young people were being trained and fitted into a machine for the manufacture of entertainment which had become bewilderingly complex.”¹⁴

Having established these possible connections among military, industrial and artistic activities, it is now necessary to proceed with an analysis of representations of America and Americans, by Americans, in war time, through documents and reports on military and industrial actions, along with art production about them. In this way, the three fields — military, industrial and artistic — can be associated on the level of representation. This association is also revealing of a national character which appears in these representations, thus defining or reinforcing images of national identity. Both the *glorious goal* of freeing the world through victory and the *right method* of reaching

¹¹ Letter to Alice Howell, July 2, 1934 (and interviews to specialized magazines). Cited by Watts, 169.

¹² “The Big Bad Wolf.” Cited by Watts, 170.

¹³ Walt Disney. Interoffice communication. May 20, 1935, cited by Watts, 170, and “Mickey Mouse Presents.”

¹⁴ Walt Disney, in an article he contributed to the *Journal of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers*, 1935, cited by Watts, 170. It might not have been by chance that after the war the U.S. had the most powerful armed forces, the biggest industrial park, and the richest entertainment industry in the world. It is also curious that in 1939 Mickey Mouse was considered by film historian Lewis Jacob as the best-known figure of the twentieth century, and by director Sergei Eisenstein as America’s most original contribution to culture, and that in 1969, Mickey and the Coca-Cola bottle were suggested by artist Ernest Trova as the most powerful graphic images of the twentieth century — together with the swastika. In Germany, an officer predicted that “the side which had the best cameras would win,” while in 1937 Hitler tried to ban Mickey Mouse as “the most miserable ideal ever revealed,” but “was forced by popular demand to rescind his order” (Shale, 11-13).

it are ideas encouraged by values usually called for to define an American national identity, values which supposedly united the American people around a national project: democracy, liberalism and social inclusiveness are the glorious goal, American ingenuity is the method.

A glorious goal and war-joy

This section focuses on the war-joy as it appears in the three fields of cultural productions analyzed here — reports on the war, reports on the defense industry, artistic production on both. In reports on war, war-joy comes from the notion of a glorious goal, proposed to all Americans: winning the war and leading a free world. An intense optimism characterized those reports. The war was considered by many as “the greatest bargain that America ever struck,” “the most challenging opportunity of all history” (Clapper) for Americans to spread “American values” all over the world. Precisely two aspects of these values, political and economic freedom, were called for by Republican senator Wendell Willkie, a hugely popular internationalist, as “the touchstone of *our good faith in this war*.”¹⁵ After a seven-day tour of Turkey, Russia and China, Willkie proudly reported that many other peoples in the world were in need of Americans as “partners who will not hesitate to speak out for the correction of injustice anywhere in the world” (Willkie 205).

Actually, American values were frequently used in the press as an emotional appeal for the general support to the image of America at war: all Americans should be happy as heirs and heiresses of such values, being now able to herald them throughout

¹⁵ Willkie, 180, my italics (see also Polenberg, 163-7). *One World* sold about a million copies within two months. Willkie had lost the 1940 election for the presidency, giving Roosevelt his third term, but he supported

the world. The above mentioned *Life* editorial, by Luce, goes on thus: “We have some things in this country which are infinitely precious and especially American — a love of freedom, a feeling for the equality of opportunity, a tradition of self-reliance and independence and also of co-operation. In addition to ideals and notions which are especially American, we are the inheritors of all the great principles of Western civilization — above all Justice, the love of Truth, the ideal of Charity” (Luce).

Numerous repetitions reminded the reader of what the founding fathers used to say about American values and war — Roosevelt’s words on this subject appeared once preceded by many “creeds for democrats” in *The New York Times Magazine*, including the “We Must Fight” speech by Patrick Henry in the Continental Congress, 1775, and the above cited “We Hold These Truths” paragraph of the Declaration of Independence (“Creed for democrats”). Indeed, American values, coming from the Enlightenment, were easily opposed to deliberately racist and imperialist Nazi principles. So the war was at most times interpreted from a Manichean point of view, and the predictable American role in it helped reporters and commentators joyfully to see Americans on the good side, as guarantors of long-lasting peace and freedom for the entire world.

The conflict was often schematized into a struggle between freedom and slavery, democracies and dictatorships, and Roosevelt’s rhetoric exemplified that. In 1941, he characterized the Nazis as “inhuman, unrestrained seekers of world conquest,” and “as ruthless as the Communists in the denial of God.”¹⁶ Later he

Roosevelt’s main war policies; incorporating the idea of a nation unified for victory.

¹⁶ Radio addresses, respectively of May 27, 1941 — in which Roosevelt responds to Hitler’s reaffirming, in a *Life* interview, that he does not intend to declare war against the U. S. and that a Nazi invasion of Americas is a

declared: “We are fighting to cleanse the world of ancient evils, ancient ills. That is the conflict that day and night pervades our lives. No compromise can end that conflict. There has never been — there never can be — a successful compromise between good and evil. Only total victory can reward the champions of tolerance and decency and freedom and faith.”¹⁷

Roosevelt’s *moral* qualities, along with his reassuring, trustworthy image, was opposed to Hitler’s tenebrous features. Such qualities were also used to reinforce the idea that he was a perfect, legitimate and powerful representative of America and American values. In addition, since Roosevelt was paraplegic — a fact that was not hidden by the press, even though seldom mentioned — this powerful image emphasizes that American values disregard any (typically Nazi) demand for physical uniformity and perfection.¹⁸ Indeed, Roosevelt himself was usually taken as a good reason for that national war-joy referred to in this research. He was praised for several aspects — his sense of history, dignity, honesty etc — but most of all for his skill, unconventionality, and strength to carry the burden of “a titanic responsibility, an Atlas load of headaches and heartaches laid upon the shoulders” (McCormick).

In January, 1942, seven weeks after Pearl Harbor, *The New York Times Magazine* printed an appealing portrait of Roosevelt on its cover, drawn by S. J. Woolf, and a four-page photo-biography highlighting his “great moments,” followed by two pages of praise. It was a celebration of Roosevelt’s 60th birthday, entitled, “At

ridiculous idea — and of September 11, 1941, when he determined, after American commercial ships had been attacked, that any American ship, from that time on, must shoot any Nazi ship which hindered American naval trade. See “Franklin Roosevelt makes an ‘inescapable’ decision...”.

¹⁷ Cited in Harris et al., 81.

¹⁸ I thank Renata Wasserman for calling me attention to this.

60 he is still a *happy warrior*" (my italics). In one of the pictures, of 1939, the president, his mother and Eleanor Roosevelt appear greeting England's nobility in an irreverent, Americanized fashion: "precedent was something F. D. R. broke with ease. Never before had a King and Queen of England visited us before this year. Never before had a President entertained them at his own home, fed them hot dogs" (McCormick). Among other traits, Roosevelt's firmness and serenity (and inevitably his chin) specially impressed the reporter:

He sits at a desk piled up with somber or nagging reports from many fronts, as calm and confident as the candidate of a decade ago. The years have thinned his hair, drawn lines around his eyes, set his jaw more firmly, but neither time nor the hammer blows of defeat in the Pacific have shaken his steady self-assurance. Mr. Roosevelt is more at ease in all circumstances, more at home in his position, than any leader of his time. His nerves are stronger, his temper cooler and more even. If he worries, he gives no signs of it. If any doubt of victory ever stirs in the recesses of his mind, it never gets to the surface (McCormick).

A BBC broadcaster helped reiterate the Manichean view of the war and the optimism about the American role in it. In May 27, 1941, a speech by Roosevelt was radio-broadcast from the White House to 85,000,000 people around the world, with a tough response to Hitler's declarations on German/American relation. The day after, a recorded excerpt of the speech was rebroadcast from London by the BBC, immediately followed by an address by Hitler in a recent Nazi meeting. *Life* narrates it thus: "[There] came the serene voice, the measured diction. . . . It was followed immediately by another voice, shrill, frenzied, guttural, rising and falling in geysers of *ungrammatical German*. . . . Then came a third voice, that of the British announcer, saying: 'We leave it to you listeners to judge which voice is the voice of calm strength and which that of hysterical violence.'" And the report goes on: "a man's voice and speech has much to do with his ability to sway mass emotions. In this respect,

President Roosevelt has entered his battle with Adolf Hitler possessed of a mighty weapon" ("Roosevelt on Americas," my italics).

Reporter Raymond Clapper resorted to emotion to reinforce, in *The New York Times Magazine*, the notion that "America" should be aware of its huge power to lead a peaceful and free world. After "feeling the throb of his country's strength," while noticing the amusement of Englishmen in the airplane over New York, back from London, Clapper supports his feelings with statistics:

Steel capacity is the best yardstick of industrial strength. Ours is twice Germany's, including those unhappy prisoners, the conquered countries. It is greater than that of all Europe. Rubber consumption is another index. We use half of the world's production. . . . American industrialists are constructing arms plants that will be the wonders of the world, although we could do much more and will find it necessary to do much more if we are to do justice to ourselves (Clapper).

The feeling of a good war, of the war-joy itself, appears particularly clear in an issue of *Time Magazine* released in January 2, 1942, i.e., only four weeks after Pearl Harbor. Headed by Luce, *Time* changed its critical attitude towards Roosevelt and portrayed him on its cover as "Man of the Year," giving a surplus of reasons for its choice:

Never before had a U. S. President faced so great a task in unifying the country that had made him President, of summoning up the spirit that would make the factories produce on a scale equal to the needs of the world's worst war. . . . In his own right and on his own record, President Roosevelt stood out as a figure of the year and of the age. His smiling courage in the face of panic, his resourcefulness in meeting unprecedented threats to the nation's economy and morale, his sanguine will place him there. The intensity of his feeling for what America can be and therefore will be — a feeling that awakened the country to master its creeping paralysis — these qualities prepared the nation for its struggle in the depth of depression ("Man of the year").

In the same *Time* issue, an exultant editorial was already giving Pearl Harbor a mythical dimension: that "sunny December" had put an end to what *Time* called "the

long nightmare of the 'undeclared war'” (my italics), indicating that “the world’s worst war” was to be a relief for America. The undisguised tone of gratefulness suggested that Roosevelt’s move into the war (inevitable after the Japanese attack) fulfilled many people’s dream of the beginning of a new era, a point zero in history, a glorious time for a political *avant-garde*.

War-joy was also visible in reports on the defense industry. In one of them the euphoria defines textual structure itself. One paragraph begins with “For America is building ships,” and ends with “America is building ships!”; between both clauses there come some impressive defense data on ship building. In several other paragraphs the author just replaces data and the keywords at the beginning and end, according to the subject — for “ships,” “planes,” “tanks,” “an Army;” or for “building ships,” “training pilots.” The opening of this paean to the defense industry sets up the excitement:

From coast to coast, from Galveston to Michigan, the face of America is changing. It is changing . . . as new ships slide gracefully into the changeless sea, changing as planes violate with noise the remotest recesses of our sovereign skies. The defense program, as yet in its gawky adolescence, has nevertheless made its mark upon a continent . . . New cities are growing — cities of men in uniform; and near mass production factories of the Middle West, in shipyard towns and aircraft centers new buildings rise to house the men behind the guns (Baldwin).

In July, 1942, after the defense program has geared up to full speed, the same magazine publishes another one of these exultant patriotic reports, “If Hitler could See These,” written after a tour of 60 plants in 21 cities and 13 states. War-joy is even more explicit:

It is a thrilling thing to see American industry in action. . . . The clackety-clack of acres of machines, the rat-a-tat-tat of endless rivets being driven home, the fearsomeness of giant cranes swooping overhead, carrying planes, tanks and mammoth caldrons of molten steel as if they were so many carpet tacks under a

magnet; then the sight of the sleek, strong planes, the elephantine tanks with their deadly cannon-trunks, the millions of machine-gun bullets jumping from the machines like a plague of locusts — well, they make you feel better! They make you feel that you can stand up and cheer for your country, the country that is producing all this, and that you can wave the American flag, just as hard and as high as you please, without feeling in the least apologetic about it (Shalett).

Time, in turn, in the same edition which selected Roosevelt as Man of 1941, exalted Henry Ford's thorough conversion from pacifism to war just after Pearl Harbor, declaring that he would deserve the title of "businessman of 1941" — actually he and the other Detroit auto-makers converted all their plants to war production, and still built new ones, but Ford was a special case, given his revolutionary industrial methods of the 1910's, which will be commented on later ("Man of the year"). Two and a half months later, Ford gets *Time*'s cover, and the caption under his portrait is "Battle of Detroit." The story/editorial extols the 78 year-old national hero and suggests that "something is happening that Adolf Hitler does not yet understand — a new reenactment of the old American miracle of wheels and machinery, but on a new scale. This time it is a miracle of war production." *Time* also claims that America needs "more men like Henry Ford: individualistic, cocky, lively, curious and productive," and speaks of war as an exciting personal game for the industrialist:

Making cars had become routine; all the problems were licked. As an automaker he was an old hand, getting kind of tired of it. Mass-producing tanks and bombers was new and exciting. The gigantic engineering and production problems took him back to his bicycle-shop days, when mass production was just a bright gleam in his eye. . . . Now Henry Ford had a chance to apply this hand-and-eyes knowledge to the greatest industrial problem of the time. . . . All Henry Ford's talents, all the empire he has built in his 78 years, all his acres and masonry, locomotives and ships, are dedicated to winning it ("Battle of Detroit").

Together with the excitement about production and industrialists, war-joy was present in the reports on the high wages in the defense industry. Combined with full employment, high wages were really important for Americans in terms of social

balance, putting an end to the effects of the Depression, and encouraging good expectations for the post-war American society. Indeed, working in defense plants was a synonym for making money, as one can see from this episode reported by Hal Borland in traditional, then also booming, Hartford, Connecticut (Mark Twain's hometown, considered by some as "the birthplace of American democracy"): "Another couple look in a clothing store window. 'If you like that suit, why don't you get it?' she asks. 'What'll I use for money?' he growls. 'Rent sixty a month and me getting forty a week in that damned insurance office. I wish t'God I'd learned to run a lathe instead of push a pencil!'" (Borland)

Actually, money was flowing as many people had never seen it do before. "Older men of the white-collar class are . . . earning much more money than they ever did when they sold dresses or kept books for a living, and youngsters of predraft age are making more than their daddies did during the Depression" (Shalett). For many defense workers, in fact, "everything's new and wonderful," as John dos Passos defines it. "They can buy radios, they can go to the pictures, they can go to beer parlors, bowl, shoot craps, bet on the ponies. . . . Girls can go to beauty parlors, get their nails manicured, buy readymade dresses" (dos Passos 94). More than earning much money, however, the real wonder, capable of changing people's definitions of themselves, was combining it with an overwhelming new horizon, open for great possibilities.

I had never seen a battleship or destroyer in my life. When I saw my first battleship I couldn't believe there was such a thing in the world. And to see the ocean too. . . . I felt like something had come down from heaven. I went from forty cents an hour to a dollar an hour. . . . I felt like at last I'm getting up in the world. I was able to buy some

working clothes for a change, buy a suit — I didn't have to depend on somebody's hand-me-downs anytime. *It just made a different man out of me.*¹⁹

As well as defense workers, many artists were excited about the possibility of taking part in the war effort, working with pleasure, joy and a sense of responsibility. An initiative by cartoonist Cy Hungerford and advertising manager George Sherman, of Pittsburgh, became exemplary, patriotically highlighted at once by *Time*, *Life* and *The New York Times* (at least). While drinking together, Hungerford and Sherman started talking about an FBI investigation on sabotage in defense plants, and got the idea: "Why not . . . by means of humorous posters, make the worker himself more conscious of the national importance and danger of his job?" They talked to directors of the FBI, in Washington, from whom they gained encouragement and new ideas. Then together they produced 12 posters warning of the risk of sabotage and industrial spying, under the general title "You are a production soldier... America's first line of defense is here." They used familiar situations and home catch-phrases, and a really attractive cartoon style, with simple lines and composition. The factories soon bought thousands of copies: Carnegie-Illinois Steel Corporation, for instance, bought 3,600; Westinghouse, 1,680.²⁰

Poster-maker Jes Schlaikjer once said that his mission in the war was "to arouse in the heart of every soldier a feeling of pride in his particular branch of the service and a determination to represent its traditions worthily." He was employed by the War Department (at the Graphics Section of the Bureau of Public Relations), and found his models in camps near Washington, taking them to his studio in the Pentagon Building,

¹⁹ Interview with William Pefley of Greencastle, Pennsylvania. Cited in Harris et al. 39-40, my italics.

²⁰ "Posters for factories." "These are defense posters." "Defense posters by Cy Hungerford."

“where generals and corporals watched them grow into these representations of young America at war” (“Young America at war”).

Several expressionist war posters circulated reinforcing that Manichean view of the war, always with American references on the bright side of a chiaroscuro representation. In one of these posters, by J. White, a Nazi soldier is painted in dark in half of the picture, while in the other half the Statue of Liberty appears in the light shed from its own torch; the title reads: “Slave World [in gothic letters] or Free World?” Nazi evil is also associated with sexual fears. In another poster, by H. Tark, a Nazi soldier brutally dominates a young woman, his hand grabbing her skirts at her buttocks, before a background of a broken fence and ruined houses; the title is “Deliver us from evil.” Good and evil were also respectively embodied in Roosevelt and Hitler themselves. Actually that solution was hugely explored by cartoonists, through Roosevelt’s and Hitler’s caricatured physical features — chiefly the former’s chin, helping suggest dignity and self-confidence, and, obviously enough, the latter’s mustache and wayward hair.

Right after Pearl Harbor — eight days later — the proud and joyful discourse of national affirmation through American values was also made explicit in the radio play *We Hold These Truths*, by Norman Corwin, written at the invitation of the U.S. Office of Facts and Figures, and broadcast to 60 million people. The play describes how the Bill of Rights was added to the Constitution and ends by affirming the contemporary value of those rights. Talking to a clerk, an editor, a worshiper, a worker and a manufacturer, the main character, called only “citizen,” says that a cry arises everywhere in America: “affirmation! Yes! United proudly in a solemn day! Knit more

strongly than we were a hundred fifty years ago!” And he goes on: “Can it be progress if our Bill of Rights is stronger now than when it was conceived? Is that not what you’d call wearing well? The incubation of invincibility? Is not our Bill of Rights more cherished now than ever? The blood more zealous to preserve it whole?”²¹

Soon good humor starts enhancing war-joy in representations of America at war. This happens especially in the already mentioned Broadway comic revue *This Is the Army*, performed by soldiers in July, 1942. Of the soldiers’ female roles, Edward Fitch Hall says that, “though a bit hairy-legged and satchel-footed by ordinary Broadway standards, [these “girls”] yield nothing in grace to the danseuse who wears skirts off-stage as well as on.” It is a prototype of war-joy: “They can make the audience roll in the aisles as they do stuff in all sorts of outlandish get-ups — and look like a million dollars in their own regulation Summer khaki” (Hall).

The same good humor provided Hollywood with new opportunities of high box-office productions, chiefly through war comedies such as *Caught in the Draft* or *In the Army*, full of those gags provided by clumsy, maladroit soldiers — who were not seldom made into heroes, which also helped build the image of the ordinary man who was able to make a difference in the war. In June, 1941, *Life* chose a shot of one of these soldiers, thoroughly muddled — Bob Hope in *Caught in the Draft* — to illustrate “the U.S. cinema industry’s newest approach to the war.” One year after that, in *Yankee Doodle Dandy*, James Cagney impersonated George M. Cohan, an American musician and dancer who proudly dedicates a large amount of his work to both world wars; the film combines war-joy with good humor, musical talent, tap

²¹ Corwin, Norman. *We Hold These Truths*. Cited by Polenberg, 17.

dance and choreography, showing, in brief, an euphoric patriotism toward the war, combined with a super efficient artistic production.

The relationship between Hollywood and war-joy went far beyond Hollywood money-making screwball war comedies and patriotic musicals. An estheticized war could be seen in Hollywood studios, situated right on the Pacific coast, the first part of American territory to be attacked in the case of a Japanese invasion. On January 2, 1942, four weeks after Pearl Harbor, "Hollywood staged its first air-raid rehearsal with all the fanfare of a Class A production." At Warner Bros, during the pretended attack, with a deafening air raid siren screaming, and military police coordinating the evacuation of 3,000 people to four basements, a pretty starlet rushes from a dressing room, and her robe, dramatically opened by her movement, casually exhibits her silky underwear. "And the drill was held five minutes before lunch hour so as not to interfere with work" ("Hollywood girds for war"). Brazilian musician Aloysio de Oliveira, leader of the Bando da Lua, the group that accompanied Carmen Miranda, who was working at Disney then, tells of another air-raid drill.

I was driving one night on Santa Monica Boulevard, Hollywood, when the alarm whistled. I did exactly what I was told to do. I stopped the car, and the first door I could see was a bar's. Strange coincidence. The bar was crowded, not only with its customary patrons, but with those like me, who had just followed instructions. That night was one of the most sensational in my life. After closing the door, I got a merry greeting. Everybody was a little tipsy, and people seemed to be one big family. It was a brotherhood celebration fed by alcohol and by a feeling of imminent danger, like saying farewell to life (Oliveira 98-99).

In the same merry mood, Hollywood stars "hit the road" as part of the war effort. In addition to shows exclusively for soldiers, they made tours to general audiences whose (sometimes huge) takes were directed straight to the Army and Navy. In April, 1942, one of these tours, the two-week *Hollywood Victory Caravan*, with 22

movie stars (including Bing Crosby, Groucho Marx and James Cagney), 8 starlets and some 70 musicians and technical experts, performed for about 125,000 people in two weeks, travelling 8,000 miles from Boston to Houston, and accumulating \$600,000. In the White House the troupe was greeted by the President with a tea party; in Boston, cheers were “so long and so loud that both Joan Blondell and Cary Grant dissolved in tears;” in Philadelphia, Bob Hope tossed cookies to the throngs.

But the paroxysm of Hollywood as a war industry was at the Disney Studio. Even before Pearl Harbor, “90% of Disney’s 550 employes [sic] [were] making films that bear directly on the war. At least six major branches of the Government have engaged Disney to reach the public. . . . The Navy is Disney’s best customer, having ordered more than 50 films on every war subject from bombing and gunnery to paratroop training” (“Walt Disney goes to war” 63).

Disney artists also drew insignias for Army and Navy corps, with animal characters concentrating all their loveliness, fun and spontaneity — like typical Disney puppies — on war activities. One of the best-known of such insignias, drawn for a fleet of new torpedo boats, portrayed a mosquito holding a torpedo with his many legs. Success was such that soon “the Disney office was bombarded with requests to design insignia for tanks, minesweepers, bombers and fighting planes” (“Speaking of pictures”). Another famous insignia was drawn for the Alaska Defense Force (ADF), with a seal balancing the letters ADF. The commander of this group, General S. B. Buckner, wrote back to Disney thus: ““Since the arrival of the insignia all of the seals in the Bering Sea have been out on the ice pack balancing D’s on their noses, sneering derisively at the polar bears, expanding their chests and exulting merrily over being

chosen to represent our defense forces.” By May, 1941, the studio had produced over 200 designs, and was expecting to do at least 500 more. *Life* magazine also takes part in the euphoria: “Disney and his artists had created a whole new system of heraldry, comparable to the ancient knightly arms.”

The right method and choreography

In addition to war-joy, choreographic movements are the other common figure in the three cultural fields from which representations analyzed here come from — reports on the war, reports on the defense industry, artistic production on both. Both life in the armed forces and the uninterrupted movement of people and machines in defense industrial plants were usually described by journalists in musical/choreographic terms, while artists in general (not only choreographers) used either to coordinate collective works through methods which resemble choreographic activities (as on a shop-floor) or to portray the war and defense industry, as reporters did, by means of musical/choreographic images.

Movements of troops, tanks, planes and ships through European battlefields were reported at large in the American press, of course. As suggested above, the very grid of platoons in particular, and the spatial organization of movements planned by strategists, hint at the idea of disciplinary methods having movements in common with choreography. Whenever a troop movement is referred to, one can easily imagine the typical platoon marching as if choreographed, legs and arms moving simultaneously, and all boots hitting the ground in that unison binary beat, so that the whole platoon moves cohesively as a block. Supervising and training make possible a near perfect

collective coordination: in order for a platoon to make a right, the column on the right must march slowly, while the others from right to left must adopt increasing speeds, so that each row marches on the radius of the curve. In a battle, such collective skills permit the “troops” to obey a specific plan of action. It is almost a dance by that “dancingest Army and Navy ever.”

But sometimes reports on military actions in the war were represented in terms of images of the coordinated military movements of a whole nation, as was the case of a two-page story in *Life*: “U.S. Sets its Sights for Victory,” issued in January, 1942. The story reported on forecasts for American war production in the next one or two years, with an intense visual appeal. The astonishing statistics were turned into neatly drawn graphs, all of them showing figures of giant grids of armaments taking over enormous geographic spaces. One of these figures encouraged the reader to imagine 185,000 planes in rows of 5, spaced 100 ft apart from nose to tail; such a flying platoon would cover 900 miles, almost the length of Japan. In another one, fighter planes deployed over bombers would form two flying “blankets,” in a flying military choreography capable of covering an area of 1 x 117 miles; another graph suggested a single line of 120,000 tanks, going from Salt Lake City to New York (“U.S. sets its sights for victory”). The very logic of grids, its very geometric monotony, allows one to imagine what is *not* in each frame, i.e., the way in which each grid of planes or tanks would go on and on, beyond the space of the picture. But there is also a black square, occupying almost a whole page, with 60,000 white dots, representing the 60,000 planes predicted to be produced in 1942. Here, with the whole grid actually drawn, imagination is asked to work differently, not extending the grid, but

transforming dots into airplanes, also visualizing the whole grid of planes moving together — now to cover all of Manhattan Island.

Recalling that maps are also drawn upon grids, and that nations are usually represented by maps, those two pages of statistic graphs through grids proposed by *Life* magazine may be seen as an especially strong invitation to imagine a national choreography of the whole U.S. at war — and a joyful one, given the national pride in American values and the glorious goal mentioned above, which in turn could be achieved by the impressive output of the defense industry, portrayed by the statistics themselves.

Two years later, on June 5, 1944, a *Life* cover provided the reader with another synthesis of national war choreography. The entire cover is taken up by a picture of soldiers on the march, seen from above, and at an angle to the grid of the platoon, so that spaces between soldiers do not appear. In addition, the rectangular frame of the magazine is not large enough to show the outer rows of the platoon. The photo also shows the soldiers' faces, healthy and full of conviction. Once again, the very logic of the grid of soldiers suggests a hyperbolic, powerful group of men in uniform, compact, cohesive, well coordinated, and endless. The soldiers' brand new uniforms, helmets and weapons, in turn, suggest that the defense program results have been so huge that no one could see the whole of it. The idea of choreography is made clear by the inevitable sense of simultaneity of the soldiers' movements, keeping all moving arms and feet always parallel, the feet making that binary beat on the ground. The cohesion is reinforced by the sameness of clothes and by all those parallel rifles, at an angle to the cover rectangle. All soldiers are looking straight ahead, focusing on a point in the

future, out of the frame, which can be easily associated with the country's destiny. Finally, the *Life* logo, printed on the picture, together with the caption, "The U.S. Infantry," implies not only the "American-ness" of the group, but also a kind of signature, suggesting the role of the American press (and one of its most powerful groups), aligned with that powerful national group on the march toward victory.

Musical and choreographic metaphors were frequent in texts on the defense industry, which is quite understandable, since industrial efficiency depends strongly on the harmony of simple movements rhythmically repeated by individual bodies. One reporter described the "rat-a-tat-tat of endless rivets being driven home," and the work of a girl at a Saint Louis ordnance plant, who turned out bullets singing to herself "in time with the clicking of the machine, 'Kill-a-Jap, kill-a-Jap, kill-a-Jap'" (Shalett). Another reporter classified skilled workers as *virtuosos* who "play by ear," who "can make the machinery and blueprints come alive as a Toscanini brings notes off paper" ("Battle of Detroit"). This choreographic industrial movement is joyfully portrayed as an astonishing, opera-like spectacle, with dramatic notes, in a *New York Times Magazine* story entitled "*Crescendo* in Detroit."

When you see Detroit plants, . . . you do hear a rising *crescendo* that soon will burst in *violent music* on distant battlefronts. . . . A bomber section, the after part, is a beautiful, shining thing, prophetic of the *loveliness* that even an instrument of destruction can have. . . . The shells are painted in colors . . . and they are *paraded* in symmetrical rows, like *metallic soldiers* in strange armor. . . . You will have *many pictures, of machines and people*, and they will merge, until you see that this is a part of the greatest mechanized army that ever marched. Here are samples of power: *power of mind, power of hand and muscle, power of machine, power of the human will*. Power for war. Power for victory (Duffus, my italics).

And we will remember that "the greatest mechanized army that ever marched" is also the "dancingest ever."

Such choreography within the defense plants, as well as their impressive output, was to a great extent made possible, according to many reports, by American ingenuity, acknowledged as present in most industrial warriors, from “The Billion-Dollar Table” (Henry Ford and his assistants) to those anonymous workers described as “geniuses in shirt sleeves.” At Chrysler, industrialist K. T. Keller challenged: “Gimme a contract for a million of anything and I can make it!” (Shalett) Working at the AC Spark Plug Division in Flint, Michigan, Don Johnson remembers he was suddenly made a team leader of six colleagues, to produce a piece they had no idea about. “The new products required that we gut and strip the plant of the equipment we were used to operating, put that equipment outside for storage, and replace it with new equipment for war production. . . . [But] there was never any doubt on our part that we would do what we’d committed ourselves to do. We just did not accept ‘Can’t do.’”²² At Chrysler, *Time* pointed out a worker, Frank Morissette, who “cut the finishing time on anti-aircraft guns from 400 hours to 15 minutes” (“Battle of Detroit”).

American ingenuity, as a provider of this “there’s nothing I can’t do” power, is seen and shown by reporters as a kind of American magic. Journalists seem strongly impressed by “huge machines that are incredibly delicate — a two-ton drill, for example, so balanced that it can be moved by a finger.” Machines are compared to the “finest piece of jewelry” (Duffus). A picture in *The New York Times Magazine* highlights “A machine that drills the holes in five propeller blades at once” (Borland). And the miracle of American ingenuity is also reportedly responsible for the keystone of that formidable output of the defense industry, i.e., the assembly line.

²² Interview with Don Johnson. Cited in Harris et al. 45.

Stories extolling American ingenuity and industrial efficiency abounded in the 40s. *The New York Times Magazine*, for instance, once featured Virginia Ritenour, a worker at the Wright engine factory, in Cincinnati, Ohio, standing at the head of a machine, “a whopper of a machine,” 154 feet long. “What do you do?” Virginia was asked. She replied: “I push a button.” The story follows in praise of the machine’s skill: “Virginia neglected to add that when she pushed that button it started an airplane cylinder head moving along a line that performed seventy-one operations, eliminating the work of thirty-nine old-style machines and reducing the number of operators required from thirty-nine to ten!” (Shalett) As to the streamlining methodization of training, for the education of bodies, the same magazine showed examples like this one: “It used to take us two to three years to train a skilled worker to build an airplane,” a manufacturer explained. “Now we train a thousand women in six weeks, each to do one of a thousand different jobs, and we build our planes faster” (Shalett).

The possibility of an American victory at war was really conceived, to a great extent, as a question of method. In order to fit the assembly line, each part of each machine was designed to be simple, at least simpler than the enemy’s:

In Manhattan last week some 360 members of the Society of Automotive Engineers inspected the motor of a Nazi twin-engined Junkers bomber shot down over England. They took it apart, put it together again, fiddled with screw drivers and flashlights — and smiled. The Nazi motor was a designer’s dream: the designers had used complicated parts, scarce materials. But by Detroit’s notions of mass production it was a little too tricky to be really good: it was a hard motor to put on an assembly line. In making war machines, the Axis had a head start, but Detroit was confident it had a head start in know-how (“Battle of Detroit”).

American ingenuity was seen as embodied in one particular American. The laudatory editorial of *Time* magazine (mentioned above) on Ford’s miracle of war production, stimulating a joyous feeling toward that man who was declared “a striking

example” of those “who have helped to turn U.S. ingenuity to a new weight in the balance of world affairs”²³. That *Time* editorial goes on to show some details of such a miracle.

A generation ago he [Ford] performed the first miracle of mass production. Today he is only one of many miracle-workers in his industry, but his part in their common job is itself greater than the greatest job he ever did before. . . . A year ago Willow Run was a lazy little creek west of Detroit. . . . Today Willow Run is the most enormous room in the history of man: more than a half-mile long, nearly a quarter of a mile wide. . . . In planning the building, Ford Motor Co.’s drafting room used five miles of blueprint paper a day, seven days a week for six months. In this enormous workroom Ford hopes eventually to turn out a four-motored Consolidated bomber every hour. The raw materials will go in at one end; from the other will emerge the 30-ton machines, coughing with life. . . . Ford’s River Rouge plant, where Ford steamships dump coal and iron ore and limestone to be *magicked* into steel and glass and machinery, has turned its two square miles of self-contained industrial empire to the tools of war.

By 1944, Ford made good on his prediction, and the Willow Run plant started producing one B-24, with its 101,650 parts, every 63 minutes. At the same time, on the West Coast, two 10,000-ton Liberty ships were produced every day. During the whole of World War II, U.S. defense plants produced 300,000 airplanes, 87,000 warships, 102,000 tanks and self-propelled guns, nearly 400,000 artillery pieces, and 47 million tons of artillery ammunition. In fact, “America outproduced the rest of the world, Allied and Axis powers combined” (Harris et al. 141-44).

What *Time* described as Ford’s first miracle, one generation before World War II, is basically the industrial revolution accomplished by Ford Motor Company in the ’teens, after adopting the moving assembly line and the high wages policy combined with low prices, which allowed workers to consume the very products they helped to

²³ “Man of the year,” my italics. In fact, however, the Roosevelt administration was worried about how things were going at the Ford corporation: Old Henry Ford was “off in an orbit of his own,” the company president, Edsel Ford, Henry’s son, had died; Henry Ford II, Ford’s grandson, was serving in the navy, and of the company directors who could take over — disrupting the family succession —, the most prominent was Harry Bennett, who did not have the government’s confidence. The company war production was strategically so important that the U.S. Secretary of Navy, Frank Knox, issued a personal authorization, and Henry Ford II was released from

manufacture. In addition to filling the streets of American cities with new cars and making the automobile more and more a part of what could be seen as American culture, the spread of Ford's initiatives unquestionably helped improve the country's employment level, wealth distribution and social development — in many struggles around labor policies in the U.S., laborers generally demand their just share in the social gain predicted by a given labor policy, fighting any kind of discrimination (such as race or sex), rather than questioning the capitalistic logic of the policy itself.

The changes in industrial methods associated with "Ford's miracle" may be better understood as the development of taylor-fordist methods, which in turn may be summarized as a combination of: (1) the minimization of tasks through the optimization of movements and mechanical automatization; (2) the methodization and normalization of each step of production, including supervision, administration, and marketing, generating easy step-by-step instructions; (3) the education of bodies through repetition, under surveillance, of simple tasks in the same place at an assembly line; and (4) the implementation of inclusiveness, by a combination of professionalization, low prices, high wages, advertising, consumerism, and allotted leisure-time, but demanding in return the workers' adaptation to behavioral standards. The adoption of the moving assembly line by Ford further simplified tasks that were already simple. The main principle was fixing bodies in their places on the shop-floor, and making car parts move in front of them. In the relationship between bodies and machines, the former lost and the latter gained movement, as well as skill, through increased automation and technological sophistication. Workers now were restricted in

the service to take on his grandfather's company. See Lacey, 401-5.

their movements to a couple of square feet, repeating all day long their ever simpler tasks.

As a result, anyone, with no especial skill, could apply for a job in a Ford plant, and that, together with the high-wages policy, gave Taylor-Fordism an including feature. On the other hand, surveillance was rendered much easier and more efficient, despite the increasing speed of production flow. The five-dollar a day wage, more than double the former average wage, was adopted at one stroke by Ford in January 1914. It was made possible by the company's sharing profits with the workers, who in turn had to adapt to the company's strict rules. Workers had to conform themselves, and their bodies, to some behavioral norms, even in their leisure hours, at home, or in community life, if they wanted to benefit from the company's high wages policy. This process was also a process of "Americanization," chiefly for thousands of immigrants from Europe and the Middle-East. Officers of the company's "Sociological Department" visited the workers' houses in the slums of Detroit, teaching them habits of hygiene and behavior patterns; the company also offered mandatory English courses for 71% of the workers, who were not American-born. At the graduation ceremony, the workers received their certificate in a theatrical presentation known as "Ford English School Melting Pot:" they entered wearing their native costumes and came out in Ford outfits.²⁴

²⁴ The five-dollar-a-day wage was so daring that it gained headlines in January 1914, and was kept at issue for weeks, making Ford well known all over the country. Thousands of unemployed swarmed on the Highland Park plant every day, looking for a job, while other Detroit automakers strongly complained about what they considered Ford's madness, until they too found out the advantages of high wages policy. See Lacey, 110-30 e Gelderman, 50-54.

Extremely simple tasks like pressing a button became magically linked along those moving assembly lines, with incredibly efficient mechanisms provided by American ingenuity and with the Americanization of behaviors — all these elements, daily described by the press as working together for America to achieve its glorious goal at war, helped establish the image of an American war-joy choreography taking place in defense plants. In their industrial version, these choreographic movements seemed more sophisticated than those exhibited by cohesive military platoons, where all movements were the same. On shop-floors individual gestures were also the simplest possible, and were always repeated, but instead of that absolute simultaneity of the platoons, the visual effect of the whole was sequential. Each moving part was affected by a sequence of different tasks, and each individual task depended strictly on the one before to be made. Therefore, platoon movements would be analogous to choreographic numbers in which each gesture is made by all dancers at the same time, while the general effect of movements by workers in a taylor-fordist shop-floor would be more like those sequential choreographic numbers in which each dancer starts making a simple gesture a little bit after the preceding dancer's (the difference here being that simple tasks were different from worker to worker).

On the one hand, the effect of a typical platoon movement can be seen as if analyzed and choreographically reproduced on stage in the filmic version of *This Is the Army* — in part a reconstitution of the Broadway revue. A number of dancers formed a platoon, headed for the audience, in such a way that each line of soldiers was formed on a level slightly higher than the following one, the first line being on stage level. This arrangement works as if the audience could see the whole platoon, from a point a

little above it, instead of seeing only the first lines. The first two lines perform a stationary march, though with larger gestures, as if they were really on the march, while the other lines only swing their torsos laterally to the binary beat. Helped by the song they are energetically singing, the impression is precisely that of the vigorous movement of a huge, powerful platoon toward victory. On the other hand, the image of industrial efficiency through sequences of simple tasks along a moving assembly line may be seen in some of Busby Berkeley's long, showy sequential choreographic numbers (this notion is further discussed in Chapter 4).

The same idea of industrial efficiency through choreographic coordination of simple tasks also appeared in artistic production itself — as mentioned above in the case of Disney's "fun factory." A good example of this was the search for the so called "war song," a song which could represent America in WWII the way "Over There" had represented America in WWI. Prestigious Tin Pan Alley songwriters — "the fountainhead of popular music which hadn't been at a loss for a rhyme or a tune since before the Spanish-American War" — produced songs in a taylor-fordist fashion:

Writing a song is usually a matter of collaboration in this era. One writer gets the idea and wraps it in a rough lyric. Then he calls in a second who suggests a few refinements and perhaps supplies a second verse. Once satisfied with a lyric, they find a composer to fit it to a tune. In the tailoring operations the lyric frequently undergoes alterations. . . . The whole process takes one, two or three days. If the thing doesn't click for the authors by that time they tire of the idea and start searching around for a new one. Almost every day one such group will hit upon what looks to them like "it." Then they will corner a publisher, telling him in unison, "It's terrific. It's a natural. Here's The War Song." If one of the writers is important a publisher may give him an audition (Desmond).²⁵

²⁵ Only two songs managed to get close to becoming the World War II Song. The first one was "Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition," written by a private, Frank Loesser, on the famous legend according to which Captain Maguire, Senior Chaplain at the Naval Training Station of San Diego, reached his ship under fire during the Pearl Harbor attack and blessed each soldier repeating what would be the song's title. Even though the Army tried to avoid its being "plugged to death," the sheet-music sales reached 125,000 copies in November 1942, and more than 250,000 records were sold. The second was "Der Fuehrer's Face," by Disney Studios composer Oliver

Poster production, too, resembled a joyfully coordinated movement of artists toward victory. "Inconceivable would be a war without posters. Like bands, parades, flags and patriotic speeches, they are designed to rouse peaceful citizens to deeds of daring and hard work. Already, in World War II, the U. S. has been bombarded with such poster art" ("These are defense posters"). In November, 1942, *The New York Times Magazine* reported: "Artists of every age and rank [from 43 states] responded to the number of 2,224 when a nation-wide war poster competition was announced last Summer" ("Posters for victory," my italics).²⁶ About 200 posters (10% of the total) were selected for the honor of being exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art, in New York. The collection then was to tour the country, and the prize-winners to be reproduced for national distribution by the Office of Civilian Defense. "American artists have been battling within themselves for a way to fight the war. Many have joined the armed forces. Those who could not join up continued the battle within themselves and in groups until finally 26 art organizations rallied together under the banner of 'Artists for Victory.' Combined with the Council for Democracy, they planned this poster campaign" ("War posters").

One of the best metaphors for the national war-joy movement of music and choreography is given by one war poster by Cy Hungerford distributed throughout industrial plants. It shows a country boy representing what could be considered the "ordinary American," happily singing and playing an organ with his huge hands and

Wallace, written for a Disney's propaganda cartoon short, whose original title, *Donald Duck in Nutzi Land*, was changed precisely because of the successful song. It sold over 200,000 records up to November, 1942, and in less than 1 month the sheet made it the top five on the best-seller list. A comy German band accompanies it. "New U. S. war songs."

²⁶ "Eight categories were set — Production, War Bonds, *The Nature of the Enemy*, Sacrifice, People on the March, "Deliver us from Evil", Slave world or free world, Loose talk — and nine prizes of \$300 each were

agile fingers. The organ itself is a defense plant, with its pipes as the factory chimneys, throwing out smoke and soot together with eighth notes. On the plant roof/organ body one reads "Defense Production;" among the notes, rises the song "God Bless America." The "message" is complemented by the text: "And it will be 'god help America' if the organ breaks down!! You are a production soldier... America's first line of defense is here" ("Defense posters by Cy Hungerford").

"A nation in flux"

On the one hand, the press and artists helped to establish a sense of war-joy suffused with American values and the sense of a grand historic opportunity; on the other hand, they also helped to divulge the miraculous results of the defense industry through choreographic means made possible by American ingenuity. The image of a war-joy choreography, thus, was being established as intrinsic to American culture. However, the national character of this image, the sense of a cohesive movement throughout the nation, was also highlighted by frequent totalizing metaphors. A *New York Times Magazine* reporter said: "Men and machines [are] making over the face of America. Slowly the stream of khaki moving through our streets turns into a torrent; slowly the great ships grow and gather upon the seas; faster the lathes whirl and the drillers [sic] turn, and the planes take shape to darken the skies of America. *Here is a land in flux*; here is a nation in change, the architects of its destiny the brain and brawn of a people" (Baldwin, my italics). A *Time* reporter reinforced the idea: "The whole U. S. nation was going to roll up its sleeves and fix Armageddon" ("Battle of Detroit").

offered, *two in the category of sacrifice.*"

There were, of course, millions of “exceptions” to this national enthusiasm, people who could not or did not want to join up or get aligned with the war effort. An example of this was a farmer from Jerome, Idaho, who moved with spouse and 3 children (including a newborn) to Long Beach, California, to work in a defense plant, but gave it up and went back home only 3 months later. Looking from his little square window at all those houses in a row with no space between them, he complained: “How in the heck can you go outside and even take a pee without some neighbor watching you?” (Harris et al. 35). Exceptions, however, were not really taken into account by reports, commentators and artists who encouraged the image of national cohesion, availing themselves of statistics on the majority, endorsed the idea of America at war.

Of every war fought by the U.S., World War II was the one with the greatest popular support, which helped establish the image of a war-joy choreography as really *national*. Less than two months after Pearl Harbor, sales of war bonds (in banks and post offices, through formal application) had already reached \$1.3 billion, while stamps, from 10¢ to \$5 each (sold at store counters, street corners, schools, offices, grocery stores, or by newsboys everywhere), brought in \$55 million. Besides bonds and stamps, the whole war cost, about \$200 billion (\$186 in federal expenditures for war production alone), was supported with capital coming from many popular sources. There were Victory Taxes, a novelty people did not quite complain about. Food was rationed — and “the majority of people ate better under rationing than they did during the Depression” (Harris et al. 64). Gas was also rationed: people were given A, B, C or E (emergency) priorities, and a national 35-mile-an-hour speed limit was established;

yet, as a nostalgic witness recalled in the recession of the early 80s', "nobody went into a gas station and hit each other with fists when we had gas rationing the way they did a few years ago when we had a gas shortage" (Harris et al. 64). Even fashion was creatively adapted to face metal demand; fabric laces and buttons proliferated, hats came without metal hat pins.

In addition to new agricultural policies, which, combined with good weather, occasioned an agricultural boom in the country, from almost every space available in urban settings — backyards, parking lots etc — the fashion of "Victory Gardens" exploded. "Then everybody grew a victory garden. . . . Our carrots never got bigger than an inch. Yet we all wanted to do our part for the war. You got caught up in the mesmerizing spirit of patriotism."²⁷ By 1943, 20.5 million Victory Gardens were planted, producing about 1/3 of all vegetables eaten in the country the entire year. At the same time, people responded with the same enthusiasm to a Government campaign for scrap and fat — one old shovel could provide iron for four hand grenades, while one pound of fat would yield enough glycerin for one pound of black powder.

Such a powerful home front made it feel as if the country had acquired a new technology, capable of providing "one people" with ubiquity. A reporter remarked of a girl who inspected airplane parts in a plant: "This girl is dangerous: she may save a pilot's life and the pilot may shoot down an enemy. This is war, too" (Duffus). Working "over here," Americans could take part in the war and feel as if they were "over there." One worker at a new Monsanto plant in Tennessee explained: "we just say to hell with everything and everybody except the United States and the United

²⁷ Interview with Sheril Jankovsky Cunning of Long Beach, Ca. Cited in Harris et al. 255.

Nations” (Shalett). If this shows an intense dedication and enthusiasm by unskilled workers, in plants hastily planned for dealing with absolutely new technology and processes, built on the metaphor of a battle filed at home, the image carried over into the cost in casualties: industrial accidents were officially reported in January 1944 as more numerous than American injuries in the battle fields.

In all, more than 15 million Americans served in the armed forces, and about 20 million others (15% of the population) moved for a wartime job.²⁸ Migration in America has seldom been that intense. Even though new jobs and higher wages were the principal stimuli for moving, those who moved generally had to consider the importance of what they were to do in order to cope with their new troubles. “Although hardships, shortages and crowded conditions were a fact of life throughout the war years, most people took them in stride and good humor. Complainers were met with the universal retort ‘Don’t you know there’s a war going on?’” (Harris et al. 32) As the defense industry geared up, female and black workers, for the first time, were seen as important in the labor force — inaugurating a new phase in their history of struggles for equal rights.

The idea of a nation on the move through the defense industry also appears in a John dos Passos’s report of March, 1943, describing a whole horizon in change, as part of the boom in Mobile, Alabama — a process common in small towns all over the country.

²⁸ If we were to refer each one of those 15 million who served to four close relatives, whose lives have been affected by such service, we would have 60 million people, almost half American whole population, mobilized or directly affected by the war, regardless those 20 million who moved for a job — who may also have had close relatives in the Army. Regardless, still, (1) the total number of people registered in armed forces, i.e., available for the service, which was not 15 but 31 million; (2) the unknown number of people who found new jobs and opportunities in their own towns, precisely because of those who moved in.

Startled by the roar of the bus, a white heron rises out of the dry reeds of the salt marsh and flies with slow wingflaps landward. Now, all along the horizon across the bay from out of a smudge of smoke begin to appear the tall derricks and the crossed arms of cranes and the hoists and the great steel cradles of the shipyards. Along the sandspit in front of the yards as far as you can see, parked cars sparkle endlessly in the sun. . . . In the outskirts in every direction you find acres and acres raw with new building. . . . Three long lines of small houses, some decently planned on the "American standard" model and some mere boxes with a square brick chimney on the center, miles of dormitories, great squares of temporary structures are knocked together from day to day by a mob of construction workers in a smell of paint and freshsawed pine lumber and tobacco juice and sweat. . . . Over it all the Gulf mist, heavy with smoke of soft coal, hangs in streaks, and glittering the training planes endlessly circle above the airfields (Dos Passos).²⁹

Busby Berkeley's choreographic synthesis

Totalizing allegories for this "nation in flux" image, i.e., for the American war-joy choreography, could also be found in cultural productions which did not deal directly with the war. Busby Berkeley's choreographic numbers can be read this way for two reasons. First, they are the product of Hollywood's industrial discipline, which is accomplished through efficiency-oriented taylor-fordist methods. Berkeley's obsession with highly organized and efficient planning, allowed him to reduce retakes to almost zero and film waste, as he claimed, to no more than six feet — which is amazing in a total production of 75 numbers, some with hundreds of performers, some lasting 20-30 minutes, with complicated, long-lasting shots (one alone involving 38 camera moves, another lasting 7 minutes).

The second reason for the association between war-joy choreography and cultural production is that to a large extent Berkeley's choreographic numbers duplicate industrial methods, since in some aspects they are analogous to a moving

²⁹ In 1942 alone, 80 thousand new workers swarmed into Mobile. In Seneca, Illinois, the population grew from 1,235 to 6,500 within a few months, and reached 27,000 at the peak of production. In Virginia, at the Portsmouth navy yard, the number of inhabitants leaped from 4,500 to 48,000. Among the many problems these little towns had to face were the lack of sanitation, waste disposal, and sufficient doctors, and it was practically impossible for the Government to keep pace with the demand. Harris et al. 41.

assembly line: each dancer makes extremely simple movements, which are supervised and coordinated according to a previously established design. For most numbers, dancers (all looking impressively alike) were not individually skillful as dancers, but had to perform high precision collective routines. Just like workers on an assembly line, they usually perform simple tasks, like tapping hands or feet on the ground, or just lifting and lowering props — as with those huge bananas in *The Gang's All Here* (see Chapter 4).

What is also noteworthy is that some Berkeley numbers were at the same time solemn, patriotic, glorifying of the military, like “Remember My Forgotten Man,” from *Gold Diggers of 1933*, or “Shanghai Lil,” from *Footlight Parade* (both of 1933); in the latter, many sailors in formation compose the American flag and then Roosevelt’s face. Actually, Berkeley started practicing in the Army, during World War I, as an entertainment officer, when he gained a reputation for his “innovative drill routines.” When he attended the Mohegan Lake Military Academy in New York for five years, he had never taken a formal dance class. Yet, from 1930 to 1962, he worked as dance director on 21 Broadway musicals, and as director and/or choreographer in 54 Hollywood films, his name usually billed above the directors’ names (notably Lloyd Bacon and Mervyn LeRoy) — in several film ads, his name was highlighted, and it really attracted audiences. After *42nd Street* (1934) his fame allowed him to produce numbers which cost \$10,000 per minute of screen time.

Berkeley’s sets were also sophisticated, commonly employing devices such as revolving platforms and hydraulic lifts. He was fond of overhead shots, sometimes lifting the camera 60 feet high and demanding that holes be punched in the studio

ceiling. He is even credited with “inventions” like a monorail to transport a crane camera (in “The Lullaby of Broadway”, from *Gold Diggers of 1935*). He filmed on a trapeze (*Jumbo*) and in a helicopter (*Easy to Love*, with Esther Williams). But every shot is always carefully planned. Under his command, props are “self-propelled,” like those moving pianos in “The Words Are in My Heart,” also from *Gold Diggers of 1935*. Improving efficiency, he used an octagonal mirrored set multiplying performers in “Don’t Say Goodnight,” from *Wonder Bar* (1934). A smooth, “magic” editing is characteristic of Berkeley’s numbers, so they seem to multiply and broaden spaces to the utmost.

With taylor-fordist technology and creative solutions, Berkeley succeeded in leading overwhelming choreographic movements along simple, winding geometric moving lines. Likewise, he used new technologies to re-read well-known figures. His recurrent “serpentine”, for instance, which are figures canonized in dance as classical, were established chiefly by one of the best known and most affecting choreographers of the eighteenth century, Jean-Georges Noverre.³⁰ Berkeley’s well-known kaleidoscopic formations, from overhead shots, also come from classical choreography — in itself, a kaleidoscope relies on the effect of the logical and simple conjugation of equally simple geometric figures. In the nineteenth century, logical divisions in the *corps de ballet* were increasingly diversified, becoming unlimited in the twentieth. “Armatures of movement in action may be reduced to diagrams, but when actually

³⁰ Noverre argued, in *The Analysis of Beauty* (1753), that the curve, rather than the straight line, should govern “desirable structures.” He then proposed a two-dimensional serpentine as a “line of beauty” and a conic three-dimensional one as a “line of grace,” which, “by its waving and winding . . . leads the eye in a pleasing manner along the continuity of its variety” (Billman 233-5). See also *International Dictionary of Dance* (Noverre).

seen in several theatrical dimensions, they are as severely variable as an asymmetrical kaleidoscope” (*International Dictionary of Dance*).

A foundation on canon and tradition combined with a hugely sophisticated, “magical” technology gives Berkeley’s works a good conservative-revolutionary balance and helps characterize them as efficient, responsible, competent — rather than thoroughly “innovative” or “avant-garde.” This will become clearer as Berkeley’s *The Gang’s All Here* is discussed in Chapter 4.

Samba and the Pride of Not Being Rich

*Deus é um cara gozador, adora brincadeira
Pois pra me jogar no mundo, tinha o mundo inteiro
Mas achou muito engraçado me botar cabreiro
Na barriga da miséria, nasci brasileiro
Eu sou do Rio de Janeiro*

(Chico Buarque)¹

On July 15, 1940, celebrating the stunning success of her one-year stay in the U.S., Carmen Miranda performed a benefit show at the Cassino da Urca, in Rio, sponsored by Brazil's first lady, Darci Vargas, for a rich, refined audience. Opening the show, she tried to be funny in her (still) bad English saying, "Good night, people;" then she performed numbers from her American repertoire. The silent coldness of the elite audience during the whole show upset her; she was considered "Americanized," a traitor to Brazilian national identity. This response sounded to her as the most ungrateful return she could have gotten for starting a promising work of representing and divulging what she considered authentic Brazilian culture on Broadway and possibly — through her first Hollywood film, *Down Argentine Way* (1940) — all over the world.

After canceling some presentations, she went back to the same theater, but to other audiences, performing a different repertoire, now including brand new songs, written by Brazilian composers in response to the charge of "Americanization." Of such songs, the best-known is the good-humored "Disseram que voltei americanizada" ("They Said I Came Back Americanized"), by Luiz Peixoto e Vicente Paiva. Right at

¹ "God is a mocking guy, he loves kidding / For to toss me into the world, he had the whole world / But he found it very funny to make me uneasy / In the core of misery, I was born in Brazil / I'm from Rio de Janeiro". From "Partido Alto" (Buarque, *Letra e Música* 101).

the reopening, Carmen recovered her customary self-assurance, but the earlier rejection reportedly hurt her so deeply that, after resuming her American career, three months later, she only went back to Brazil after 14 years, a few months before dying, and only because her doctor and family insisted on it. Anyway, since the Cassino da Urca episode, more than 60 years ago, Carmen's image has occupied a relevant position in debates on Brazilian national identity. The only Brazilian artist who was ever that successful in the U.S., where she was the highest paid woman in 1945, she has usually provoked both pride and shame as a synthesis of national stereotypes.

I will argue that the accusation that Carmen was Americanized, "inauthentic," or a traitor to a Brazilian national identity, made by a Rio de Janeiro elite group in 1940, as well as her singing response to it, indicates (1) that notions of Brazilian national identity, in general, lacking a unique paradigm of ideals and images, have for long been affected by a *tradition of self-doubt, self-pity, and resignation*, and (2) that there was a specific notion of Brazilian national identity circulating at the time, verifiable chiefly in samba songs, which was additionally affected by Brazil's "Americanization" of the 1930's, and characterized by the association of Brazilians with the poor, and Americans with the rich.

This chapter will first elaborate on the lack of a coherent historical paradigm of ideals for Brazilian national identity and on what I call the Brazilian *tradition of self-doubt, self-pity, and resignation*. Secondly will draw attention to historical processes by means of which, from the early twentieth century to the 1940's, representations of Brazil and Brazilians based on elements of Brazilian popular culture (notably those related to samba) were accepted at large, replacing former representations — the latter

were based either on traditional allegories of political ideals (liberty, republic, democracy) or on Brazilian nature. The new representations were even officially legitimized by Getúlio Vargas's government, with the help of artists engaged in the modernist movement. Thirdly it will show the way those new images of Brazilian-ness were affected, on one hand, by the tradition of self-doubt, self-pity, and resignation, and by the "domestication" that allegedly took over samba communities after samba was accepted by the elite, and on the other hand, by the Americanization of Brazilian culture in the 30's. As a conclusion, this chapter will propose a reading of the Cassino da Urca episode, together with "Disseram que voltei americanizada," as a synthesis of images of national identity that associates Brazilian-ness with poverty, and American-ness with wealth.

The tradition of self-doubt, self-pity, and resignation

Brazil has always lacked a coherent paradigm of ideals capable of including more than an insignificant percentage of the population, for more than a few years, around what could become a national tradition of freedom and justice — this lack has helped to preserve crude social injustice. After it was discovered in 1500, reportedly by chance, for two centuries Brazilian lands and peoples generally served only to provide natural resources and tax to be collected by Portugal, rather than to be turned into a new nation, a new part of Portuguese "civilization." There was no "New Lisbon," no "New Coimbra," no utopian new land on which to make European enlightenment dreams come true, out of old mistakes. Until the middle of the eighteenth century, Portuguese attitudes toward Brazil were informed by what António Paim calls the counter-reformation morality, characterized by the condemnation of

material life.² Up to 1808, when the Portuguese King D. João VI fled to Rio de Janeiro, along with the royal family, from the French invasion, Brazil was isolated. Brazilian ports had been closed to international shipping, printing and publishing businesses, as well as all manufacturing, were prohibited (Hallewell 21).

Independence was not an autochthonous political project; rather, it was proclaimed by a Portuguese prince in Brazil, whose political plans differed from those of the narrow mercantilist Portuguese rulers. The Empire (1822-1889) was not only lacking a well defined and coherent political project, but was also highly responsive to the different interests of elite groups, which in turn gave the government neither strong support, nor a philosophically coherent opposition. The abolition of slavery was not the result of a well defined national project either; rather, it was a political move that allowed the empire to put an end to numerous urban manifestations and increasingly violent slave rebellions, while politically co-opting republican movements — which nevertheless toppled the emperor only one and a half years later.

Yet, not even the opposition to the empire managed to formulate a coherent national project. In the late 1880's, republicans had three conflicting political proposals for the country, tailored to their own interests, in which the poor (and the *res publica* itself) figured only in an idealistic, romantic, sometimes hypocritical sense. The most radical and noisy republican movement was the Jacobinist, modeled directly on the French Revolution, but the Republic was actually proclaimed by the positivistic

² The metropolis adopted four basic assumptions that directed its own and its colonies' intellectual and economic lives against Protestantism: (1) life on Earth is a punishment, and disengaging from it is an important moral objective, (2) being no more than a pilgrim on Earth will assure a place in heaven, (3) the human body is an object of contempt and even disgust, and (4) all material wealth is to be condemned, whereas *poverty is a great and holy virtue* (Paim, my italics).

project, in 1989, led by dissatisfied military officials. Only five years later, the “coffee barons” of São Paulo, representatives of the liberal project, took office, and gained control of the government up to 1930.³ Actually, republicanism was in part proposed as the response, by elite groups, to anxiety regarding the seemingly insurmountable distance between the huge new country, with its abundant natural resources, and North Atlantic modernity — a distance the empire could not bridge.

The Revolution of 1930, headed by Getúlio Vargas, defeated the long established state oligarchies, and carried out important reforms in the labor system, education, and cultural policies, with the decisive help of some fine modernist writers and artists such as Mário de Andrade, Cândido Portinari, and Heitor Villa-Lobos. However, Vargas’s politics were so deeply ambivalent, swerved so violently from alliances with the extreme right to the extreme left, flirted so unaccountably with the Allies and the Axis powers, alternated so unpredictably between democracy and dictatorship, that ambivalence is the best term to define that government.⁴ The industrial modernization of the country in the 50’s, the military dictatorship of the 60’s and 70’s, the redemocratization and neo-liberalism of the 80’s and 90’s, none of these political projects appear as constituting a unique paradigm of political ideals for the whole country.

Rather than a political paradigm, capable of addressing the future from a specific point in the past, national identities in Brazil have been affected, among other

³ For a complete account of the three republican groups, Jacobinist, positivistic, and liberal (see Carvalho, *A formação das almas* 17-33).

⁴ Integralist (nazi-fascist) leader Plínio Salgado, was invited by Vargas to take on a ministry in late 1937, a few months before Vargas exiled him; communist leader Luís Carlos Prestes, after being persecuted, jailed and tortured by Vargas’s political police, campaigned for him in the presidential election scheduled for 1945 to put an end to the dictatorship. I deal with ambivalence and Brazilian national identity in Chapter 3.

things, by what I call the Brazilian *tradition of self-doubt, self-pity, and resignation*. I define it as a persistent feeling that Brazilians are condemned to inferiority, that the country will never “work out.” Each great political move of the country — independence, the empire, the abolition of slavery, the proclamation of the republic, the revolution of 1930, the rightist coup of 1964, the re-establishment of democracy in 1989 —, as well as each popular rebellion, appeared in part as an attempt to correct former mistakes, to make amends, to make possible an affirmative answer to questions like “will it finally work out now?” and “Do you believe in Brazil?” The old perception of the insurmountable distance from North-Atlantic modernity, the vain effort to apply French and English habits and ideals to Brazilians, the very lack of a definition of “the Brazilian,” the historical sense of being a “foreigner in one’s own land,” as Sérgio Buarque de Holanda puts it (31), in brief, all this feeling of a supposed inferiority, can be translated into self-doubt, self-pity, and resignation. In the late nineteenth century, when the distance from American and European sophistication and industrial development seemed bigger than ever, the abolitionist Joaquim Nabuco expressed that feeling:

We, Brazilians (the same may be said of the other South American peoples), are divided between America, the new still forming sediment in our spirit, and Europe, our spirit’s stratified layers. The predominance of the latter over the former begins at the point where we acquire the least culture. Our imagination cannot help but be European, that is, but be *human*...

I do not mean to say that there may be two humanities, the high and the low, and that we are of the last; perhaps humanity will renew itself one day through its American branches; but, in the century in which we live, the *human spirit*, that is only one and terribly centralist, belongs to the other side of the Atlantic; the New World, in everything pertaining to the aesthetic or historical imagination, is a true solitude, in which that spirit feels as far from its reminiscences, from its associations of ideas, as if

all the past of the human race had been struck from memory and it had, like a child, to stammer and spell out again all that was learned under the Attic sky.⁵

It is clear that this impression of inferiority depends on the application of a scale of European values. The positive attitude of some *avant-garde* modernists in Brazil about the Brazilian people's alleged primitiveness and savagery, as analyzed below, may well be seen as a response to such a feeling of inferiority: an inversion of values, characteristically returning to a nostalgia, or an admiration, for the first inhabitants of Brazilian lands. The modernist *enfant terrible*, Oswald de Andrade, declares in his "Manifesto Antropófago" ("Anthropophagist Manifesto"): "We had already had communism, the surrealist language, the golden age. Before the Portuguese found Brazil, Brazil had found happiness." Even if a European yardstick is also present in the Brazilian *avant-garde*, as it had always been in literature and the arts, works such as the "Manifesto Antropófago" had a real impact on the development of a positive self-image for Brazil from the 1920's on. In the 1930's, some reasons of the supposed inferiority were analyzed and criticized at large.

Nevertheless, the tradition of self-doubt, self-pity, and resignation survived. It is still evident today, for instance, in clichés like "Brazil has missed the streetcar of history," in the passive acceptance of geographical metaphors like "first world" and "third world," or in the concern, often shown by commentators on corruption or violent episodes in the country, with the image of Brazil "out there." In addition, this tradition has acquired its good-humored version, as one can see in those many jokes that compare a European or American feature with its equivalent in Brazil, as I exemplified in the introduction.

⁵ Joaquim Nabuco, *Minha formação* (Paris: H. Garnier, 1900). Cited in Needell 63 (Needell's translation).

In addition, the tradition of self-doubt, self-pity, and resignation appears even in overt manifestations of pride about Brazil — a pride which is clearly defensive. These manifestations are part of a discourse that evinces a telling need for compensation, a discourse that could be translated as: “in Brazil we also have nice things, which might be envied by other people, such as good soccer, music, and typical foods and drinks.” The adjective *tupiniquim*, as I pointed out in the introduction, is a good example of both resignation and defensive pride. On one hand, the term is used at large in the same sense as those jokes mentioned above (a *tupiniquim* machine is necessarily worse than its American, Japanese or West-European counterpart); on the other hand, *tupiniquim* has increasingly been used to assert national pride, as it is the case of an information and entertainment web site (members.xoom.com/tupiniquim), and of a brand of “natural” health products, made either of *guaraná* or *cachaça*.

The aspect of this tradition of self-doubt, self-pity, and resignation most closely linked with the central point of this chapter is the resignation about poverty, which is particularly striking in a country that has the eighth most powerful economy in the world, but the third worst wealth distribution — today, 10% of the population (16 million people) own 45.3% of the wealth. Speaking of poverty as a good thing also comes from what António Paim calls the Portuguese counter-reformation morality. In Brazil, the glorification of poverty and suffering has always been usual, and may be represented by popular sayings like “money does not bring happiness,” or “we don’t make much money, but we have fun.”

It is true that, at least since the middle of the eighteenth century, as observed, for instance, by Eric Hobsbawm and Benedict Anderson, elements of popular (or folk)

cultures have consistently been called upon to represent national characters by national states seeking political legitimization.⁶ Indeed, defining nations through popular culture characterizes nationalism itself, in various forms around the world. But one aspect of Brazilian specificity in this process is the resignation of the poor to the country's deep social injustice in the very construction of national identity. Part of Brazilian national identity still depends on an unequal social structure; it incorporates injustice. "Being Brazilian" is in part defined as "living with social injustice." An example of it was given in an album of children's songs by Vinicius de Moraes, recorded in the 1980's by some of the most respected Brazilian singers. Alceu Valença impersonates a circus entertainer who presents three seagulls to the children in the audience: the American one is rich and selfish, the French one is sexy and charming, resembling Brigitte Bardot, while the Brazilian one collapses from hunger trying to dance the samba.

Hiding the poor

After stressing the force of the tradition of self-doubt, self-pity, and resignation, it is now important to show the historical process by which the elite accepted the culture of the poor as a source of national authenticity. This process was crucial to the establishment of the association of Brazilian-ness with poverty, and of American-ness with wealth, a presupposition of the elite audience of the Cassino da Urca that rejected Carmen as "Americanized." First of all, it is necessary to notice that, just before being

⁶ One can think, for example, of legends such as King Arthur's, popular tales such as those about Parsifal, folk songs such as those elaborated on by Bela Bartok, New Orleans jazz, or foods of the poor, such as pizza.

called upon to shape national authenticity, the poor were violently hidden from the eyes of Brazilian and foreigner elite groups in Rio (Brazil's capital until 1960).

At the time of the proclamation of the republic, it was almost impossible to find, in the press, in literature or the arts, any image of the poor as representative of Brazil, or bearing any trace that could be thought of as common to all Brazilians. In previous decades, romanticism had glorified the figure of an idealized, rousseauian Indian as paradigmatic of a new great nation. Such a figure encourages the faith in a brilliant future for the nation, since it was built on its natural beauty and abundance (see for instance "The Song of the Exile", by Dias).⁷ By the end of the century, naturalist authors would compare the poor with worms, monkeys, or cows, in accordance with the scientific/literary program proposed by French naturalism.

Explicitly excluded from national projects, to a certain extent the poor were excluded from history itself: while some disgusted aristocrats reportedly heaved "tender sighs which seemed to be torn from the depths of their souls" when they met poor people on the streets, the "masses" outside the walls of the Collège de Sion were referred to, according to one of its students, as people who "[n']avaient] pas d'histoire" (Needell 61). As Renata Wasserman shows, European metropolitan elites consistently asserted that their former colonies, chiefly those in Latin American, had no history, as a way of marking their cultural inadequacy; in that, they resembled the original inhabitants of the continent, who, by definition, existed outside history, since they had no writing (Wasserman 21-32). Now, the Brazilian elite was reproducing that same

⁷ For a comparative analysis of Alencar's and Fenimore Cooper's works regarding national identities, see Wasserman 144-219. See also Candido, "Literatura e subdesenvolvimento."

attitude toward the poor (defined as “other” by class criteria) who also lack writing — 84.6% of the population was illiterate in 1872 (Hallewell 176).

Most republicans, striving blindly for modernization, and despite their enlightened ideals, also kept their distance from the absolute majority of Brazilian people. Such distance appears clearly in the representations of the Brazilian republic they proposed, some of which turned into national symbols, with a total disregard for popular culture. The most important of those symbols is the flag, drawn by Décio Villares, and featuring the positivist motto, “ordem e progresso” (“order and progress”). As shown by José Murilo de Carvalho, such representations made use of European allegories for the ideas of freedom, justice, and of the “republic” itself, particularly embodied in the feminine figure, either Marianne, leading the revolutionaries of 1789, or the matriarchal, soft figure of Clotilde de Vaux with a baby in her arms, the central icon of Auguste Comte’s “Religion of Humanity.”⁸

The greatest effort of the early republic to hide the poor and their culture from the eyes of both local and foreign elite groups was Rio’s huge “renovation,” which radically changed the city, and was backed by part of the urban middle sector — businessmen, middle class professionals, some students, journalists, and writers. At the time, Rio was the most important port in Latin America, yet it had serious sanitation

⁸ De Vaux was the chief model and source of inspiration for Comte’s radical move toward the privilege of sentiment over reason, community over the individual. The picture *República*, and the *Estandarte da Humanidade* (“Banner of Humanity”), both by Décio Villares (see Carvalho, *A formação das almas* 100-1), are two of the best examples of the two French feminine allegories drawn by Brazilian artists — the former with the profile of a young woman in the Phrygian cap, the latter with Clotilde de Vaux herself holding a baby. Many other works, however, including pictures, sculptures, drawings and newspaper caricatures, reproduce the same figures. Soon the republic started appearing in critical caricatures that combined features of Marianne and of elements of stereotypical prostitutes (see Carvalho, *A formação das almas* 75-96).

problems, which often caused yellow fever and other fatal epidemics,⁹ and its bad image and discomfort worried many. With the support of the government and of the “coffee barons,” Rio was beautified, internationalized, and gentrified, following the example of the radical urban renewal planned and supervised by Georges Eugène Haussmann in Paris. Many streets were paved, improved and/or rectified, six long and wide avenues were opened; in each new important intersection, as in Paris, a monumental square was created. One of the new avenues, Avenida Central (now Avenida Rio Branco), was truly monumental, perfectly straight, thoroughly new with its Beaux-Arts façades, cutting through the whole old town, with daring dimensions for South America at the time — 1,996 meters long, and 33 meters wide. The whole work was finished in eighteen months, which was considered a real miracle. Such a “miracle” was turned into a symbol of a new Brazil, which caused euphoria: Rio “was indeed becoming civilized! Progress, which for a long time had hovered at the door, without permission to enter, was welcomed joyously.”¹⁰

The construction of the Avenida Central demanded the destruction of 590 old buildings, among them the traditional *cortiços* of the downtown, which were crowded tenements, generally big old houses subdivided for use by families who signed no formal contract with the owner. The poet Olavo Bilac, who had considered the city,

⁹ Due to the topographical feature of the city, fenced in by the ocean, the huge Baía da Guanabara and the hills, the heavy summer rains used to flood downtown with water coming from the hills, contaminated with undiluted and unprocessed “human excrement, food wastes and cleaning water, bathing water from hospitals and water used to launder hospital patients’ clothing, contents from the intestines of cadavers from the morgues, and water used to groom both sick and healthy animals.” Directoria Geral de Saúde Pública. *Relatório apresentado ao Dr. Cruz pelo Delegado Alvaro Graça*, 9º Distrito Sanitário, v. 5, app. 11 (Rio de Janeiro: Imprensa Nacional, 1907) 7-8. Cited in Meade 77 (her translation).

¹⁰ Luís Edmundo da Costa. *De um livro de memórias*, v. 1 (Rio de Janeiro: Nacional, 1958) 163. Cited in Needell 50 (Needell’s translation).

half of whose population was black in 1888, the "Old Portuguese Bantuland,"¹¹ relished the rhythmic sound of picks:

A few days ago, the picks, intoning a jubilant hymn, began the work of the Avenida Central's construction, knocking down the first condemned houses . . . we begin to stride toward our rehabilitation. In the collapse of the walls, in the crumbling of the stones, in the pulverization of the earth, there was a long groan. It was the sad and lamenting groan of the *Past*, of *Backwardness*, of *Shame*. . . . [T]he clear hymn of the picks smothered the impotent protest. With what happiness they sang, *the regenerating picks!* And how the souls of those who were there understood well what the picks were saying, in their unceasing, rhythmic clamor, celebrating the victory of hygiene, of good taste, and of art."¹²

In fact, in the name of either sanitation or beautification, thousands of houses were demolished, with no effective relocation policy. Thousands of people, most of them unemployed, had nowhere to go. Many just roamed the streets, others went to the far-away neighborhoods of the *Zona Norte* (north zone), others went to live in the slums on the hills near downtown, already known as *morros*, or *favelas*.

This development was apparently tolerated by Pereira Passos, who in 1903 signed a decree determining that "rough shanties will not be allowed, and under no pretext will a license be presented, *except on those morros which have not yet been inhabited; and on those only by license*" (Cabral 31, my emphasis). Such apparent tolerance was neither altruistic, nor incoherent. By permitting the formation of a "spontaneous" housing development high on the hills, hidden from the eyes of those who wanted to see a "modern" city on the ground level, city hall would be officially freed from the burden (and the cost) of relocating thousands of people, inspecting their housing, and bringing it up to standard; the decree was a means of legalizing, for free,

¹¹ Luís Edmundo da Costa. *De um livro de memórias*, v. 1 (Rio de Janeiro: Nacional, 1958) 162. Cited in Needell 49 (Needell's translation).

¹² Olavo Bilac. "Chronica." *Kósmos*, n. I, v. 3 (March, 1904). 2. Cited in Needell 48 (Needell's translation).

the customary neglect of the poor. The *morros* of Rio became spaces officially decreed not to be reached by urban planning, which thus cleverly established exceptions to its own rules and, taking advantage of topography and history, pursued its elitist orientation. In other words, in Rio, the term *morro* acquired the meaning of an island of random occupation geographically included in the city, but topographically, scientifically and legally isolated from its normalization, expelled from the visible zone of a supposed modernization — a space thus dedicated for those who “n’avaient pas d’histoire”.

In addition to demolitions, the modernization of the country’s capital also demanded, by law, a change in the cultural habits of the poor. City hall not only prohibited habits regarded as unhygienic, such as selling milk door to door directly from the cows, exposing meat in the butcher shop, or raising pigs in the backyard. Other traditional popular manifestations, which can be seen today as early versions of Rio’s carnival, such as parades known as the *entrudo*, together with what were called “abominable *cordões*,” were also prohibited by law — with the approval, for instance, of Olvavo Bilac, who found it “revolting that these orgies spill out onto the streets, in erotic processions.”¹³

Samba composers: from outlaws to heroes

Curiously, samba was among those persecuted cultural habits, as the police considered it intrinsically linked to rituals of *macumba*, a Brazilian version of the African rituals of *candomblé*, then prohibited by law. Among the gentrified in the Rio

¹³ Olvavo Bilac. “Chronica.” *Kósmos*, n. I, v. 3 (March, 1904). 2. Cited in Needell 48-49 (Needell’s translation).

of the 1900's were some of the first samba composers, the same who would become representatives of national identity a few decades later — being given the “authenticity” Carmen would supposedly lack in 1940. Donga, a composer acknowledged as one of the founders of samba, reported that “when the cop caught a fellow playing the guitar, this guy was lost. Lost! Worse than communist, much worse. . . . Punishment was really serious.”¹⁴ There were also psychological punishments. The police would surround a house where a samba party was going on, taking samba singers to the station under strokes of sticks and canes, as happened to another samba founder, João da Baiana. All along they were forced to sing. “We had to sing according to the rhythm; if you did not do it, you were beaten with canes” (Cabral 29). Sometimes the police even used methods comparable to those described in *The Scarlet Letter*, as João da Baiana describes them:

[chief of police Meira Lima] did not hate only samba. He had a deep antipathy to those gaucho-like wide pants, which were the *malandro's* special touch. . . . At his command, his subordinate, a tall and resolute Negro called Cidade Nova, took the *malandro* to the police station. There, Meira Lima took the scissors and cut the pants vertically, lessening their width. Cidade Nova, with a needle between his fingers, made some loose stitches, and the *malandro* went away with funnel-like pants. If the pants were white, stitches were made with black thread. And with white thread, if they were black or dark.¹⁵

Nevertheless, the republic could not keep so many people out of its history for long. It took less than a generation for samba composers to be freed of police persecution and become heroes of Brazilian national identity (which however did not grant them social justice). That was the time musicians like Donga, João da Baiana, and Pixinguinha became known as the “Holy Trinity of Brazilian Popular Music.” In

¹⁴ Interview of 1963 to Herminio Belo de Carvalho. Cited in Cabral 27.

¹⁵ *Diário Carioca*, 1936. Cited in Cabral 28. Malandro is a figure that may often be identified with the trickster, but having in addition the samba groove and an elegance which would become typical of old samba composers

February, 1935, only seven years after the creation of the first escola de samba (“samba school”) in the Estácio area, Rio’s city hall started subsidizing carnival parades. Twenty-eight “schools” were enrolled in a well organized league, involving twelve thousand people; the subsidy signaled an agreement with the league’s arguments that the “schools” were “centers where the *true national music* was being cultivated,” and that the league itself was establishing “*the essential mark of Brazilian-ness.*”¹⁶

In brief, within less than half a century, as already shown by Hermano Vianna, samba and samba musicians were turned from humble outlaws into official representatives of Brazil and Brazilians, both within the country and internationally.¹⁷ One can clearly see at least two simultaneous and interwoven processes that contributed to this radical change: (1) the spread of samba through Rio’s lower-middle-class areas, and (2) the Brazilian version of the intellectual search for authenticity in popular culture. The former invites to a brief examination of the twofold history of samba. Present consensus says that samba comes from two sources. One of them is Cidade Nova [“new town”], a lower-middle-class neighborhood, to which thousands of black, poor people from Bahia, a Northeastern state, migrated in search of opportunity in the country’s capital after the abolition of slavery and the economic decadence of their region. Among them were women who, after a certain

and performers.

¹⁶ In late January, 1935, the directors of the league sent a letter to the city’s secretary of tourism, asking for a subsidy. Cited in Cabral 97-98. My emphasis.

¹⁷ A similar change affected other manifestations of popular culture, traditionally rejected by the elite groups, as it can be seen, for instance, in many versions of “regionalist” production in literature and the arts — from the artificiality of picturesquely portraying local typical figures, before 1930, to a critical attitude toward real national problems, common to many writers in Latin America (Candido, “Literatura e subdesenvolvimento” 160).

age had acquired a religious and social ascendance over their communities, and started being respectfully called *tias* (aunts).

The most famous “aunt” of samba history is Tia Ciata, who managed to keep an old large house at Cidade Nova, in the teens, where she gave large parties, sharing expenses with the community. Each party lasted six, seven days, some of its participants going out to work in the morning and returning in the late afternoon to share the Bahian food, African religious rituals, and music. The musical performers were divided: in the living room, they played *choro*, an older, more socially accepted rhythm, based on waltzes or marches, akin to ragtime in the U.S., played on guitars and wind instruments, one of whose greatest performers was Pixinguinha; in the back yard, they played samba, a rhythm derived from *choro*, but with a heavy backing of traditional forms of percussion (*batuque*), of more clearly African origin, with chant replacing the wind instruments. The percussion instruments were rudimentary, made by the performers themselves — and including pots, tables and chairs. As to the chanting, there was generally a spontaneous chorus singing a simple refrain, while the composer improvised the other parts. The new rhythm was also bound to what was then a very popular ball-room dance, which many considered erotic, called *maxixe*. It helped that Tia Ciata’s husband, João Batista da Silva, had friendly relations with the police,¹⁸ which tolerated her parties. Not much later, the prohibition of African rituals was lifted.

¹⁸ Silva had a job in an important police station in Rio, reportedly given by the president Wenceslau Braz (who governed from 1914-18), after Ciata (called for by another police station functionary), combining some herbs, healed a wound on the president’s foot, which many doctors considered incurable (Roberto Moura 64-6).

The other place where samba is reported to have originated is Estácio de Sá, another lower-middle-class neighborhood. The music made at Tia Ciata's parties started being performed at Estácio as well, but did not exactly fit the local taste, more bound to parading on the streets for carnival — thus reinforcing the tradition of the *cordões*. According to Ismael Silva, Estácio's young musicians like him started altering the rhythm, so that it would allow people to dance while walking — a “sambaing samba” [“samba de sambar”], as defined by Silva's friend Babau (Cabral 34).

Indeed, the samba from Cidade Nova is more clearly geared toward ball-room dancing, like the *maxixe*, than to walking and singing along. Its binary rhythmic structure over-emphasizes the strong beats, and with its quick tempo, makes it easy for couples to go round in a ball-room, and keeps it closer to the *choro*, from which it derived. In contrast, Estácio introduced a strong syncopation, while slowing down the tempo to a walking speed, while allowing for accompanying arm and upper body movements — sometimes drowsy, sometimes elegant and lively. In addition, while the Cidade Nova style relied on guitar and other similar instruments, often virtuosistically played, the Estácio style relied more on percussion, which resulted in a rougher sound. The latter also had longer musical phrases, which allowed for lyricism amid roughness, with a curious, poetically conflicting effect.

In addition to becoming increasingly famous in the Cidade Nova, the music made at Tia Ciata's was also heard at the Festa da Penha, a popular annual feast where she always set up her stand to sell her Bahian tidbits, gathering her samba friends around her. Formerly dedicated to Portuguese traditions, the Festa da Penha was

turned into a musical celebration, attracting an ever larger diverse public (about 100,000 in 1910), interested in new samba songs the composers prepared especially for the occasion. Soon the feast began to feature both types of samba — Cidade Nova and Estácio.

In the following years, the Estácio style “climbed the *morro*,” and became known as “*samba de morro*.” Indeed, there was an intense interchange of musicians between lower-middle-class areas such as Estácio and Vila Isabel on the one hand, and *morros* such as Mangueira, around the Estácio style. Noel Rosa, for instance, one of the greatest names in Brazilian popular music of all times, lived in Vila Isabel, and often visited another samba exponent, Cartola (Angenor de Oliveira), who lived in Mangueira. In the end, the Estácio style spread over the entire country through “samba schools.” The first “samba school” was formed in Estácio in 1928; the second one, in Mangueira, one year later. Soon several others were participating in the early carnival parade at Praça Onze, a square still in a lower-middle class area of Rio, paralleling similar middle- and higher-class manifestations in other areas.¹⁹

Poor is beautiful

From the beginning the relationship between the two styles was conflicting. Since the *morro* is a much poorer area, the Cidade Nova style was soon associated with the middle class, while the “*samba de morro*” was considered by many as the only real samba. Carmen Miranda’s style is much closer to that of the Cidade Nova.

¹⁹ In the 70’s, the tempo of the samba performed by “samba schools” in carnival parades started to speed up again, getting closer to that of the march, as it is today. The name “samba school” comes from an ironic remark by Ismael Silva when passing by a [regular] school in Estácio. To metaphorize his and his Estácio fellows’ superiority in samba, when compared to composers of Cidade Nova and other neighborhoods, he said, “we are the teachers” (Cabral 41).

For instance, in the 1930's, when Carmen was already successful in Brazilian show business, Noel Rosa declared he did not recognize "that thing Carmen Miranda sings" as samba (Máximo and Didier 233). On the other hand, the older Cidade Nova style was considered the only authentic one by practitioners like Donga, author of "Pelo Telefone," the first recorded samba song (1917) to be really successful. In addition, neither style was considered authentic by more traditional composers, like Pixinguinha, who preferred the very first sambas that had never been recorded (Cabral 36-37, and Roberto Moura 80). Finally Noel Rosa suggested a definition of samba as universal, or at least non-geographical: "Samba, actually, / comes neither from the *morro* / nor from the town / and anyone who knows passion / will learn that samba, then, / comes from the heart."

What is especially important in this genealogy of national authenticity through samba — which directly concerns the accusation of Carmen as traitor of national identity — is that there is no consensus on the authenticity of samba itself. Nobody is capable of definitely legitimizing this or that kind of music as "authentic samba." Since authenticity, by definition, must be unique, the very first samba composers' concern with an authenticity that will never be agreed upon only indicates an authenticity that will never exist.

Rather than authenticity, the only consensus about samba, since the beginning, is its dimension as symbolic capital (Bourdieu), capable of providing the nation with a national image that came from real popular culture, a culture of people who were poor indeed. Poverty was the only element of samba clearly verifiable as authentic. Samba was really taken as a "privilege" which "nobody learns at [formal] school," as it is

made explicit in the same Noel Rosa song quoted above.²⁰ The fact that samba was made by the poor was in itself important for journalists, writers, intellectuals, artists, politicians, in sum, for an elite group who increasingly backed activities and habits linked to samba, thus assuming the position of guardians of a new, “authentic” national identity. And this constitutes the second of the two processes that contributed to the radical change in the acceptance of samba in the first half of the twentieth century.

One of the first journalists to publicly show admiration and curiosity for popular culture — and for the habits of the poor in general — was João do Rio (Paulo Barreto’s pseudonym), a dandy who often got sick with what he saw in the docks, *cortiços*, prisons, but who insisted on describing the poor for the elite. Invited by a chief of police to visit Rio’s “infernal circles”, he started wondering: “I remembered that Oscar Wilde had also visited the ill-famed inns . . . It was about the most literary and most trivial thing there could be. For ten years French plays have shown us the journalist who conducts the chic to macabre places. . . . I only repeated a gesture that was almost a law. I accepted the invitation” (158). João do Rio saw a fascinating “soul” on the streets: “The wretched do not feel entirely abandoned by the gods while before their eyes a street opens toward another street. . . . the street has created a figure strange and ambiguous, with catlike jumps and razor-sharp laughter.” Once he wrote an article on *cordões*, linking them to the paroxysm of life (123-34).

²⁰ In Bourdieu’s work, symbolic capital is an economic metaphor for the use of knowledge, of cultural appropriations, in an “economy of symbolic exchanges,” as means of moving among hierarchical levels of institutions of cultural fields.

Newspapers showed continued interest in popular culture and the habits of the poor. Soon interviews with samba composers became common in newspapers and magazines; they began to be no longer "history-less." Likewise, early twentieth century cartoons are especially significant in their approach to the poor. In contrast to the way in which the wretched were depicted in cartoons at the time of the proclamation of the republic, samba dancers are shown with a peculiar charm and elegance. There is some poetry in those precise lines, revealing admiration (see, for instance, Cabral and Roberto Moura). Finally newspapers offered institutional support to samba. In 1932, the first parade of "samba schools" in Rio, at Praça Onze, was sponsored by *Mundo Sportivo*.²¹ *A Pátria*, together with city hall, promoted contests for original samba compositions, while the entire press started describing samba performances, sometimes euphorically, as in an article in *O Globo*:

The spectacle could not be more picturesque and suggestive. Each "school" will perform for the audience with a considerable number of figures. There are, thus, hundreds of mouths singing with great emotion the most gracious melodies in town. . . . When the first "school" steps on the theatre, a wave of melody fills the metropolis. The samba from the *morros* does not always get down to town. Sometimes it stays up there, away from any possibility of being transposed to records. Some "*malandros*" do not accept the phonograph, because they think that on the plate the samba loses its sincerity, its emotive and sweet grace, its delicious spirit."²²

At the same time, the Brazilian recording industry and trade were growing. After the success of "Pelo Telefone," in 1917, recording became the main professional aim of samba composers, which gave many singers the chance to begin their careers. After the introduction of the electric recording process in 1924, the market expanded, and the popular music of Rio spread all over the country.²³

²¹ The *Jornal do Brasil* sponsored a carnival parade of associations similar to "samba schools" in 1931.

²² *O Globo*, February 5, 1932. Cited in Cabral 69-70.

²³ The pioneer of the recording industry in Brazil was the Czech-American Fred Figner, who arrived in 1891

However, the most decisive move for the general acceptance of the poor as sources of national authenticity — together with recording and the support of the press — was Brazilian modernism. The movement exploded at the “Week of Modern Art” of 1922 (February 13-18), in São Paulo, inaugurating a radically different way of evaluating what could be taken as Brazilian reality. Specifically, the general modernist attitude was radically opposed to hiding the poor. Elements formerly considered *deficiencies* in Brazilian life were reinterpreted to mean *superiority*; blacks and *mulatos* were incorporated as objects of analysis, and primitivism became a source of beauty (Candido, *Literatura e cultura*). It was a special moment for Brazilian intellectuality regarding the old presupposition of inferiority. As well as Brazilians, Europeans were dealing with serious social problems — provoked by WWI, which deeply changed the economic structure and the balance of political power on the continent. Europeans also experienced political agitation inspired by communism. Rethinking traditional presuppositions about society and culture in the old continent, including the Cartesian *cogito* itself,²⁴ European modernists were themselves in search of primitive elements, and highly interested in new ethnographies. Brazilian modernists, in turn, noticed that their country had a lot of primitivism to offer.

Soon Figner successfully hired musicians and sold their performances mechanically recorded on wax cylinders, professionalizing Brazilian popular music; in 1904 he signed a contract with the International Zonophone Company and started recording on discs; he led the market until 1924, when the Victor Talking Machine introduced the technology of electric recording (*História do samba* 22-24). Other states, such as Rio Grande do Sul, also had important recording industries, interested in regional manifestations of popular music, all of them different from samba. The fact that samba has been more easily taken, both inside and outside the country, as *the* authentic national music deserves some specific historical investigation. In Brazil, the tradition of spreading Rio's cultural manifestations in general throughout the country is long, and persists today; outside Brazil, reducing “Brazilian” culture to Rio's is a very common attitude.

²⁴ See, for instance, Marx's concept of ideology, Freud's concept of the unconscious, and Nietzsche's frontal attack on the *cogito* in *Beyond Good and Evil*, as influential intellectual moves that helped shake traditional certainties of a self-validating line of European thought about Europeans.

As previously mentioned, Oswald de Andrade's "Manifesto Antropófago" proposed a radical inversion of the scale of values against which Brazilian culture used to be measured. According to the "Manifesto," European values and methods were there to be "eaten" and digested — the way Portuguese Bishop Pero Sardinha (Sardine) was reportedly eaten by Brazilian Indians in the early seventeenth century — in order to produce Brazilian authenticity, force, and pride. Brazilian primitiveness itself was to be accepted as a reason for joy regarding the future. The Brazilian nation would be a matriarchy where "joy is the proof of the pudding."²⁵ In the same mood, Oswald de Andrade, who could afford an intense exchange with European artists and intellectuals, started drawing attention to the possibility of attributing national character to Brazilian cultural elements traditionally rejected by the elite, such as were represented by the circus clown *Piolim*.

Another leading artist of the "Week of Modern Art," Mário de Andrade, wrote the most representative work of Brazilian modernism, the rhapsody *Macunaíma: um herói sem nenhum caráter* ("a hero with no character," 1928). The genre of the work is itself a break with traditional ones — its structure is not really that of a novel, and it is too long for a short story. The subtitle indicates a break with the traditional way in which heroes are defined — heroes are supposed to have moral qualities and coherent attitudes, instead of *no character* at all. The text itself not only satisfies the expectations created by the title, but also intensifies what is expected: the protagonist is a trickster, a liar; he is lazy, incoherent, untrustworthy, but highly seductive, funny, sympathetic, smart, in brief, irresistible. Belonging to no well-defined race,

²⁵ "Alegria é a prova dos nove / No matriarcado de Pindorama" (Oswald de Andrade). I thank my co-advisor, Renata Wasserman for the translation.

Macunaíma is proteic, undefinable; his trajectory covers the whole Brazilian territory, and goes beyond South America, ending in the Southern sky, where he becomes a constellation.

Together with the hero's a-geographical trajectory and his metamorphoses, his final ascension highlights in the rhapsody an ironic suggestion (in its "why not?" tone) that Brazil should also be given a mythology, a set of narratives that overcome illogicalities and spatial and temporal restrictions in order to proudly fix on the firmament, as a guide for the country, a peculiar morality, made of no character — which could translate into a character totally independent from European moralities. As Antonio Candido ("Dialética da malandragem") observes, with *Macunaíma* the figure of *malandro* is "elevated to the category of symbol." Macunaíma, says Renata Wasserman, "is free of the European-imposed and Brazilian-accepted load of virtue o'r villainy which burdened previous literary Indians; he is the prototype for a recognizable national character that defines itself not as either in conformity with or in opposition to some European model but as characteristically *undefinable*" (230, my italics).

However, what is indisputable about Macunaíma's undefined character is that he is always poor, while circulating through all sorts of places — many of them now easily acceptable as "typically Brazilian," and identified by elements of popular culture. Andrade claims that "he [was] just tapping a flourishing and till-then neglected popular culture, not out of a desire to abandon his intellectual formation but in order to give a more accurate account of the level at which the differentiating elements of nationality are to be found" (Wasserman 229). Indeed, the hero decisively

helps identify as characteristic some Brazilian habits like the taste for soccer, and the rhapsody gathers up a whole series of popular narratives and stereotypes, including, of course, native American legends.²⁶ One of the allusions to urban popular culture is a party at Tia Ciata's:

The macumba ceremony was to take place down at the Mangue on the premises of Aunt Ciata, a witch without equal, a famous sorceress, Mother-of-Saints, and a singer to her own guitar. At eight in the evening Macunaima arrived at her place, carrying on his shoulder the obligatory demijohn of cheap rum. There was already a crowd of people there, poor people, honest people, lawyers, waiters, stonemasons, bricklayers' mates, speculating councilors, all manner of men; and the affair was ready to begin. Macunaima took off his shoes and socks like the rest and hung around his neck a charm made from wasps' wax and the dried roots of the nanceberry tree, good against snake bite and fever. He went into the crowded hall, and brushing off the swarms of mosquitoes coming from the bedroom, respectfully greeted the macumba priestess who was sitting motionless on a three-legged stool, not speaking to anyone. Aunt Ciata was a gaunt old Negro woman with a wizened face on which were engraved a hundred years of suffering, and whose untidy mop of white hair formed a halo encircling her tiny head. No one managed to catch her eye; she seemed to be just a bag of bones dreamily swaying toward the floor of stamped earth (Mario de Andrade, *Macunaima* 64).²⁷

Likewise, Brazilian visual arts started portraying the poor, attributing to them a national character. It is clear, for instance, in *Abaporu* (1928) a picture by Tarsila do Amaral, one of the more important works of Brazilian modernism. At the center of the picture is a strange female figure, sitting on the ground with her leg bent, so that her foot also rests on the ground. In addition to this female character, there are only the big yellow sun above, a small portion of the ground below, and a cactus against a blue sky. Her very nakedness in that absolutely arid backland evinces her poverty, but she is hyperbolically enlarged and elevated in relation to the viewer: sitting on top of a hill, she is seen from below, and her head is far away, on the level of the sun. The picture recognizes the beauty of that poor young woman, and her intense sensuality, suggested

²⁶ Chiefly from Taulipang tales about a trickster figure called Macunaima, as reported by Theodor Koch-Grümbert in *Vom Roraima zum Orinoco* (Wasserman 230).

by her perfect tanned skin, her soft curves, the gentle way her buttocks touch the ground, the delicacy of her hand — in addition to the intimacy of getting so close to a naked young woman from below, under the tropical sun.

The woman on the hill represents nationality as defined within a *Brazilian* modernism; the painting places her in the backlands (rather than in the forest, preferred by the Romantics).²⁸ Yet the picture has an Indian title, a canonical reference to native Americans to suggest Brazilian difference. There is no anatomical proportion among the woman's body parts, as if she were shot by a camera equipped with a deforming fish-eye lens. This anatomical "incorrectness," also in line with the experiments of contemporary French painting, seems to suggest the need of *analyzing*, from bottom to top, that different female anatomy.

The curiosity about popular culture and the poor, the analysis of the people, appears as a sort of intellectual need, becoming a general orientation after the first impact of Brazilian modernism. Mário de Andrade contends that "[m]anifesting itself particularly in the arts, but also staining established social and political customs with violence, the modernist movement announced, prepared, and to a great extent created a national state of mind."²⁹ Antonio Candido adds that in Brazil "[t]he modernists' turbulent and iconoclastic happiness prepared the way for the engaged art, and the historic-sociological investigations of the 1930's" (Candido, *Literatura e cultura* 119).

²⁷ See also Mário de Andrade, *Macunaima* (Brazilian edition of 1978) 55.

²⁸ In a way such allusion dialogues with the influential book by Euclides da Cunha, *Os sertões* (issued in English as *Rebellion in the Backlands*), a report of the Canudos war in the Bahian backlands, from 1893 to 1897. The impact of the book, issued in 1902, was due not only to its impressive content, but also to the way Cunha combines literature, journalism and scientific naturalism in a sort of inauguration, *avant la lettre*, of the scientific analysis of Brazilian social problems.

²⁹ Mário de Andrade, *Aspectos da literatura brasileira* (São Paulo: Martins, 1972) 231. Cited in Wasserman 227 (Wasserman's translation).

New views of Brazilian national authenticity embodied in individual Brazilians (including the poor, either urban or rural) spread through the country, entering fields such as science (chiefly sociology), education (the so-called new school, secular, empiricist, anti-dogmatic), and politics (when the first set of labor laws was issued). Antonio Candido points out, in the 1930's, the normalization and generalization of the "ferments of transformation" of the 1920's," when modernist attitudes were seen "with suspicion and even in an aggressive mood." After 1930, "they became to a certain extent 'normal,' as facts of culture that a society learns to live with and, in many cases, to accept and appreciate" (Candido, "A revolução de 1930 e a cultura" 182), and he notes that by 1931, the 38th exhibition of the National School of Fine Arts (Salão da Escola Nacional de Belas Artes) was inviting *avant-garde* artists, and provoking protests from academicians.

Finally deemed worthy of attention and study, the poor, the black, and popular culture were incorporated by new definitions of nationality. In effect, there was a search, on a scientific basis, for a "new man," a "Brazilian man." The two finest examples of the "Brazilian studies" of the 1930's, both in terms of methodological rigor and innovative critical attitude were *Casa grande e senzala* (1933), by Gilberto Freyre, and *Raízes do Brasil* (1935), by Sérgio Buarque de Holanda. Both authors drew their objects of analysis from a large series of different cultural objects such as architecture, urban design, personal letters etc, the former positing racial miscegenation almost as a national asset, and the latter critically examining Iberian cultural heritage and authoritarianism, and doubting Brazilian elite groups' capacity of ruling the country.

The Vargas government not only sanctioned modernism, but also assigned to modernist artists and intellectuals part of the task, considered crucial, of “preparing, composing and perfecting the man of Brazil.” These ideas were formulated by Gustavo Capanema, Vargas’s minister of education and health, who wanted to run a real “ministry of man.”³⁰ For the project of the new building of this ministry, in 1935, the government hired modernist architects Lúcio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer (who two decades later would design the new capital, Brasília); on its walls there are Candido Portinari’s murals, and in the hall, a monument to youth by Bruno Giorgi. Modernists thus mediated between a paternalistic state and “the people,” seen by the state from a Rousseauian point of view, as pure, spontaneous, and authentic.

Mário de Andrade’s research on folk tales, songs and poetry in the city of São Paulo played an important role in this sense. Simone Sá highlights Andrade’s efforts toward the formation of a federal agency for the preservation of the Brazilian historico-cultural patrimony, since his reflections on the role of the intellectual regarding definitions of national identity, and “especially his preoccupation with popular music, conceived as a contribution that ‘honors nationality’ and must be retrieved by intellectuals.”³¹ Gustavo Capanema knew how to take advantage of the work of important Modernist artists, who nevertheless assumed very different positions regarding Vargas’s policies, from Cassiano Ricardo’s overt collaboration to Oswald de Andrade’s radical opposition as a communist.

³⁰ From Arquivo Capanema (series F, 34.06.21-2), cited in Sá 28.

³¹ Squeff and Wisnik, *O Nacional e o popular na cultura brasileira* (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1983) 131. Cited in Sá 43.

In the case of Villa-Lobos, the contribution to the search for a “Brazilian man” was offered in a sincere, excited, almost euphoric way. Villa-Lobos composed the anthem of the revolution of 1930, and became the government’s secretary of musical and artistic education, carrying out a project of education (and civic pride) through choral music. In a large soccer stadium in Rio, he conducted the performance of patriotic tunes by thousands of voices of students from elementary to high schools. At the same time, Villa-Lobos, though known for his erudite work, had an intense involvement with popular composers, among whom he reportedly spent many samba nights in the city’s cafes. Even as a secretary of the central government, he kept climbing the *morro* of Mangueira to visit Cartola, whose songs seemed to inspire him. After listening to one of these songs, at Carola’s place, he reportedly said, “it is all wrong, but it is wonderful!”³² — a typically erudite *avant-gard* attitude regarding popular culture as source of novelty, inspiration, and authenticity. Villa-Lobos also had a close relationship with Paulo da Portela, the hugely popular Portela community leader, who was also portrayed by Di Cavalcanti (Cabral 94).

Domestication and resignation of the *morro*

Up to this point, I have argued that images of Brazilian national identity have long been affected by the Brazilian tradition of self-doubt, self-pity, and resignation, and I have attempted to show how the culture of the poor, particularly samba, was proudly turned into a source of national identity, in the beginning of the twentieth century. This section attempts to show how the new images of Brazilian-ness, which

³² The dialogue was reported by Nuno Linhares Veloso, in an interview to Marília Barbosa da Silva and Artur de Oliveira Filho. Cited in Cabral 116.

were coming from samba communities, were particularly affected by that tradition and by what can be called the *domestication of the morro*. The next sections, in turn, will show how they were also affected by the Americanization of Brazilian culture. Then I will apply my conclusions to the episode of the Cassino da Urca.

Indeed, there are two aspects of the change of status in the culture of the poor, especially with the rise of samba, as a matter of Brazilian national identity, that are important for the present argument: (1) the *domestication of the morro*, and (2) the persistence of the *tradition of self-doubt, self-pity and resignation* in the lyrics of samba songs. The first aspect corresponds to a supposed pacification of what had been considered “dangerous” in the poor and their habits, in the perception of samba, and the culture of poverty in general; ruling groups seemingly decided that the country, instead of worrying about the dangers inherent in that culture, should consider it as a symbolic capital which was there to be appropriated by the whole nation. Until 1930, the history of the Brazilian republic had been in part one of a constant fight, by the elite ruling groups — particularly the coffee barons — against popular rebellions that exploded in various parts of the country. Rebels came from different geographic locations, professions (if any), cultures, objectives, and methods, but what the absolute majority of them had in common were poverty and the notion that they were not being respected by the republican elite.

The biggest of these anti-republic rebellions was the Canudos war, fought in the Bahian backlands from 1893 to 1897. Led by Antônio Conselheiro (the Counselor; Antônio Vicente Mendes Maciel), Canudos was a messianic, millenarian movement that gathered those left behind by the republic in a faltering economy and offended by

the secularism of the state. The central government sent there full expeditions against the rebels. The first two suffered ignominious defeat by hostile, unknown terrain and unexpectedly fierce guerrilla warfare; the third overwhelmed and massacred the rebels with a massive artillery attack. In all, about 4,000 soldiers died. Canudos became emblematic of the victory by a highly authoritarian, elitist, “modern” republic over pre-modern forces. In this sense, Canudos can be seen as parallel to the Rio renovation. In both cases the cost of imposing modernity was high and, to a large extent, paid by the poor. But while Canudos laid bare the savage face of the state, in Rio the poor furnished some of the cultural capital that underwrote cultural modernity.

The link between Canudos and the new Rio was closer still. The very name of the *favelas*: the very places where people are supposed to have samba in their veins—until these days one of the main symbols of Brazilian social injustice —, came from that of one of the hills at Canudos, from which the army shot at the rebels: *Favela* was so called because of the shrubs that covered it, tough and draught-resistant.³³ Additionally, after the war, hundreds of surviving federal soldiers, the “victors”, many of them disabled, and many with Bahian wives, went to Rio with no support from the government to find a job or a place to live. They built their shanties on a hill called “Providência” (“providence”), which was close to the Ministry of War (in 1920 there would be 839 small houses there). As the hill reminded the women of their old place in Bahia, it became known as *Morro da Favela*. Soon the name was generalized to all

³³ The Favela shrubs are scientifically called *Jatropha phyllacantha* (see “faveleiro” in Aurélio B. H. Ferreira). According to Euclides da Cunha (41), until the Canudos war they were unknown by science.

morros, not only in Rio, but in every big city in Brazil, referring more specifically to the shanties built on them, and their inhabitants' supposed way of life.³⁴

The semantic changes in the term *favela* — resistance, war, and resignation about long-lasting injustice — may stand for the domestication of the *morro*, for the pacification of the poor, formerly considered dangerous, provided in part by the Brazilian version of the acceptance of popular culture as authentically national — chiefly through samba. This domestication is illustrated by an interview Paulo da Portela gave after a fight that, at the Carnival parade of 1945, left 20 people wounded and a 21-year-old samba musician dead. Trying to confront negative generalizations about the *morros*, Paulo da Portela declared that samba gave people of the *morro* structure and social harmony:

It is possible that in the old times the *morros* were a refuge for thieves, hooligans, and the like. But, let's tell the truth: when samba started being organized, and "schools" became prominent, the *morros* eliminated disorder and bravado, and nobody had the right any longer to pull out a knife, to be a *malandro*, to live by playing cards. . . . We work from sunrise to sunset. The police knows quite well that the real *malandros* are down there. . . . It is necessary to be fair to the people of the *morro*. We wear clogs and t-shirts because we do not make enough money to wear leather shoes and Panama suits.³⁵

But Paulo da Portela's defense of the *morro* contradicts the traditional view of samba as the music of the *malandro*, and of the *morro* as different from the town. If he is right, then, after being accepted by the society outside the *morros*, samba seems to have denied its parentage. Obviously Paulo da Portela exaggerated the degree of social harmony on the *morros* (as well as "the old times' disorder") for strategic reasons. At the same time, however, his declaration indicates a real move of samba towards

³⁴ The name now applies to bigger communities, some provided with some urban infra-structure and good houses. Some favelas in Brazil have more than 300 000 inhabitants.

³⁵ *O radical*, February, 1945. Cited in Cabral 141.

respectability — evident, for instance, in the normalization of the “samba schools” and their negotiation with public power.³⁶

There are other signs of the image of docilized samba communities. After 1930, the “dangerous insurrections” to be feared were more specifically political, chiefly communist and nazi-fascist, in addition to reactionary moves by the old oligarchy. Now the poor and their culture were seen as allies to be won by political proposals for the whole country, populist or enlightened, rather than enemies of the republic. Cultural habits attributed to the poor, mainly those connected with samba, were now deemed *precious*, rather than *dangerous*, an asset, rather than a threat. Since the modern nation was expected to have its cultural specificity, many Brazilians felt that, having beaten back retrogressive oligarchies and the violent backwardness of Canudos, the country was ready to show the world its real face in a popular culture.

That is the sense of opportunity that may be heard in the opening of the song “Brasil Pandeiro” (1940), by Assis Valente: “Now it’s time for these tan-colored people to show their *value*” (my emphasis). The temporal adverb in the statement refers to what was considered the greatest opportunity for Brazilian culture, symbolized by samba and Bahian foods, to reach the whole world, riding on American industrial power: “I want to see Uncle Sam play the tambourine for the world to dance to the samba.” The song celebrates the fact that batucada, a form of samba, had already

³⁶ A character of the *Ópera do malandro*, by Chico Buarque (1978), whose action takes place during WWII, scornfully finds out that the old *malandragem* no longer exists, that some *malandros* now appear with the apparatus of “official *malandro*,” some as candidates to “federal *malandro*,” with their picture on the jet set pages, signing contracts, and working hard to support their families. See “Homenagem ao malandro,” in Buarque, *Ópera do malandro* 103-04. On the other hand, even today a metaphysical (if ambiguous) “transforming power” attributed to samba is glorified, as in the song “Desde que o samba é samba” (“ever since samba has been samba”) by Caetano Veloso, where “transforming” may well correspond to “pacifying,” or “docilizing.”

entered the White House, an allusion to Carmen Miranda's success in the U.S., particularly to her performance at the White House, for President Roosevelt, in March, 1940.³⁷ The assertion of Brazilian people's *value* does not subvert the scale of values inverted by the "Manifesto Antropófago;" rather, *batucada* is presented as something the (modernized) world will also appreciate, an image "of ours" that will satisfy "their" taste: a value capable of compensating for the supposed inferiority of an obedient, docile, tamed, tan-colored people.

The move from threat to asset is also evident in an official proposal for civic education through music, formulated by Villa-Lobos, a political-pedagogical project which, according to José Miguel Wisnik, aimed at converting "Brazil's clattering chaos" into a "choral cosmos;" the "rich and dangerous disorder of the 'new country' into a productive order."³⁸

The second aspect of the change of status of popular culture as representing national identity is the surprising persistence of *the tradition of self-doubt, self-pity and resignation*, especially regarding Brazilian poverty, in samba songs. The first hugely successful popular song that clearly associated Brazilian-ness and poverty was the samba "Com que roupa?" ("in what clothes?"), the first top hit by Noel Rosa, issued at the Carnival of 1930. This song, however, is almost one of a kind. Rosa develops the association in a tone of irony, of denunciation, and of a scornful, and angry, good humor.

³⁷ Valente reportedly wrote this song for Carmen to record it, as he had done with many other songs, but Carmen rejected it.

³⁸ From Squeff & Wisnik. *O Nacional e o popular na cultura brasileira - Musica*. São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1983. Cited in Sá 174.

In addition to showing that the song is formally innovative in relation to the Estácio samba style,³⁹ Noel Rosa's biographers João Máximo and Carlos Didier call attention to its similarity to the Brazilian national anthem. They argue that Noel Rosa used to playfully parody the anthem on the guitar, and that the song may well have been the result of one of those musical jests. In fact, apart from the refrain, the stanzas fit the first musical stanza of the anthem perfectly, so that one can in fact sing part of the anthem with lyrics from "Com que roupa?", and vice-versa. Moreover, according to the biographers, the first verse of each stanza of the song, as it was first written, corresponds exactly to the first (and best known) musical phrase of the anthem, note by note (probably changing only the syncopation). Homero Calazans, the musician who wrote the score for Rosa, and prepared it for publication, reportedly warned him that he could go to jail because of the jest, and suggested a subtle change, which resulted in the way the song is now known.

In addition to the correspondence between the two musical pieces, the huge national success of "Com que roupa?" helps suggest the identification of its poetic I, who aggressively complains of poverty, with the image of a broken country, a penniless people. The title was rendered fashionable on radio, on the streets, in the press, in advertisement etc. Actually, the expression "com que roupa" was also used as slang, and recognized all over the country, as meaning "I can't afford it." "Com que roupa?" could be read as the anthem of a people bound to say "*I can't do that*".

Nevertheless, in contrast to what happens in "Com que roupa?", which suggested a radical "change in conduct," an explicitly violent reaction against poverty

³⁹ For instance, the 5th verse of each 6-verse stanza rhythmically breaks the flux of the song and prepares the

and social injustice (“I will treat you with violence / So that I can rehabilitate”), the association between *being Brazilian* and *being poor* continued to circulate in samba songs according to the tradition of self-doubt, self-pity, and resignation described above. This tradition has long encouraged a conservative attitude towards social injustice, described by João do Rio in the first years of the twentieth century as a “bizarre patriotism” (239), a love of the country totally free of resentment. As an example, the journalist picks up a poem, by a poet of the streets, attributing to Santos Dumont (considered in Brazil “the father of aviation”) not the merit of inventing flying machines, but that of provoking wonder in Paris.⁴⁰

Such bizarre patriotism does sound like a fatalism that not only seeks compensation for the supposed inferiority, but also isolates poverty from history. It can be translated, in general, as, “this is how things are in my country, but that’s ok, I love my country and its (official) history anyway.” In the realm of carnival and “samba schools,” this attitude gave rise to the so called *samba exaltação*, a genre characterized by samba songs which explicitly, naïvely, and humbly glorify “notable figures” of official history, as exemplified by many of the sambas that were the themes of “escolas” presentations in Carnival parades of the 40’s and 50’s.⁴¹

refrain with a rhyme (in “opa”, for *roupa*, clothes) that was itself unusual (Máximo and Didier 120).

⁴⁰ The poem says, “Europe bowed to Brazil / and whispered congratulations / Another star shone in the sky / There arose Santos Dumont” (João do Rio 237).

⁴¹ Perhaps the clearest one is “61 anos de república” (“61 years of republic”), by Silas de Oliveira, theme of Império Serrano “school” presentation of 1951. In praise of all Brazilian presidents, all the same, the lyrics argues, for instance, that the end of the Canudos war was also the end of all evil (Augras 235). This naïve patriotism would have no strong opposite trend in Carnival parades until 1960, when the Salgueiro “samba school” chose as the theme of its presentation, Zumbi dos Palmares, the legendary fugitive slave who led a strong rebellion in the late seventeenth century. For all lyrics of sambas sung in Rio “schools” presentations, from 1948 to 1997, with an analysis of frequency of words and issues, see Augras 232-295.

Another prolific trend in samba yielded by the tradition of resignation about poverty is a series of songs which lyrically praise the beauty of *barracões de zinco* on the hills (shanties with scrap zinc roof and walls). In a way, *morro* itself is a notion that is being constantly reinvented not only as national, but also as a Brazilian essence people should be proud of. One of the best-known songs in this sense is “Chão de estrelas,” by the middle-class journalist Orestes Barbosa. Here the national character of the peculiar life of the unemployed in the *morro* is effectively summarized in the lines, “on the ill-dressed hills / it is always national holiday.” On the top of the hills, social injustice turns into a good life: the moon light entered the shanty through holes on the roof, sprinkling the ground with stars, and the missed, beloved woman “stepped on the stars absent-minded.”

In brief, while composers patriotically reiterated how life could be beautiful on the *morro*, the national authenticity provided by samba was being sold cheap. In 1959 Cartola was found at the age of 51 washing cars in Rio, and in 1969 Ismael Silva could not afford a ticket for the “samba schools” parade, a tradition he himself triggered.⁴² And Carmen Miranda, in contrast, is still considered by many as a national hero because she was the only one who could succeed in Hollywood while singing Brazilian popular music.

As history was acquitted of the social condition of most samba composers, samba was given a strange tautological value, as if capable of paying for itself: the greatest reward for the communities that made samba into a national symbol was the

⁴² In the 1970's the professionalization of carnival, together with the great expansion of the “schools” (more than 4,000 people in the biggest ones), technology and expenses, practically alienated the poor from the most visible manifestation of Rio's carnival. Finally in 1995 the huge structure of the organization of the parades was privatized (Cabral 174-233).

honor of making samba into a national symbol. From the condition of outcast to the central position in definitions of national identity, samba appeared as a “real value,” an ontological truth, and the search for the “authentic samba,” along with the presupposition of the existence of such a thing, is the best expression of it. Obviously the real, authentic samba was to be found among the poor, as argued by politician Carlos Lacerda in 1936, when he was still considered a leftist: “The elegant samba of official feasts is deformed. . . . Samba is the music of class. . . . When the oppressed defeat the oppressors, samba will have the place it deserves.”⁴³

“Hello boy, hello Johnny”

Finally, when the association between Brazilian-ness and poverty was well consolidated, the Americanization of Brazil came, chiefly in the 1930’s, and established the association between American-ness and wealth. And here it is important to remember that Carmen Miranda’s rising as a star in Brazilian show business also occurred by this time, precisely from 1930 to 1939.

Americanization progressed swiftly. Whereas before WWI examples of the adoption of American cultural elements by Brazilians was rare, in the 1920’s and 1930’s American culture became increasingly present in Brazil, until it became the main cultural paradigm from the 1940’s on. The average of Brazilian imports from the U.S. in 1925 was 287% bigger than it was before WWI. In Brazil increasing amounts of highly diversified merchandise, such as oil (both raw and derivatives), railway and electric materials, and fruits like pears and apples — along with typewrites,

⁴³ *Diário carioca*, February, 1936. Cited in Cabral 109.

phonographs, and films were circulating (Bandeira 208-09). From 1922 to 1929, large American corporations such as Atlantic, Firestone, Armour, and Burroughs, installed branches in Brazil, establishing monopolies in some commercial areas (such as meat and oil). Hollywood studios Universal and Metro Goldwyn Mayer did the same. From 1900 to 1930, American companies invested in Brazil more than 10 million dollars, about 37.5% of the total foreign investments in the country at the time. American banks replaced English and French ones as creditors of Brazilian debts: between 1921 and 1927, they held 35% of all Brazilian foreign debt (Bandeira 214-15).

American habits came along with merchandise and dollars. Riding in automobiles was one of the most visible changes in Brazilian habits: 814 American cars were bought in 1913, 39,996 in 1925; in 1927 Brazilians absorbed 10% of the American production of cars, trucks and buses, becoming the world's fourth biggest market for them. The important educational reform of 1931 was in good part modeled on American theories, such as John Dewey's, brought back by Brazilian scholars sponsored by the Ford and Rockefeller foundations since the 1920's. The American information agencies United Press and Associated Press almost monopolized Brazilian press and radio on foreign news. Together with American gramophones, music houses sold jazz and Charleston records, which soon replaced European waltzes at middle- and high-class balls (Bandeira 208-09).

As to the film industry, as early as in 1928, 402 of the 941 films shown in Brazilian theaters were American (Bandeira 208). The Brazilian market for American films would grow along the 1930's, and become crucial, together with all Latin-American markets, during the war, when traditional European markets were drastically

reduced. In the late 1940's, every theater in São Paulo was showing an American film. Of the 2,164 films (short or long) cleared by the Vargas censorship in 1943, 1,410 (65%) were American, and 604 (30%) were Brazilian (Augusto 43, cited in Tota 131-32). The impact of these numbers on the imagination of many Brazilians is glossed in one scene of a recent 2000 Brazilian TV mini-series, *Aquarela do Brasil*: it showed a young man just after Brazil entered the war, being terrified at receiving a summons from the draft board; his neighbor, a girl who sold tickets at a theater nearby, and was addicted to movies, told him he should be proud of serving his country, and of defending his flag, with those white and red lines and all those little white stars in a blue square.

Together with films and recording, the technology which decisively helped to Americanize Brazilian culture was the radio. It is present in Brazil since 1922, when a small radio station, with Westinghouse technology, made short distance transmissions of music, conferences and speeches at the International Exhibition in Rio. On the same occasion, the potential of that novelty excited Edgard Roquette-Pinto, an intellectual who a few months later, in 1923, founded the Rádio Sociedade in Rio, with an educational orientation. Similar stations soon opened in São Paulo and Paraná, in the South (*História do samba* 31). For a country as big as Brazil (the world's fourth largest), radio had obvious advantages for projects of nationalization like Vargas's, so his government invested in the technical quality of national broadcasting, and created the official daily program *A voz do Brasil* ("The Voice of Brazil"), with news and entertainment — and in January of 1936, the Mangueira "samba school" hosted a special broadcast of the program (Cabral 108).

For popular composers and singers, who looked to successful record sales as the chief aim for each new song, radio offered the possibility of getting national fame. Actually, radio was responsible for the consolidation of a “star system” in Brazil. In the case of Carmen Miranda, she was “discovered” in 1929 by composer Josué de Barros, who helped her record some of his songs, and soon, through records, her voice and singing style called attention of some radio programmers. By 1939 she was one of the biggest stars of Brazilian show-business — so much so that the simple chance of being close to her caused an unforgettable excitement in composer Dorival Caymmi, author of “O que é que a baiana tem?” (“what is it that the Bahiana has?”), who helped her create her Bahiana character (Caymmi 80).

In 1940, encouraged by the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (OCIAA), the cultural branch of the Good-Neighbor policy, which was headed by Nelson Rockefeller, CBS and NBC started their transmissions to Brazil, mostly to counterbalance the effects of radio shows from the Berlin official station, which were being broadcast, all over the country, both in German and in Portuguese. In the name of inter-American (and anti-German) solidarity, CBS and NBC, traditional competitors, made an alliance and lowered the prices of their productions for Brazil, making it easier for sponsors to pay for them. Still in 1940, Luís Jatobá, “reputed the number 1 radio announcer of Brazil,” went to New York, hired by CBS. The schedules of the American radio shows were published by the Brazilian press, with the help of Brazilian versions of American magazines such as the *Readers' Digest*; in Rio, São Paulo, Porto Alegre and Recife, several local stations retransmitted them. The official *A Voz do Brasil* dedicated five minutes a day to the OCIAA. In addition to news on the

war in Europe, one program offered entertainment, with military bands and typical American orchestras. In May of 1941, Ruddy Vallee and Carmen Miranda did a sketch on the *Royal Gelatin Program*, in which they got married, and observed: "Our two countries could have a better relation after our marriage" (Tota 76-78).

With Americanization, it was increasingly common to see rich American tourists, in addition to intellectuals, entertainers, and artists, visiting Brazil, a traditional tropical, exotic reference, now a strategically important "good neighbor." In the big cities, these visitors could enjoy night clubs that catered to their demand for quality and their taste for refinement (if not luxury), good music, good food and drink, and always with the hint of local "exoticism." Particularly in Rio, tourists could find three luxurious casinos — Copacabana, Atlântico, and Cassino da Urca. The latter was inaugurated in 1933, in a large, sophisticated beach resort hotel, on the beautiful, calm Urca beach, a perfect setting for what was expected of a tropical paradise, especially at night. The owner, Joaquim Rola, though somewhat crude himself, was an expert at entertaining the rich, and had planned his casino, with an eye on Hollywood, balancing international sophistication and the "local color" of popular artists like Carmen Miranda.

[Rola] knew how to satisfy the needs for gambling and fun of his important patrons. At the tables of the casino, foreign visitors and elegant cariocas [people from Rio] could win or lose small fortunes — and find the pretty *demimondaines* who afterwards would help them celebrate their gains or regret their losses. . . . the turbulent frivolity of the ambiance was the perfect setting for the sparkling of their huge Brazilian diamonds and for inspired jokes addressed to the owner of the casino (Gil-Montero 111).

Americanism soon provoked an intense anti-Americanism, chiefly as encouraged by the political radicalism of the 1930's. While some Brazilian

intellectuals such as Gilberto Amado, Anísio Teixeira, and Monteiro Lobato, praised “American civilization,” others such as Agripino Grieco, Alceu de Amoroso Lima, and Antonio Torres, acidly criticized the American presence in Brazilian culture — in 1922, Grieco called Americans “unesthetic impostors;” the U.S., “the civilized barbarism;” and American cities, “real *pigopoles*.”⁴⁴ In popular culture, the debate between Americanism and anti-Americanism can be well represented by Noel Rosa’s “Não tem tradução” (“no translation”), actually a critique to foreignness in general, in which he declares that samba can not be translated into French, and suggests that this “hello boy, hello Johnny” thing is more adequate for telephone conversation.

As to the association of American-ness with wealth, in opposition to that of Brazilian-ness with poverty, one can say that it was really established at that time, as shown by “Disseram que voltei americanizada,” performed by Carmen Miranda when she went back to the Cassino da Urca in 1940. The lyrics make that charge of *being Americanized* correspond to *being rich and frivolous*: “They said I came back Americanized / With a bunch of money, very rich / . . . / They said I’m worried about my hands.” The response is a series of assertions about the character’s habits to make the point that she has become neither rich nor frivolous, and that she is still loyal to the life of poor Brazilian samba communities:

But look at me, what is all that poison for?
How can I be Americanized?
I who was born with samba, and who live in the dew
Dancing to the old *batucada* all night long
At the teams of *malandros*, my most preferred,
I still say *eu te amo*, and never “I love you.”

⁴⁴ Agripino Grieco, *Fetiches e fantoches* (Rio de Janeiro: Schettino, s/d) 135-8. Cited in *Bandeira* 209-10.

As long as there's a Brazil, for my meals,
I want shrimp in a sauce with chuchu⁴⁵.

Rigorously speaking, both the charge and the response had no basis in fact. Carmen Miranda started performing in the Casino da Urca in 1936, and in 1938 was already one of Rola's chief artists. The casino was an Americanized place from its very blueprint; likewise, Rio had been an Americanized city at least since the 1920's, and Carmen Miranda's style had always corresponded to the taste of the rich, both Americans and Brazilians, so she was already to a great extent Americanized before going to the U.S.. Moreover, her "authenticity" as a samba singer also had been questioned before, for instance, by Noel Rosa. Therefore, there was no real point in charging her with being Americanized because she had been successful in the U.S. and sang in English.

Carmen Miranda's response was equally refutable, in at least three aspects. (1) The music underlining the argument was recognized in general as samba, so Carmen was declaring loyalty to samba by singing it, but her style did not properly correspond to Cidade Nova, and definitely not to Estácio; rather than proving her national "authenticity," her singing helped to show that there had never been an authentic samba. (2) References to the old *batucadas* and to the teams of *malandro* may appeal to images of a national identity, but the "old *batucadas*" and the actual *malandragem* had already suffered the domestication mentioned above. Moreover, Carmen's sophisticated image definitely does not fit Rio's poor communities. And (3) the argument is based on the same presupposition that in part shapes the charge of

⁴⁵ Chuchu is a cheap and easily produced vegetable that grows all over Brazil, good for accompanying many dishes. I took some ideas for the translation from Davis 241.

Americanization, i.e., the opposition between American wealth and frivolity, on the one hand, and Brazilian poverty and *malandragem* on the other, as if the charge could have been translated into “you are not poor enough for us to accept you as a Brazilian.”

Nevertheless, the intense repercussion of the (largely pointless) Casino da Urca episode, reportedly responsible for Carmen’s lifelong self-exile, made “Disseram que voltei americanizada” one of her best-known Brazilian performances ever. Together with the amount of possible examples of the tradition of self-doubt, self-pity, and resignation in samba songs, it suggests at least that the basic assumption about Brazilian and American national identities — the association between being Brazilian and being poor, on one hand, being American and being rich on the other — has really been largely accepted. In a domesticated samba, being Brazilian sounds like being resigned to poverty and to social injustice; by reaction, it gives rise to a national pride that corresponds, if not to the pride of being poor, certainly to the pride of not being rich. The following chapters present two critical analyses of Carmen Miranda films from this viewpoint.

Hollywood and Ambivalence in Rio

*Even tone-deaf people can identify Latin American dance music.
Its earmark is a varied assortment of strange drums, dried vegetables, bits of wood,
which can produce sound combinations
as fascinating as static in a transatlantic broadcast,
rhythms more intriguing than the clickety-clack of a 60-mile-an-hour express.*

(Time magazine, 1942)

When Irving Cummings's *That Night in Rio* was issued by Twentieth-Century Fox, in March, 1941, it was considered, in the U.S., as "the first rose tossed by Hollywood in its current attempt to woo South America via the movies" ("*That Night in Rio*"). Actually, it was the second American film with Carmen Miranda, and the second one to deliberately flirt with Latin American audiences. However, in the first one, *Down Argentine Way* (1940), the flirtation was a failure. It offended Argentinean audiences with some grotesque stereotypical characters. So, before starting to shoot *That Night in Rio*, Fox producer Darryl Zanuck had the foresight to ask the Brazilian embassy in Washington for official approval of the screenplay.

In Rio, *That Night in Rio* divided opinions. Some appreciated the sophisticated way Rio was portrayed, as well as Carmen's good service in divulging Brazilian culture throughout the world. Andréa Zenaide wrote: "we are infinitely grateful to this gesture of Pan-American cordiality, which makes our capital [then Rio] look good in the eyes of our international fans." Others complained of the allegedly shameful way Carmen's character was representing Brazilians, by resembling what one critic called a "cozinheira de morro," that is, a humble maid coming from poor and mostly black slum communities ("*Uma noite no Rio*"). Between pride and shame, journalist Paulo Francis noticed a split in the attitude of audiences in Rio: "Everyone [was] delighted,

in the dark. As they left the theater, however, everyone complained that Carmen represented us as little monkeys to entertain Americans. In other words, people loved Miranda, 'our real thing' shining in Hollywood, but only in the sheltering darkness of the theater. On the streets we turned into patriots" (quoted by Sá 7).

The only thing all audiences, both in the U.S. and in Brazil, seemed to agree on was the positive strategic attitude by Fox (and by Hollywood by extension) towards Latin America, an attitude apparently stimulated by the Good Neighbor policy. Critics of both countries were aware of the commercial and political interests involved in this attitude. Given the war in Europe, Hollywood producers were in need of new markets for their films, and Latin American spectators were there to be conquered. In addition, since 1933 Roosevelt's policy of not intervening in Latin American countries was proving efficient as a way not only of expanding markets for American industry (including the film industry), but also of strengthening the political power of the continent as a whole (under U.S. leadership) against an increasing Nazi menace.

Thus, in the U.S. *Time* magazine testified that "*That Night in Rio* should convince Latins that the *yanquis* [were] trying to be good, albeit slightly dreamy and gushing, neighbors" ("*That Night in Rio*"), whereas in Brazil the poet and diplomat Vinícius de Moraes said: "[the film] is, I want to suppose, a sympathetic gesture by Hollywood regarding us." In brief, on the one hand, American critics in general, in addition to voicing their technical impressions of the production, commented on the Good Neighbor policy, as if accepting an invitation of the film to do so; on the other hand, Brazilian critics, generally in an emotional tone, discussed images of Brazilian national identity proposed by the film — either approving of them or not.

What is intended in this chapter is a deeper analysis of *That Night in Rio*. Rather than discussing the Good Neighbor policy or restating that the film is full of stereotypes and prejudices, I want to analyze the film as an industrial product and a discursive manifestation in which two historical traditions are intertwined, both of them involved in the formation of such stereotypes and prejudices: the tradition of well defined images of American national identity, coherent with the paradigm of ideals proposed by the founding fathers in 1776 (as seen in Chapter 1), in contrast with the tradition of self-doubt, self-pity, and resignation, connected with the lack of a single paradigm for images of Brazilian national identity (as seen in Chapter 2).

The hypothesis that guides this analysis of *That Night in Rio*, which will be formulated more precisely below, is that the film can be seen as the imposition of the industrial normativity, typical of the American war effort in general (Hollywood included), over a cultural context, presented as Brazilian, so as to propose the reduction of cultural difference and ambivalence involved in images of Brazilian national identity — an attitude *opposite* to that adopted by the Good Neighbor policy and its principle of non-interference, as will be shown.

Modernity, ambivalence, and the Good Neighbor context

Zygmunt Bauman indicates a peculiar *fight* between industrial modernity and ambivalence, a fight that has been shaping the world for more than two centuries. This is useful for the following analysis of the relationship between an industrial production (*That Night in Rio*) and the objects it deals with, which were not yet defined (Brazilian

national identity, and a “good neighborhood” between Americans and Latin Americans).

Ambivalence can be conceived of as a character, or a state, that opposes rationality. If something is ambivalent it can not be the object of a scientific analysis; it escapes epistemology. All along the history of Western thought, at least from Heraclitus on, the concept of ambivalence can be seen as a challenge to reason. To begin with, something that accumulates two opposite features at the same time is itself a challenge to the Aristotelian principle of non-contradiction; thus it hinders the very logic of categorization: it is *both inside and outside* a category. Ambivalence hinders the very elaboration of a concept. Thus, ambivalence imposes hermeneutical problems.

Bauman argues that

Much of the social organization can be interpreted as sedimentation of the systematic effort to reduce the frequency with which hermeneutical problems are encountered and to mitigate the vexation such problems cause once faced. Probably the most common method of achieving this is that of the territorial and functional separation. Where this method applied in full and with maximum effect, hermeneutic problems would diminish as the physical distance shrinks and the scope and frequency of interaction grow. . . . [But] As boundary-drawing is never foolproof and some boundary-crossing is difficult to avoid, hermeneutic problems are likely to persist as a permanent “grey area” surrounding the familiar world of daily life. That grey area is inhabited by *unfamiliar*s (56-7).

For Bauman, the main effort of industrial modernity is to fight ambivalence, an effort, in a sense, to make everything fit a grid — the *mapa mundi*, the streets in a town, or the disciplinary institutions, as pointed out by Foucault.¹ But if this effort is likely to be the very definition of modernity, modernity would need to have always an area of ambivalence to fight, to have a permanent gray area. This means that

¹ See Chapter 1. See also Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, and “O nascimento da medicina social.”

modernity lives by its very incapacity to annihilate its enemy totally.² “A moderate dose of puzzlement is pleasurable precisely because it resolves in the comfort of reassurance (this, as any tourist knows, is a major part of the attraction held by foreign trips, the more exotic the better). The difference is something one can live with, as long as one believes that the different world is, like ours, a ‘world with a key,’ an orderly world like ours” (Bauman 58).³

However, the real *undecidability* of many “unfamiliar” remains, always challenging the internal coherence of the disciplined system imposed by modernity. There will always be exceptions, anomalies of clear, well defined oppositions. If in any cultural context one can distinguish “friends” and “enemies” as symmetrically opposed, as black and white, good and evil, then Bauman proposes the concept of the *stranger* for the undecidable, neither friend nor enemy, and possibly both. Actually, fighting ambivalence and strangers (and “foreigners”) is an activity much older than modernity, but Bauman argues that before modernity, “the allocation of strangers into one of the two opposite categories of either friends or enemies was easy and within the community’s power” (62).

After the seventeenth century, however, as Bauman argues, with the rise and dissemination of national states, with their efforts of organizing and disciplining vast territories, sociability no longer depended on physical proximity among people. Trying to put together complex social and political realities, which involved so many and deep cultural differences, national state could be, as Bauman suggests, “designed primarily

² A relationship, thus, that resembles that between Tom and Jerry.

³ I take a strong exception to the pronoun “ours” in this passage: it refers to a North Atlantic view. However, the effectiveness of the quotation remains without the two incidences of the comparative expression “like ours.”

to deal with the problem of strangers, not enemies” (63). In addition, Bauman suggests that enhancing the dependence by national states on industrial and rational methods to instrumentalize the dissemination of its power over vast spaces and populations, “Nationalism was a programme of social engineering, and the national state was to be its factory” (64). Going on with the analogy, he says that “the strangers were an ‘industrial waste’ growing in bulk with every increase in the production of friends and foes” (65).

In the context of the Good Neighbor policy, one can see the fight between ambivalence and modernity in a peculiar way. As seen in Chapter 1, national political projects in the U.S. have, since 1776, a unique national paradigm of ideas to be measured against. As seen in Chapter 2, Brazilian national projects and images of national identity lack this unique paradigm. In addition, the way American people in general are obedient to law and norm, together with the rigor of methods shown by the police, the juridical system, and other institutions that make law and norms applied in the American society, is a feature that commonly strikes Brazilian visitors as remarkable. Symmetrically, American visitors to Brazil, in general, must take a time to get used to the flexibility of schedules, and to the particular attitude Brazilian people have regarding law and norms.

Antonio Candido (“Dialética da malandragem”) commented on Brazilian historical *anomie*, taking it as a feature that distinguished it from North Atlantic cultures; as he pointed out, it is visible in the naturalness with which people crossed from what was licit to what was illicit during the period of the “formation of families, prestiges, fortunes, reputations of urban Brazil from the first half of the nineteenth-

century” (53). As to the presence of such *anomie* as a constant feature in Brazilian culture, Candido refers to a “corrosive tolerance, very Brazilian, that presupposes a reality valid beyond, but also before, law and norm.” The comic feature that involves such *anomie*, not only in literature, but in Brazilian popular culture in general (as also seen in Chapter 2), according to Candido, “sands away the sharp edges, and gives rise to all sorts of accommodations (or negations), which sometimes make us [Brazilians] feel like inferiors against a vision stupidly nurtured by Puritan values, as it is in capitalist societies, but which will facilitate our insertion in a world eventually more wide open” (53).⁴

As seen in Chapter 2, the process of “Americanization” of Brazil, starting in the 1920’s and highly intensified in the 1940’s, helped to consolidate Brazil’s industrial modernization — chiefly because of the first Brazilian metal-works plant (Volta Redonda), made possible by an agreement involving American military bases on Northeastern Brazil. However, the possible correspondence between both trends, Americanization and modernization, against the ambivalence of many images of Brazilian identity, must be verified (or not) with care, through the analysis of some facts within the specific context under scrutiny — during World War II.

U.S. military interventionism in Latin America was interrupted in 1928, to be resumed only in the late 1950’s. According to Brice Wood, “one common motivation toward the formation of Good Neighborly attitudes may have originated, oddly

⁴ What is especially important in Candido’s comments on the image of Brazil as a land of a “delightful moral neutrality” is that they correspond to non-judgmental and non-patriotic (but also non-pessimistic) view of the insertion of Brazilian culture in the world — Candido is a leftist, and wrote “Dialética da Malandragem” in 1970, when the Brazilian military dictatorship was trying to impose a developmental national project based on technicism in education, a big and strong national state, and repression to communism, an attitude that interested the Nixon administration. See also Schwarz.

enough, in the administration of Calvin Coolidge [1923-1929]" (133). At the end of 1928, Herbert Hoover, who was to take office a few months later, visited Latin America "to talk with his 'Good Neighbors'." At the end of his term, in 1932, he took the last U.S. Marines out of Nicaragua (while still interfering politically in Cuba). Roosevelt, who took office in 1933, was wrongly credited, mainly in Latin America, with the *creation* of the policy. To a great extent this wrong crediting occurred because Roosevelt was a Democrat, whereas Coolidge and Hoover were Republican, as well as Ted Roosevelt, who had intensified the Big Stick policy at the very beginning of the twentieth century.

Wood argues that Roosevelt actually followed a non-intervention policy previously established by Hoover, only strengthening it by means of some important decisions — notably avoiding political interference (replacing it with "wise and friendly" advice), reducing fees for imports, and (I add) heavily investing in industrial, commercial, and cultural interchange. For twelve years (1933-1945) Roosevelt's policy — cultivated in a clever, coherent, and rhetorically sophisticated way — succeeded in developing a good deal of "confidence among Latin Americans that pre-1928 policies would not be revived;" the policies were approved by some Republican leaders (including Hoover), and finally garnered strong bipartisan support after Pearl Harbor (Wood 133-35).

What is visibly ambivalent in the Good Neighbor policy is its principle of action by inaction. Sometimes, as it is well documented in Wood's book, Latin governments, together with American companies that had Latin branches, intensely insisted on American intervention and protection against local revolutionaries — such

as Nicaragua's Somoza (Wood 149-52), but Secretary of State Cordell Hull managed to withstand intense political pressures and avoid any sort of intervention. The bigger the anti-Americanist movement, in any country, the more Hull and Assistant Secretary Sumner Welles tried to confirm a "friendly" attitude by the U.S. — notably during the war, alleging the Nazi threat and the strategic need for continental solidarity. As to disputes involving North and Latin American enterprises, Hull and Welles were changing the image of the U.S. from "just a big international law office," as it was described in the 1920's, to a "center of diplomatic negotiation for the protection of [U.S.] nationals in Latin America" (Wood 166); from the owner of the big stick to the good neighbor. Instead of the armed force of the former "policeman of the Caribbean," Hull and Welles were now using remonstrance, differential treatment, and inducements, and asking the other countries for cordiality and "reciprocity."

Of course, this course of actions had nothing but advantages for the U.S. government. From 1933 to 1939, asking for "reciprocity" of methods, equality of rights, and transparency in all negotiations, Hull and Welles paved the way for all American national states to be seen in Pan-American conferences as equally interested in, and responsible for, continental solidarity in the case of war — rather than merely conforming or reacting to the wishes of a leader (Wood 313). Right after World War I, American economic and military superiority was great enough to invalidate the argument of national security for military interventions. Now, with increasing tension in Europe, the argument for solidarity (thus political strength) was more and more effective. Its superiority indisputable, American steady leadership over the continent depended, to a large extent, on the reduction of traditional anti-American anger in

Latin America. So the U.S. government started inviting its poorer neighbors to gather as equals, offering loans and attractive plans of interchange, and admitting historical mistakes. Visiting Brazil in 1936, Roosevelt declared:

No nation can live entirely to itself. Each one of us has learned the glories of independence. Let each one of us learn the glories of interdependence. . . . We can discard the dangerous language of rivalry. . . . You [Brazilians] have done much to help us in the United States in many ways in the past. We, I think, have done a little to help you, and may I suggest that you, with this great domain of many millions of square miles, of which such a large proportion is still unopen to human occupation, can learn much from the mistakes we have made in the United States. . . . it was two people who invented the New Deal — the President of Brazil and the President of the United States ("The Presidency").

As to economic support for Latin America, in early 1939, already foreseeing the war in Europe, Roosevelt declared that the U.S. should provide it, "so that no American nation need surrender any fraction of its sovereign freedom to maintain its economic welfare" (Wood 313). In the same year, he said:

Because markets for forty percent of the normal exports of Latin America have been lost due to the war, there is grave danger that in some of these countries economic and political deterioration may proceed to a point where defense of the Western Hemisphere would be rendered much more difficult and costly. In the interest of hemispheric solidarity and as Good Neighbors, the United States government must do what it reasonably can to prevent any such development (Wood 355).

Even the anti-Americanist argument that, by not intervening, the U.S. would be protecting tyrants had a clever and effective answer by the architects of the Good Neighbor policy. In 1939, after taking office in Managua as a dictator, Somoza was officially and ceremoniously greeted at the Washington railroad station by Roosevelt himself, as it was customary with heads of state in general, democratic or not. This caused indignation all over Latin America,⁵ but acting this way Roosevelt was reaffirming the U.S.'s impartiality regarding other countries' internal affairs. Strictly

⁵ *The New York Times*, May 14, 1939. Cited in Wood 155.

speaking, Roosevelt was paying the price of the consistency of the good-neighbor policy, stating that any political attitude against a foreign government could end in military intervention.

In addition, and that was important for local populations, it was clear that, even if the U.S. could help people to depose one dictator, it would not necessarily offer guarantee against another one. In the end, the rhetorical invitation to be "as one" with the U.S. (as if equality were possible), together with actions really consistent with the principle of non-intervention and non-interference, showed that some Latin American villains could be (as they were) at home, instead of far away North, and divided opinions among local populations about their own responsibilities regarding not only the U.S., but also their own governments — thus undermining a good part of anti-Americanism. Therefore, by means of the Good Neighbor policy, without spending big money or sending troops, the U.S. government was steadily consolidating its leadership over the continent and cleaning up part of its former bad image.

The U.S. already occupied the position of the one who was always asked for money or intervention, and the U.S. government managed to profit from the inevitable consequences of such unbalance of political power without explicitly and forcefully imposing its will. Latin national states could hardly refuse to go along with such policy. Things happened as if a personified U.S. were saying: "com'on, my poor brothers, accept my peaceful leadership, you don't have many options anyway. If my predecessors were stupid enough to oppress you with their troops, at least they helped establish my indisputable superiority over you, so that I can act this way. Now my proposal, you can't deny, is much better than none, don't you think?" So, the

Roosevelt administration imposed its policy by not imposing it; the absence of explicit imposition was the very condition for the effectiveness of this elegant and firm imposition. As a result, it got only the benefits of imposition, without its onus. By not interfering or intervening, Roosevelt kept his distance from his neighbors; non-interference in Latin America was indeed a radical non-interference in the structure of power of the whole continent — and its reinforcement. The radically new way of acting politically yielded, in a way, the most radically conservative result possible.

Wood argues that within the Good Neighbor context, “*ingenuity* in the formulation of well-regarded general concepts became an essential part of reciprocal arrangements” (Wood 355). When asked, more than one decade later, for a definition of “old-style diplomacy,” the American ambassador to Brazil during World War II, Jefferson Caffery, answered “Getting things done. That’s about all it amounts to. How is it done? You just *play it by ear*.”⁶ Those references to a sort of *virtuosity* in politics make clear that there was a possible combination between reason and intuition by people who had to make decisions in the Department of State about Latin America at the time.

The sophisticated reasoning imbued in the logic of the Good Neighbor policy offers a historical restriction to the application of Bauman’s theoretical model to its historical context. In his description of modernity as a systematic opposition to ambivalence, on an industrial scale, Bauman suggests that modern reason disseminated the use of step-by-step instructions. Indeed, each new industrial procedure established, which was often achieved by *ingenuity*, in American defense plants, and yielding those

⁶ *New York Times*, February 20, 1955. Cited in Wood 356.

production “miracles”, as seen in Chapter 1, was soon formalized in very simple step-by-step instructions in manuals, so that any unskilled worker, even from a culture totally different from that in which the plant was inserted — even if bearing “undefined” features in his/her identity — could do his/her job perfectly. As also seen in Chapter 1, Hollywood studios adopted to a large extent the same industrial methods, valuing simplicity and precision.

Things were different in the formulation of the Good Neighbor policy. Procedures here could never be described step-by-step. Welles, for instance, once rejected a formal proposal, by his Latin colleagues, that the U.S. government should publish “a comprehensive list of the specific assets of the Good Neighbor policy.” He restricted his orientation to reaffirming the broad concept of “mutuality of interests based upon the self-respect and sovereignty of each of the twenty-one American republics” (Wood 314). Good Neighbor procedures were always being redefined, under this broad principle, as each specific problem came to light. There was no possible manner of automatizing them. Indeed, there are no written rules by Hull or Welles, no standard procedures for different situations — not even an official categorization of situations. The policy clearly depended on the officials, losing its effectiveness after 1943, when Welles resigned, and practically vanishing in 1945, with the end of the war, when the Nazi threat was no longer an argument to unite American nations. And it practically ended with Hull’s resignation and Roosevelt’s death.

One can see the Good Neighbor policy as a kind of permanent learning, by the Department of the State of the time, about how to deal with those many different Latin

American cultures and policies, in other words, the development of a specific knowledge. Of course, most foreign policy has always been a matter of how to deal with the other and the unknown, but what is specific about the Good Neighbor policy is that it was ambivalent by definition (imposing without imposing, acting without acting, leading by being neutral, being conservative by innovating), and created to deal with peoples that were not only unknown by Americans, but also by themselves, in addition to being ambivalent in relation to the U.S..

It can be argued that the creators of the Good Neighbor policy were trying to spread “American values” and modernization throughout the rest of the continent (as they really helped to do), keeping the basic structure of American national identity the same. But their action looked like taking one step toward ambivalence in order to take two steps in the opposite direction, toward the objective of modernization and Americanization of the continent. In a sense the policy was strategically humble, subtle, and risky. In brief, the U.S. government invested heavily to learn how to deal with ambivalence in general (including its own new method),⁷ though having a precise, reasonable objective in mind (in brief, peaceful and steady American leadership over the whole continent) — as if pursuing a kind of knowledge not quite “scientific,” but one that allowed for ambivalence and depended heavily on intuition.⁸

⁷ Particularly in relation to film, from August, 1940 to April, 1945, the Film Division of the Office of the Coordinator of Inter American Affairs (OCIAA) accompanied the production of 134 feature films (including *That Night in Rio*), helped production and distribution of about 1700 newsreels, sponsored 101 shorts, and distributed 466 educational documentaries, such as those intended to teach Latin American people good habits of hygiene — the Film Division also addressed American audiences, trying to convince them that Latin Americans were not that different from them (Amâncio 87). Amâncio suggests consulting Pennee Bender on the subject.

⁸ It is possible to demonstrate the existence of two streams of thought running in parallel along modernity: (1) a scientific, technological, and industrial stream, which can be called Cartesian, made of conceptions that do not allow for ambivalence, based on precise definitions and analytical methods; and (2) a stream that can be called Spinozan, made up of intellectual works that try to deal with ambivalence, allowing for human incoherence, contradiction, and incapacity of ruling over the world, thus opposed to the other stream. The first one, which includes Kant's epistemology, makes science possible, together with industrial normativity, research, and objectivity. The other stream can be seen as a challenge to the traditional, Cartesian, rational knowledge, adopting presuppositions such as Spinoza's “third kind of knowledge,” one that is *both* rational *and* intuitive

Outside of Washington's political offices, in the late 1930's, curiosity about Latin America was also growing in the rest of the U.S.. After Carmen Miranda's stunning success on Broadway, in 1939, her style was soon turned into fashion, with shoes and turbans like hers taking on store displays and advertising space of newspapers and magazines (Barsante 20-21). She was hired in early 1939 by Broadway businessman Lee Shubert, who saw her performance at the Cassino da Urca, in Rio. Some versions indicate that, advised by Sonja Henie, Shubert went to Rio just to see Carmen (Gil-Montero 69.). Anyway, her image certainly touched a chord in the entrepreneur, which suggests the existence of a previous interest by American audiences in Latin things — an attraction to a large extent linked to the exoticism of the “unfamiliar.” As a result, Carmen, who arrived at a time when Broadway theaters were suffering a slump at the box office, was pointed out in a cover of *Click* magazine as “the girl who saved Broadway from the World Fair.”⁹

And Carmen was not the only Latin artist to be welcomed by American audiences. Many night clubs in big cities were hiring Latin musicians, such as the band leader Xavier Cugat, while Latin immigrants crowded some big city neighborhoods — *Time* magazine noted that New York had the biggest Latin population north of the Tropic of Cancer. Latin dancers could make a living not only on stage, but also

(*Ethics*, Part 2, proposition 40, note 2, and Part 4, “Appendix 4”). This different kind of knowledge comes both from the senses and reason, and is based on the principle that man is not the most important and powerful part of God/Nature; since for Spinoza body and soul are only parts of the same thing, the soul can not rule absolutely over the body — and over the world (*Ethics*, Part V, Preface). Unlike what happens in the Cartesian stream of thoughts, in the Spinozan one Nature is never wrong, and nobody should be “corrected.” One of the main examples of the continuity of the Spinozan stream of thoughts in the twentieth century is Lacan's psychoanalytical subject, as clearly shown by Elizabeth Roudinesco (67). The kind of knowledge that the Good Neighbor policy makers seemed to be pursuing does not correspond to Spinoza's “third kind,” which was universal and essential, but it allowed for ambivalence anyway, being thus different from the Cartesian one.

⁹ *Click*, November 1939, cover, reproduced in Barsante 15. The Fair was a huge, grandiloquent, optimistic exhibition of goods, natural resources, technologies, and urban plans and architecture from many countries, also in New York.

teaching the rumba, conga, tango, and samba in the big cities, as one could see every day in many small advertisements in the press. In Manhattan there was a daily newspaper, *La Prensa*, written in Spanish, whose survey of April 1943 testifies to the richness of Latin culture in the U.S.. *La Prensa* asked Latin Americans to estimate the rumba and conga artists then performing in the U.S., and the result was very different from what could be expected from Americans. Among female entertainers, Carmen Miranda, considered “Hollywood’s cavern-mouth,” was the 20th most popular, and the winner was “the explosive gypsy dancer, Carmen Amaya,” who had been performing in the U.S. since 1939. Among band leaders, “long-nosed” Xavier Cugat was the 8th most popular, the winner being “a stocky Cuban named Machito, . . . with his high-octane rumba style that would rattle the fenders off a jeep” — Machito’s band was considered “brassy and solid, without Cugat’s high romantic perfumery,” and Machito himself accused Cugat of being “commercial.” The winning singer was Miguelito Valdés (who had sung with both Cugat and Machito), described as big, bull-like, going from the comic to the truculent, always with the great energy of someone who “grew up on the Havana docks.” Among dancers, the winners were the cousins Rosario & Antonio, or Los Chavalillos Sevillanos. who performed in the Broadway revue *Sons O’ Fun*, in which Carmen and the Bando da Lua also had a number. They had danced in Spain, made a tour of Europe and South America, and entered the U.S. for a “specialty act” at the Waldorf-Astoria, with their “flashing gyrations” and “intricate footwork” (“Leading Latins”).¹⁰

¹⁰ Carmen and Xavier Cugat performed in the same film in 1948, the Metro production *A Date with Judy*, by Richard Thorpe, with Elizabeth Taylor.

At the beginning of 1941, Carmen Miranda, Mona Maris (Argentina), and Maria Montez (Dominican Republic) were considered by *Life* magazine as “living testament to the Good Neighbor Policy” (“Latin Ladies”). In September, Brazilian dancer Eros Volusia was on the cover of *Life*, after having performed (as Carmen had one year before) in the White House at a birthday party for Roosevelt.¹¹ Meanwhile, with Carmen’s success, samba was getting popular enough for *Time* to give it a lot of space in March, 1942:

For the first time since the Cuban conga (1938), it looks as though the U. S. is taking up a new ballroom dance, . . . notable alike for its breezy tempo and its lilting bounce. North Americans got their first inklings of samba rhythms . . . when seductive Carmen Miranda came up from Rio to shine on Broadway in *The Streets of Paris*, became really aware of it last spring, when she samba-sang and samba-danced in a cinema, *That Night in Rio* By last week:

- Half of Arthur Murray’s pupils in 46 cities were taking samba lessons.
- Band Leader Eddie Duchin was playing the samba in theater engagements; his samba disc *Brazil* was a steady seller. Duchin had spent last summer in Rio, had come back steamed up with the samba’s possibilities.
- U. S. phonograph companies, noting that record buyers were growing more samba-conscious, had seven albums on the market. A year ago they had none.
- On the East and West coasts, in Mahattan especially, the samba had broken out of the Latin American nightclub bounds, was being played & danced in many swank dance spots (“New dance”).

So, Latin America and Latin Americans were objects of curiosity for many Americans. Adopting Bauman’s concept, it is not difficult to see, on the one hand, Latin Americans as strangers, and, on the other hand, Americans and Germans as friends and enemies. The Good Neighbor policy, then, would be an attempt, by some sectors of American society (including the U.S. government), to conquer those Latin “strangers” as friends, instead of losing them to the enemies.

Most Latin Americans probably did not see a cartoon that circulated in Germany in 1941, also published in *Life* a few weeks later (“FDR as he is

¹¹ “Brazil’s Eros Volusia does Negro with dance.” See also *Nosso Século 1930/1945* (São Paulo: Abril Cultural,

portrayed...”), in which Roosevelt appears dressed as Uncle Sam, putting his stars-and-stripes top hat on the globe — an idea somehow symmetrical to Charlie Chaplin’s version of Hitler playing with the Globe in *The Great Dictator*, shown in the same year. Even so, German, Italian, and Japanese descendants and sympathizers were many and politically strong enough, in several Latin countries (mainly in Southern Brazil and Argentina), to heavily worry many Americans and a good part of the U.S. government. For these immigrants, it had never been easy to decide on their national identification.¹² Many German immigrants had kept German as their only language, and after Brazil’s alliance with the U.S. in the war, they were strongly repressed, losing schools, newspapers, clubs, and other social institutions — even radio sets were confiscated. At the same time, the Nazis counted on those populations to ease their way in the conquest of the world. And among some of the immigrants support for Nazi Germany was active.¹³

Brazil’s minister of war, for instance, General Gaspar Dutra, and the chief of Brazilian armed forces, General Góes Monteiro, were clearly sympathizers of Nazi Germany. Actually, as Gerson Moura has already shown, up to the middle of 1940, the Vargas government was perfectly equidistant from the Axis and the Allies. On one side, there were those military ministers, who reportedly celebrated Hitler’s conquest, and on the other, a group led by Oswaldo Aranha, minister of Foreign Affairs, and ex-Brazilian ambassador to the U.S., known as a great admirer of Roosevelt and American culture. Precisely such equidistance, such institutional ambivalence, was

1980) 260, cited in Amâncio 99.

¹² See, for instance, *Nós, os teuto-gaúchos*.

¹³ As an illustration, see, for instance, Sylvio Back’s film *Aleluia, Gretchen!*.

Vargas's most valuable negotiating tool with the U.S.: threatening to decide for an alliance of Brazil with "vigorous peoples," Vargas acquired from the U.S. everything that was necessary for the construction of the first Brazilian metalwork plant, in Volta Redonda (crucial for the country's industrial development), and for the modernization of the Army. In exchange, the U.S. were allowed to build military air bases in Northeastern Brazil — from where both American and Brazilian soldiers took off toward the North of Africa, from 1942 on.

In addition, Brazilian culture in the late 1930's and early 1940's was living a special moment of undecidability between the modern and the traditional, the "universal" and the regional.¹⁴ As seen in Chapter 2, Brazilian culture was also getting intensely Americanized at the time, which concomitantly stimulated an intense anti-Americanism among many Brazilians. As it appeared in the recent TV series *Aquarela do Brasil*, common people might well have noticed some aspects shared by leaders such as Vargas, Roosevelt and Hitler. Heloísa Mafalda's character, for instance, when she was to send her son to the war, asks her friends why Vargas and Hitler were fighting (in 1943), since they had so much in common — including the ease with which they sent other people's children to die in the war.

A continental war-joy choreography

In sum, in the late 1930's and early 1940's, both in the U.S. and Brazil, both within the political institutions and among ordinary people, one can see that ambivalence appears (and is at use) in many ways. Industry, with its normativity, and

¹⁴ For the dialectic of modern and traditional in the Vargas era, see Mendonça; for the dialectic of universal and regional, see Candido, *Literatura e cultura de 1900 a 1945*, and *Literatura e subdesenvolvimento*.

simplification of methods — its step-by-step instructions — is the only institution in which one can see a decisive, intense, permanent, constitutive fight against ambivalence. Historically, thus, one can neither say that industrial normativity characterizes “the American people” as a whole, nor that ambivalence characterizes “the Brazilian people.” This would correspond to a simplification — precisely the one against which this work wants to argue — stimulated by totalizing, generalist images of national identities, especially those built during World War II, referred to in Chapters 1 and 2.

This summary is useful for the analysis of *That Night in Rio* to follow. Now the hypothesis that leads such an analysis can be formulated thus: (1) the film, working on generalist and oversimplifying images of national identities, presupposes that cultural values such as reason, logic, and industrial normativity characterize “the American people” as a whole, while ambivalence, strangeness, and illogic characterize “the Brazilian people” as a whole; and (2) the film evinces and naturalizes the idea of American leadership over the continent, by suggesting that it might be easy for Americans to cope with the ambivalence (and the strangeness) in stereotyped images of Latin American national identities, by means of reason, logic and industrial normativity.

In contrast with the Good Neighbor policy makers, who developed complex, ambivalent methods to deal with difference and ambivalence itself (though apparently sharing with them the same “Pan-Americanist” objective), the film oversimplified the problem of the cultural relationship between the Americas, taking ambivalence as only one among other superficial features of the most stereotypical images of Latin

Americans in use — such as the sombrero, the tanned skin, or the strange accent. The film seemed to tell Americans (as part of the American war-joy choreography) that no matter how strange things South of the border might be, they have the proper tools to spread American values all around, and are already doing it; actually, there is no ‘can’t do’ for them.

First, the film includes ambivalence as a feature among others in a superficial view of Latin American culture; then it underestimates ambivalence and cultural difference, revealing the assumptions about American competence to cope with any level of Latin strangeness. Indeed, the film thematizes ambivalence in its very plot, in much the same way as some traditional farces, at least since Molière, in which two characters who look absolutely alike (played by the same actor) interact, provoking many comic mistakes (generally corrected in the end). Darryl Zanuck himself produced *Folies Bergère*, in 1935, starring Maurice Chevalier, with the same argument. In *That Night in Rio*, Don Ameche plays the two roles: the Brazilian *Baron* Duarte, the rich owner of an airline holding company, and Larry Martin, an American comic actor (Carmen Miranda’s boyfriend), who makes a living by performing in a Rio night club called Samba, where he usually impersonates the Baron. This provokes confusions (voluntarily or not) that prove highly advantageous for all, saving the Baron’s romantic and financial lives.

The two plots — the romantic and the financial — go together, in alternate sequences. The Baron’s marriage to Baroness Cecília Duarte (Alice Faye) had lost all romance, keeping only its form; at that point she meets the actor, whose impersonation, including gallantry, brings back some heat and excitement into the

marriage. The financial plot is surprisingly complicated for this Technicolor musical, apparently no more than entertainment. After taking out a \$20 million loan from a banker he knows (J. Carrol Naish), to buy shares in a company, the Baron receives a telegram, at night, that a crucial contract was interrupted. Predicting stock losses as soon as the news leaks, he immediately flies to Buenos Aires, to get a new loan, so that he can quickly pay back the first one. The morning after, the impersonator is hired by the Baron's executives, to be present at the Rio stock market, so that the banker would not suspect the problem. Larry, however, naïvely waves many times to an investor, so the Baron involuntarily buys even more shares. In the end, the banker confesses that he himself had faked the telegram, in order to have the company devalued, because he had long been interested in it, but the actor's waving thwarted his plot. Then the banker buys the company for much more than he had been thinking of — making the deal with the actor, too, due to another confusion at a party — and regards the Baron as a very sharp businessman.

Despite all these confusions, however, ambivalence is not really taken seriously, not even by the Baron and his two executives, Arthur (S. Z. Sakall) and Salles (Curt Bois), who are afraid of going to jail if they do not pay back the first loan: the way in which they play their parts makes it difficult for the spectator to take them seriously. Arthur and Salles are absolutely caricatural. The former's fatness is highlighted by a childish gesture of astonishment — he takes both hands to his cheeks and emits a sound (“sheeee!!”) that in Portuguese expresses fear of serious problems. The latter, in contrast, is very thin, and suffers from a sort of spasm in the mouth when he is nervous. The Baron, in turn, simply does not seem to care about fate.

The construction of the two characters by Ameche also touches ambivalence only on the surface. The difference between both is restricted to four features attributed to the Baron: the gray hair for his maturity, a more sober mien and a monocle for his nobleness, and a strange accent (more Slavic than Latin) for his non-American-ness. As if obeying a rule of this particular genre of farce, the two identities are permanently on show, since the funny part of the game is telling who is who; nevertheless, both of them are defined very precisely: telling who is who is always easy for the spectator. The definition of each identity separately, however, is never at issue; there is no depth in either of them. The structure of the farce keeps things clear, most of the time (when not, it is for just a few moments, only as one more joke involving the spectator).

The closest the Brazilian Baron gets to self-questioning is at the end of the film, after a joke by his wife. The night before, he had pretended he was Larry impersonating himself, only to test the Baroness's faithfulness. The Baroness, however, noticed the plot and, in turn, pretended she was really in love with Larry. The morning after, in his office, the Baron tells his friends he was puzzled by the game: "I felt miserable, finished. It was like a beautiful, horrible dream, and at the same time, delightful and agonizing," and he assumes he had been an idiot for having lost his wife to the impersonator. However, when he realizes the Baroness's strategy, and, with the help of his two silly executives, that the Baroness still loves him, he declares there is no reason for him to worry about it all by himself, and starts another joke on her by phone. This means that the only change in him is his recovery of a former liveliness that was asleep beneath the Baron's pompous day-by-day life, as he

neglected his marriage and the love of such a good and beautiful woman; it is something like the superficial, adaptive effect of psychodrama, rather than a deep psychoanalytical questioning of his subjectivity (which would in fact break the genre).

The superficiality of Ameche's two characters is even clearer in the Baroness's relationship with them. She, too, is perfectly able to tell who is who. But she does it only by logical deduction. The first moment in which the impersonation was supposed to deceive her — in the Duartes' mansion, a few minutes before a reception — she notices that the fake Baron is much more tender, attentive and polite than the real one, giving her a \$20,000 piece of jewelry for their wedding anniversary (after he had forgotten about it for at least two years). Later on, when the Baron pretended he was Larry impersonating himself, she checks on him by simply asking him to sing a song that she knows only Larry knew (Larry sings it with her at the beginning of the film). There is not even that usual trick, conventional to the genre as well, of making a kiss, or some other intimate act, work as a key for the distinction between the two look-alike characters — something that would not fit the Hays moral code, in force at the time.¹⁵ Carmen also recognizes Larry under the fake Baron, at the reception, by means of logic, actually by the mark she had left on his hand by accidentally scratching it the night before — true identity is something as superficial as a trace, an artificial mark, a writing on the skin. The difference between (national) identities loses all of its complexity, its depth, as only its surface appears, with an innocuous game of reflections.

¹⁵ Will Hays was head of Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, Inc., and author of a moral code that the studios agreed to obey, and that once in a while acquired new "don'ts." See, for instance, "Don'ts."

As to the financial plot, nobody in the stock market suspects that the Baron is a fake, despite all the stupid hand-waving and silly smiles of Larry's. The ambivalence of the impersonation interacts perfectly with the specific ambivalence that the meaning of the gesture acquires in the stock market: just waving for Larry, "buying" for the investor. Yet, the hand sign is understood in Rio as it would be in any stock market in the world, indicating that the city is really "civilized," inserted in the international financial world. This might lead to a third meaning of the gesture, which is a narcissistic flattery, the Brazilian public being expected to read it as a gesture of acceptance, and perhaps admiration, for an equal.¹⁶ And the building of the stock market was indeed seductive: "The interior of the stock market at Praça 15 de Novembro is impeccably rendered. . . . One can see that there was the most intense concern by the producers to make of *That Night in Rio* a moving picture to be praised and not to provoke offence" ("Uma noite no Rio").

But superficiality when dealing with ambivalence becomes most evident when one analyzes Carmen Miranda's figure, which is highly ambivalent. Firstly, she is ambivalent in terms of sex and gender, as it became increasingly clear from the 60's on, when she was adopted as a permanent inspiration by drag queens — regardless of what anatomical characteristics were present under her extravagant clothes and ornaments, her figure is easily taken (at least in America) as a "hypersexualized visual presence" (Roberts 11)¹⁷ with an exaggerated femininity. From her first appearance in

¹⁶ Though narcissism refers to "the self," while flattery by definition addresses "the other," I adopt "narcissistic flattery" as an efficient metaphor for an attitude by which a narcissistic subject (in love with him/herself) admires an "other" only while considering (or making) "the other" an equal, a subject supposed to look just like "the self."

¹⁷ See Introduction.

the U.S. — a six-minute performance in the Broadway review *Streets of Paris*, by the Shubert Brothers, in May 1939 — she suggests sex by singing her “piquant songs” while rolling her “mischievous eyes” and showing a little bit of the “torrid zone” of her belly. Yet, in the whole of her career she never sang truly “piquant songs,” her most “piquant” sequences were not necessarily more “piquant” than those of some pin-up girls she used to work with, and she never wore clothes as provocative as, for instance, the dress Alice Faye wears in *That Night in Rio* for the reception sequence (as seen below) — the most intimate parts she ever revealed were her belly and a small part of her thigh.

In addition to sex and gender, Carmen’s figure is deeply ambivalent, perhaps most, in terms of nationality, which particularly interests this analysis. As seen in Chapter 2, she provoked an intense polemic in Brazil, since she was accused of being “Americanized.” Thus, though she represents Brazil in America, she is too American in Brazil — as also seen in Chapter 2, like a good part of Brazilian culture, she was already Americanized when she left Rio to perform on Broadway in 1939. Actually, if Carmen represents a Brazilian tropical paradise in her films (at least for Americans who would like to believe in tropical paradises south of the Equator), she also represents an American capitalistic paradise for many Brazilians who, resigned enough to the association of their national identity with poverty, dream of getting as rich as Carmen was.

Indeed, in the beginning of the shooting of *That Night in Rio*, journalist Gilberto Souto, who was accompanying her in Hollywood, wrote a story for *Cinearte*, a Rio movie magazine, testifying that director Irving Cummings said to Carmen, as she

arrived at Fox: "Carmen, we only play here. Nobody works! . . . We want you to be close to us, getting used to the place, talking, laughing at our jokes and telling some of yours. . . . Just take it easy, and leave all the rest to us." The same story tells that Carmen "danced with Joseph Scheneck, the president of the Twentieth-Century Fox," at a fine restaurant, and that, as Scheneck is "crazy about rumba, and naturally not knowing how to dance to our samba, Carmen had to 'rumba' in the arms of the great tycoon." This, together with stories in a number of magazines and newspapers which were constantly showing Carmen's comfortable lifestyle in California, certainly sounded like paradise, principally when compared with the working-girl life Carmen had led in Rio only ten years earlier. In brief, she was what the so called 'First World' seeks in the 'Third' and vice-versa.

Yet, all this deep ambivalence, compressed in just one human body, left no mark on the plot of *That Night in Rio*. Carmen's figure, by means of the very exaggeration of stereotypes, might well cast doubt on those stereotypes, showing them *as such*, and telling Americans what Brazilians are *not* necessarily like, that is, inviting the spectator to know Brazil and its hugely heterogeneous people. Off stage, yet still within the film, while dealing with the other characters, Carmen's could well have been written differently. She could have worn less scandalous clothes, or not be shown throwing shoes at her boy-friend to demonstrate her jealousy. But her figure serves only for the film to play with, reinforcing, a notion of Brazilian national identity based on those stereotypes — strangerhood, high sex appeal, lack of elegance, excess. Through Carmen's figure, the film seems to say, at the same time, that Brazilians are a little bit strange, and that Americans can handle them just fine.

Indeed, this is precisely the way the other characters treat Carmen in the film. Larry's funny prompter, Afonso (Edward Conrad) is always calm, perfectly used to Carmen's fits of fury. He and Larry can tell she is angry by the way she climbs the stairs from the stage to the dressing room; in an automatic gesture, he immediately exchanges his top hat, already battered, with Larry's, so that Carmen's shoes will not dent the good one. In another fit, she throws everything down in the dressing room, and leaves after an angry dialogue with Afonso, who then, in a coda, calmly throws a tray of teapot and teacups on the floor, and then goes back to his newspaper. Afterwards, arriving at the Baron's reception, she is announced by the butler Pedro (Frank Puglia) as someone "most engaging," but also as someone who "might make a most unpleasant scene" if not greeted.

In brief, the ambivalence in Carmen's characterization, which could make notions of Brazilian-ness more complex in the film, is reduced to a superficiality which corresponds to the stereotype of wilderness: attractive, but (or perhaps because) unrepressed. The suggestion of such a reduction can also be read in her performance of "I, Yi, Yi, Yi, Yi, I Like You Very Much," by Mack Gordon and Harry Warren. The repetition of some syllables calls attention to the very cultural difference the film tries to avoid, to the depth it hides below the reflecting surface. In the very beginning, Carmen repeats the pronoun "I" of the title, inviting one to associate her identity with an "eye," stressing that she could also see, in addition to being seen. However, since she had opened the film singing in Portuguese, the repetition may have made many Brazilians unavoidably translate the sound into "Ai," the Portuguese interjection for

pain (like “ouch!”) and sorrow (like “oh!”).¹⁸ Soon she starts repeating “see” (for “see the moon above”), a clear imperative, commanding the spectators (both those at the Baron’s reception and those in the theater) to look at something and see what she wanted them to see; in the next lines, however, she makes the same sound, but now repeating “si,” *Spanish* for “yes” (to say “si, senhor, I think I fall [sic] in love”). That strange female figure, who could be imperious if she wanted to, turns into a woman who romantically repeats “yes” (in a language that is not hers) to confirm she is in love. After the performance, which does not affect the plot structure, her repetitions seem to be reduced to one more illustration of what was once called her “macawlike” chattering (“New Shows in Manhattan”).

Carmen is actually a diffuse synthesis of stereotypes that allude to supposedly non-American things, performing songs that sound Latin American. In the same song referred to above, she emphasizes the sound “hip,” while singing, “You do like my hips to hypnotize you,” and calling attention to her hips, which now suggest a kind of belly dance. As Vinícius de Moraes cleverly described her, “Carmen Miranda is a Hindu, more than a Brazilian. There are colorful turbans, arms like serpents, hands like the heads of cobras. . . . [She] manages not only to be the Hindu — she manages to be the Hindu and the serpent.”¹⁹ Indeed, Carmen’s figure curiously resembles some representations of Siva, with her turbans, ornaments, and hand movements that somehow allude to Siva’s many arms. Her ambivalence, thus, instead of stimulating a

¹⁸ And it does make sense as an interjection, combined with the rest of the line in English, resulting the same as “oh! I love you very much.”

¹⁹ Two years before, after seeing Carmen’s performance on Broadway, Ida Zeitlin described her thus: “a princess out of an Aztec frieze with a panther’s grace, the plumage of a bird of paradise and the wiles of Eve and Lilitth combined.”

precise knowledge about Brazilians, is dissipated in some imprecise non-American thing — Latin, Hindu or something else. And it is this very imprecision that is to be taken as an index of Brazilian-ness.

Indeed, Carmen's association with Brazil in the film came more from geographical information about her nationality (and from common knowledge that the language she spoke was spoken in Brazil) than to any cultural reference to be found in her wardrobe. This association, arbitrary to a large extent, implies, by means of the production that, as she is from Brazil, performed in Brazil dressed this way, and sings Brazilian songs, she will mean Brazil within the film and for the audience. The arbitrariness of this attitude is almost the same (minus the irony) as that by Magritte, as he draws by drawing diffuse forms and writes names of things on them.²⁰ The mix of diffuse signs displayed on Carmen's body, as well as her nonsensical gestures, are a way of writing Brazil.

In addition to trivializing questions of national identity, and keeping ambivalence under strict control, the production also indicates the narcissistic flattery mentioned above. Alice Faye, with white skin, blue eyes, blond hair, and glamour highlighted, plays a Brazilian. This suggests that, in addition to Carmen, an ideal exemplar of female beauty may be found in Brazil as well as in the U.S.. Symptomatically enough, the very first sequence in which she appears, is immediately and powerfully absorbed by Larry's impersonation of her husband. And it is worth remembering that this confusion is precisely what caused in her the excitement she needed to save the happiness of her marriage. So it is his American counterpart who

²⁰ See, for instance, "Personnage éclatant de rire" in Foucault, *Isto não é um cachimbo* 44-45

shows her, intimately, that she really loves her husband. That WASP figure, with her perfect American accent (in contrast to the Baron's), suffers an irresistible, perhaps atavistic, attraction for her fellow American.

However, the Baroness is hardly a Brazilian. To begin with, as seen in Chapter 2, titles were abolished in Brazil in 1889, when the Republic was proclaimed. In addition, Faye dresses like a rich American woman, and in tropical Rio, wears a fur hood to a nightclub. Her bedroom is decorated exactly like those in many other American productions of the time — a big high bed with a baroque metal head, heavy curtains, crystal chandeliers, etc. The production makes no attempt to be faithful to local fashion or custom in the home, though it is careful in its characterization of the stock market.²¹ There are only some hints of Brazilian-ness in decoration, such as a flowerpot with tropical plants, and some of them are equivocated, such as two statues of blacks in turbans in the entrance hall.

It is also curious how this narcissistic flattery occurs only around the rich woman. As also seen in Chapter 2, poverty is known as part of the definition of Brazilian national identity. So one can say that the Baroness is an extreme exception to an essence that could be called Brazilian-woman-ness. Yet it is through this very exception that the flattery really occurs. And it goes on in some superficial concessions (and inversions) regarding national stereotypes. In the end, it is time for the Baroness to offer Larry full payment for another impersonation service, that is, the rich and lonely Brazilian wife (this very peculiar Brazilian) pays the middle-class (never poor) American actor.

²¹ From what was shown in Chapter 2, about the Americanization of Brazilian culture and Rio, the Americanized

In addition to nobility titles, a Baroness who wears fur in Rio and sleeps in an American-style bedroom, there are many other historico-linguistic-geographic mistakes in the film, which provoked the anger of many Brazilian spectators (thus, again, hindering good-neighborhood to a certain extent), overlooked by the Brazilian embassy in Washington.²² But the important thing here is that no mistake seems to be really important in the film. While showing a glorious and glowing place for Americans to dream of — as it appears in the opening, with fireworks over a silhouette of the hills around Guanabara Bay, as Carmen happily dances in a silver dress and high plumes on her fruit turban — the film helps neutralize difference and ambivalence.

Indeed, cultural impositions look “natural” throughout the film, that is, they do not cause much impact. At the very beginning, while dancing on stage with her troupe in that glowing tropical setting, Carmen greets Don Ameche, who comes on stage standing in a Jeep, and dressed like an American Navy officer. In a smooth continuation of the “Chica-Chica-Boom-Chic” song Carmen was singing, Ameche sends regards from 130 million Americans to all Latin Americans. This is the common sense notion of Good Neighborhood: a representation of America trying to be nice to others — all of them represented by Carmen alone. What makes this look as authoritarian as big stick — in contrast to Good Neighbor diplomacy, whose

look of the night club is not that problematic.

²² Some of them were added afterwards, in the composition of the scenes. The sign on the Baron’s office door reads “Baron Duarte,” instead of “Barão Duarte.” The Baroness’s friend, Pierre Dufont (Leonid Kinskey), who intends to be her lover, angrily complains to the Baron himself, about what he takes to be signs of the recovery of their marriage, in an illustration of the sexual permissiveness stereotypically associated with Brazil. The astonishment expression (“xi!”) that Arthur keeps repeating is used wrongly by the Baron once to indicating happiness. When talking to the Baroness, the butler Pedro gesticulates to help make his point, as if she could not understand Portuguese. For the audience responses, see references to articles on *That Night in Rio* at the section of “Other works analyzed,” in the Bibliography.

imposition, as above described, is more subtle — is that (1) the representative American is a military officer, brought in on a military vehicle, and speaking from above, thus making explicit, for the others, that they have no alternative to accepting American leadership; (2) he is overacting, shaking hands with himself, and suggesting a curious circular friendship of himself with himself, a narcissistic flattery that only stresses the dominant position of those who propose good-neighborhood; and (3) while singing together with Carmen, he explicitly considers Carmen's way of singing ("Chica-Chica-Boom-Chic") as a "crazy thing" of some sort, which he can however handle musically, smoothly, easily.

The film even allows Brazilians to ridicule Americans. Carmen's character curses Larry, calling him a "big ugly pig," which could well have had a certain cathartic effect for some anti-Americanists in Brazil. In addition, glamorous Alice Faye appears in a ridiculous dressing-gown, looking like a sort of Christmas tree made of white poodles, and she is fooled by her husband and his employees. This ridicule, however, is so childish that only underlines the reduction of differences.

As in the opening sequence, the whole film seems to perform a double movement of imposition upon Latin America (in contrast to the imposition-by-non-explicit-imposition of Good Neighbor diplomacy). The film first represents a glowing Rio, reiterating that narcissist flattery mentioned above, and then shows that American domination over it is natural. This double action appears clearly, for instance, in the construction of the character of the Baron: he is rich, elegant, handsome, clever, supposedly irresistible to all women — and Brazilian. Nevertheless, he is a broken

Baron, his wife is not happy with him, and the American impersonator is the one who (though involuntarily) both saves him from bankruptcy and mends his marriage.

In the case of the Baron and his impersonator, the reduction of difference by narcissistic flattery is obvious all the time. In the case of Carmen and the Baroness, it grows along the film. In the beginning, as already described, Carmen's flying shoe hits Larry's top hat before one can hear her first line of dialogue. In contrast, Faye is first shown at the height of her elegance, in a sober attitude and with slow gestures, her fur hood showing off her big blue eyes.

At the reception, differences start diminishing. Just as Carmen recalls Siva, Faye recalls Parvati,²³ unreachable, bearing a sex appeal no less intense than that commonly attributed to Carmen. Her back is all bare, the volume of her breasts is enhanced by the low neckline of a shiny golden dress, with matching long gloves. At first appearance, the Baroness's only jewel is a glowing diamond between her breasts, but after receiving the wedding anniversary gift, she wears that, reinforcing her resemblance to a goddess: it is an exaggeratedly big, glowing, expansive necklace, with several stones, that covers her front from the neck to the middle of the breasts. In addition, her shiny dress has radial drapes departing from a point close to her pubis, not only calling attention to it but also enhancing the curves of her thighs and the soft volume of her belly.

Carmen, on the other hand, looks much less outrageous. She is still jealous at the reception, but she tries to restrain her anger to act properly toward Larry, behaving discretely, wearing a fine black dress, and a socially acceptable turban, which gives

²³ See, for instance, *Encyclopædia Universalis*, and *Enciclopedia Universal Ilustrada*.

her a mysterious, feline look. When she dances on a stage, in a short, tight top that reveals her belly, her outfit does not call much attention to the small volume of her breasts, compressed by the ornaments. While dancing, she still behaves well, with a kind of elegance which makes her “exoticism” more acceptable, even when she hints at a belly dance.

In the final sequence (thus after Faye’s appearance in the ridiculous dressing-gown), the two couples perform a dance number together, among other characters, first in counterpoint, and then in perfect harmony. In the last shot, the four of them appear at once, looking at the camera, and raising their wine glasses as if toasting the audience. At this moment, the two Don Ameches, between the two women, are absolutely identical in their suits. The symmetry of the shot is enhanced by the two women’s turbans, both made of plumes; the only important difference between them is their colors — which are American: Carmen’s is red, Faye’s is blue.

But as for impositions and mistakes, nothing is more remarkable in *That Night in Rio* than the reduction of Carmen to the inescapable position of learner — of someone who must keep on learning what she already knows. The imposition here is that of a rational knowledge, in such a way that, as in Foucault’s theory of power, it corresponds to (and allows) the exercise of power — whoever owns knowledge exercises power over (controls, disciplines, educates) those who do not, especially when the knowledge is itself about the latter (see Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: an Introduction*). In the film, such power through knowledge is paradoxical, though still naturalized: it is exercised either through a knowledge Carmen’s character does

not need (the English language, since the action takes place in Brazil) or through a knowledge she has (samba), but the powerful/knowing party is not expected to have.

Indeed, Carmen speaks Portuguese only when she is made mad by jealousy. In itself this posits Portuguese as a cruder, less proper language than English, which is the language of elegant, calm, civilized people. But this conclusion does not entirely correspond to the paradoxical exercise of power referred to above. Rather, the important point is that Carmen's Portuguese is presented as an exception in a fictional world where everybody speaks English in Brazil. This is in effect the oddest misrepresentation in the film, yet follows a tacit Hollywood convention. Hollywood films are spoken in English wherever the action takes place. Since all the characters speak English in Brazil, the tacit convention determines that English means Portuguese (as it would mean French if the action took place in France). Accents fall under the same convention in films: in *The North Star*, for instance, which takes place in Russia, smooth English means Russian, while Stroheim's German accent means German.

In *That Night in Rio*, however, the Baron's accent means some kind of nobility or ancestry, in addition to nationality. But the main contradiction is that Carmen's character, though Brazilian, speaks a language (real Brazilian Portuguese) different from the English that means Portuguese. So the real Brazilian Portuguese sounds like a strange, unknown language of the angry, the uncivilized, the monstrous. More than that, she *must* learn English, the language everybody around her uses to communicate, which from then on is to be considered universal, or at least Pan-American. During one of her fits of fury, Larry complains: "I've been trying to teach you English for six months." And explains: "Now, you'll never learn unless you speak [English], and you

can't speak if you get excited. English isn't that kind of a language. So, don't get excited." She then curses him saying "you is a low down no good ham." Despite the fact that he is in Brazil, the American actor calmly (and self-indulgently, considering the curse) corrects her English. Obediently, she repeats after him, and feels happy when she can do it correctly.

Carmen is thus made into a strange creature, arbitrarily associated with an image of Brazilian national identity, which includes her speaking Portuguese, in need of being corrected, tamed, *taught*. And it is. Carmen "falls" again into Portuguese when jealousy makes her angry, but this happens only in the first half of the film — up to the reception, during which she is already acting a little more lady-like. As seen above, the violence of such an imposition would never be adopted by Good Neighbor diplomacy.²⁴

In addition to the universal language, Carmen has to learn to do the samba differently. In Brazil, as seen in Chapter 2, during those endless discussions about what constitutes authentic samba, Noel Rosa questioned the authenticity of her interpretation of the samba. Now in the U.S., where she was supposed to be the specialist, she still had to learn something about representing Brazil. When talking about the dissemination of samba in the U.S., the *Time* story mentioned above gives a short history of samba and a curious technical characterization of it. In contrast to the subtlety of Good Neighbor policy makers, *Time* tried to establish rules for that new kind of dance and song — brand new in the U.S., but also relatively new in Brazil (and in the world). It describes the basic step of samba as

²⁴ Even Larry sings in Portuguese, proving that Don Ameche made an effort to learn at least some verses,

a springy, knee-action rise & fall — a motion heretofore found mainly on ski slopes. The samba's one ironclad rule: a knee-bend on every beat. A ballroomful of bobbing samba dancers suggests a gay polka, but the bobs in the samba are downs & ups, not ups & downs. The weight remains on one foot at a time for two full counts and dips. But quick waltzlike turns are also permissible and, as in other dances, partners may improvise fancy variations ("New dance").

The imprecise, though technical, description of the dance turns into an effort at stereotyping the music:

"Even tone-deaf people can identify Latin American dance music. Its earmark is a varied assortment of *strange* [my italics] drums, dried vegetables, bits of wood, which can produce sound combinations as fascinating as static in a transatlantic broadcast, rhythms more intriguing than the clickety-clack of a 60-mile-an-hour express. . . . Most popular and distinctive of samba instruments is the large, roundish *cabaça*, a gourd around which rattling beans are strung on loose strings. Other noisemakers include the *reco-reco* (sounds like rining a stick along a picket fence), the *cuica* (a dull squeak). Above them the syncopated samba tunes run their jerky course ("New dance").

Knowledge about samba in the U.S., as this *Time* story shows, started with Carmen Miranda, but, at least from *That Night in Rio* on, the very object of this knowledge was already, in part, an American thing. In the set of the film, samba was being taught to Carmen. "Hermes Pan, who teaches dancing in the movies, says the samba has never been performed in this country and after he demonstrates it you know why: It looks difficult, but Hermes says anyone who can do the rumba can do the samba also." Carmen had shown her way of dancing the samba, "But her performance wasn't very violent. Violent is the word for Hermes's way of doing it." According to Pan, who also taught 20 background couples, samba "is like this: you twist and gyrate from the hips like a universal joint on a jag, taking a one-two-three step here and there so you can get out of the other couples and the potted palms. . . . In Brazil, Hermes says they do the Samba to 6-8 time, but in America it has to be done to 4-4 time. That is faster, like swing. And like nothing you ever saw before" ("Brazil dancer is taught...").

increasing the apparent virtuosistic aspect of his double performance in the film.

As seen in chapter 2, in 1941, samba was already the main cultural feature of most definitions of Brazilian national identity. On the one hand, Darryl Zanuck sent his project to the Brazilian embassy for approval; on the other, Hermes Pan arbitrarily invented samba his own way — he treated the cultural context of samba as “a world with a key,” as Bauman puts it —, in order to adapt that strange dance and music to what he believed was the American taste, so that it could be a new fad — and his plan worked just fine. In contrast to what Carmen was expected to do (teaching samba), she took to the U.S. only raw material, an object of knowledge, rather than a kind of knowledge.²⁵ This object was modified, while she herself was turned into the subject of a traditional kind of knowledge already established in American culture, a rational and technicist one, which aims at correcting ambivalence.

On the one hand, such knowledge, in contrast to the apparent coherence and cohesion of Good Neighbor productions (subsidized by the OCIAA and producers interested in Latin America, such as Darryl Zanuck and Walt Disney), did not fit the discursive structure of Good Neighbor diplomacy itself, based on a strategic respect for the unknown and on intuition (though in a rational and focused way). On the other hand, Pan’s arrogance fits the comfortable position of the U.S. as able to represent “others” through the force of its huge entertainment industry, supported by an internationally effective structure of power which was at the basis of the success of the Good Neighbor policy.

Mack Gordon and Harry Warren, authors of the songs performed in the film, were also presented as Americans capable of mastering traits which were considered

²⁵ For Latin Americans as providers of only objects, never of theories, see Mignolo, “Posoccidentalismo,” and

representative of another culture. One year earlier they had written the songs for *Down Argentine Way*, and they did it when no American songwriter had “taken a chance on competing with the Brazilian tunes which she [Carmen] brought North in her repertory;” yet Gordon’s and Warren’s songs outsold all of “Miranda’s native tunes.” For *That Night in Rio*, according to the Los Angeles Herald, “they responded with a bevy of hits which [were] runners up to their previous effort in popularity.” About “Chica, Chica, Chica, Boom, Chic,” the musicians proudly added that it was “thought by most people to be an actual Brazilian tune” (“They Outdo Brazilians in Songs”).

In the film Carmen’s performances reproduce less a kind of samba than a taming process, similar to that, described in Chapter 2, by which Rio’s *morro* was domesticated, made acceptable to middle class norms.²⁶ Here, samba is tamed by means of Hollywood conventions for narrative film, in general, and musicals in particular.²⁷ In a word, Carmen’s performance in *That Night in Rio* is disciplined to fit the film and the market. She really re-learns samba. She is made both object of and subject to rational knowledge produced by the American industry. At the Baron’s reception this process becomes emblematic. She performs two songs (“Cai Cai” in Portuguese, and “I, Yi, Yi, Yi, Yi, I Like You Very Much” in English) on a checkered stage, that is, on a grid, her hand gestures are soft, she is always laughing, and making pleasantly funny faces, and she does not roll her supposedly “mischievous” eyes too often for the camera. The movements of her feet are invisible, hidden by the fine black tight-fitting skirt — all her ambivalence seems to be reduced to the black and white of

“La Razón Postcolonial.”

²⁶ See in Chapter 2, the quotation from Paulo da Portela’s interview, and the comments on it.

²⁷ For general conventions, see Bordwell; for musical conventions, see, for instance, Woll.

her skirt and blouse, with no gray areas. Most of the time she is shown from the hips up, even when the lyrics refer to her “hypnotizing hips.” After each number, she elegantly gives thanks for the applause and goes away. In sum, she behaves very properly on stage, much more so than she had away from it at the beginning of the film.

As Carmen politely performs on the grid, entertaining the Baron’s guests, the Bando da Lua accompanies her from beside the stage, enclosed in a bandstand, which resembles a cage. In the few frames dedicated to them, samba instruments are shown only *en passant*, functioning as a means of punctuation for the editing of the scene, like illustration aimed at tourists, of a certain strangeness specific to Brazilian culture. The problem here is that the instruments are not always really at work; rather, their sounds are repressed by those of an invisible orchestra, typical of Hollywood musicals, which can be heard loud and clear in the background. The most disturbing effect of this (recognizable only to those who know the sound of a *cuíca*) is a soundless *cuíca*, played vigorously, desperately silent, its “dull squeak” lost among the sounds of other instruments, which makes the player into a sort of clown, lost in the middle of a complex industrial production. This might also illustrate *Time* magazine’s observation that “Even tone-deaf people can identify Latin American dance music,” with all those strange instruments.

Samba appears fully tamed, too, in the opening sequence, when background couples perform slow circular movements with their arms and trunks. In contrast to what Hermes Pan wanted, dances here are not violent at all; violence, however is not completely out of the scene, when one considers the continental power structure that

allowed the representation of those dances as part of an actual culture, within a production that reportedly showed concern for authenticity. Yet, even tamed, and violently domesticated, samba in *That Night in Rio*, closely linked to Carmen's figure, still provoked the fury of some elite Brazilian reviewers. Renato de Alencar, for instance, complains: "[Carmen] still comes to us with that outlandish wardrobe imposed on her by carnivalesque exaggeration, and makes herself into a spectacle for people eager to see Brazil represented by lascivious movements made to negroid sambas. And, as if it were not enough, the Casino of *That Night in Rio*, a fine house, frequented by barons and aristocrats, is named... 'Samba!'"

One can see how power is exercised over Carmen's character not only when she is forced to learn the dance and language of her own country, but especially when her anger is tamed by an offer made by Larry, in the Baron's house. Extremely jealous, she recognizes him by the scratch she had left in his hand. Before Larry realizes she knew it is him, she curses him out, and pretends she is about to fall in love with the real Baron. She was the one supposed to demand an apology from him, but what happens instead is that he mollifies her by saying that he accepted that impersonation job only to buy her a fur coat, and asks her to apologize for the jealous scene. And she does: "you forgive me?", she asks.

In conclusion, one can say that, unlike what many critics say, the film does not follow the general strategy of the Good Neighbor policy, which is not to interfere. The main presupposition about cultural difference in *That Night in Rio* is that it is licit for Americans to interfere in other cultures, so that differences can be neutralized, and that everyone can live according to national American values, and under U.S. leadership.

The film, thus, positions itself toward international relationships much more along the lines of Ford's 1910's and 1920's melting pot than along those of Good Neighbor diplomacy. *That Night in Rio* cannot be taken as a Good Neighbor policy film — Zanuck did not really buy into Cordell Hull's project. With its entertaining superficiality, and its normativity, the film, as an industrial product, is more clearly violent than U.S. wartime diplomacy (which thematized deep differences by refraining from interference). This reading may operate an inversion of a Marxist architectural metaphor: here "structure" is lighter than "superstructure."

Yet, if one considers the historical context as a whole, at least two opposite processes may have interacted to reinforce American cultural, economic and political domination over the continent: (1) a clever and subtle policy in politics, imposed simultaneously with (2) a sublimated version of the big stick embodied, among other vehicles, in some products of the Hollywood entertainment industry — such as *That Night in Rio*. Regarding Brazil, specifically, a third process may have helped the American imposition, as seen in Chapter 2, namely the lack of a single national paradigm of ideals that, in addition to the tradition of self-doubt, self-pity, and resignation, allowed for many conflicting images of national identity. Among these images, one can highlight those based on samba, a genre that was neither well defined enough to fit the normativity of an industry, nor fully respected, within or without Brazil, since it was a cultural manifestation linked mostly with the poor and the black.

As to the representation of the power of American industry, and of American ingenuity during the war, that became even clearer in another Hollywood entertainment including *Carmen: The Gang's All Here*, which is analyzed in Chapter 4.

The Disciplined Choreography of Incorporation

I scratch my heart

(Carmen Miranda)

As seen in Chapter 1, Busby Berkeley's choreographic numbers in film are generally considered "innovative," or "avant-garde," due to their technological sophistication and abstract esthetics. However, as has also been shown, they include moving lines of dancers that are a feature in classic choreography. They can well be seen as metaphors for American industrial ingenuity (particularly the defense industry, and the industrial power of Hollywood itself), as in both cases complex effects are accomplished through simple means. In Hollywood products, powerful visual effects are produced by means of simple and perfectly coordinated movements made by large numbers of dancers. Both the effects and the means to achieve them have an affinity with the methods used, since 1914, on the assembly line, in accordance with Taylor-fordist guidelines.

This chapter will analyze the metaphORIZATION of the American war industry through classical moving lines of dancers in film, specifically in Busby Berkeley's *The Gang's All Here*. The analysis, however, will suggest that one more meaning becomes visible in the metaphORIZATION performed by this specific film, taken both as an industrial product and a discursive manifestation: the meaning of the *incorporation*, by the American war effort, of some non-American cultural features, emblematic in Carmen Miranda's figure (but also, for instance, in Tony de Marco's); an incorporation that reinforces the notion that Americans in general, naturally and easily, absorb cultural difference, as long as the different element accepts to live according to

the so-called American values. When this discourse becomes part of war propaganda, American flexibility stands as a positive trait against Nazi inflexibility and intolerance.

Accordingly, *The Gang's All Here* will be analyzed first as a metaphor for the American industrial war effort and then as a metaphor for a proud and happy incorporation of images of other nationalities by American national identity.¹ The historical context under scrutiny is the WWII era, when there was an effort to build an image of the U.S. as a victorious nation that would lead a democratic world after the war, as seen in Chapter 1. The image of America as a “melting pot” of nationalities also reinforces the idea that everyone in the world would love to live in the U.S., being also allowed to preserve some superficial aspect of their cultural difference.

The meaning of *incorporation* of non-American cultural elements can be more accurately indicated thus. Absorbing and incorporating cultural difference — so as to reinforce Enlightenment values of political, religious and economic freedom proposed by the founding fathers in 1776 — appear as an attitude constitutive of the very definition of American national identity. This incorporation works, of course, by first defining certain cultural elements as “non-American,” and then suggesting that America is ready to happily absorb them. The puritan text “The City upon a Hill,” by John Winthrop (1630), points the image of a place where everyone would be accepted to live happily together in the new land:

wee must be knitt together in this worke as one man, wee must entertaine each other in brotherly Affection, wee must be willing to abridge our selves of our superfluities, for the supply of others necessities, wee must uphold a familiar Commerce together in all meekenes, gentlenes, patience and liberallity, wee must delight in eache other, make others Condictions our owne rejoyce together, mourne together, labour, and suffer together, allwayes haveing before our eyes our Commission and Community in the

¹ By means of “melting pots” such as that illustrated in Ford Motors English School. See Chapter 1.

worke, our Community as members of the same body. . . . wee must Consider that wee shall be as a Citty upon a Hill, the eies of all people are uppon us.

Actually, the possibility of guaranteeing equal rights for different people is clearly a part of “The Declaration of Independence” written in 1776: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men.” As seen in Chapter 1, this very passage of “The Declaration of Independence” was reiterated by the press in the late 1930’s and early 1940’s, in texts that argued for the importance, for the world, of American victory at war.

Latin Americans in general, and Brazilians in particular, had ambivalent images of national identity and ambivalent positions regarding the two sides in fight at World War II; could be identified, as in Chapter 3, as strangers in relation to Americans and Germans. For an American industry such as Hollywood — deeply involved with the American war effort, as well as with the definition of American national identity through industrial modernity —, dealing with Carmen Miranda’s figure as a representative of Brazilians and Latin Americans was a convenient way, due to its synthetic simplicity and its malleability, to handle strangeness. The exotic elements in Carmen’s figure were stressed, and her acceptance — indeed, her huge success in America (foreseen by Broadway producer Lee Shubert in early 1939) — could be taken as a sign of incorporation, and as if American fans were showing, once again, their ability to make non-American things into parts of a characteristically American identity.

In *That Night in Rio*, Carmen's submission to the power of a knowledge imposed by American characters was already an indication that her incorporation as an American figure was indeed possible. I argue that in *The Gang's All Here* that incorporation appears as consummated. More than simply (and obviously) making Carmen represent "Brazil," it reveals how the American industrial war effort (the film itself included) incorporated images supposedly representative of other nationalities, to reinforce the image of a strong and democratic nation capable of leading a free world after the war. To use the two central metaphors of this dissertation, *The Gang's All Here* can be seen as a metaphor of the logical and normative way by which the image of the American war-joy choreography incorporated, for its own sake, ambivalent images of Brazilian national identity which were based on the pride of not being rich.

Choreographing the assembly line

Chapter 1 showed how Busby Berkeley's choreographic sequences can be analogized to moving assembly lines — first because they were highly organized and carefully planned before the shooting, and thus made extremely efficient and economic; second, because each dancer, who does not need highly developed dancing skills, makes extremely simple movements, supervised and coordinated according to a previously established design, so as to develop precise and showy collective routines. Just as moving assembly lines lead to high productivity by breaking complex processes down into extremely easy tasks, Berkeley's numbers draw amazing effects from extremely easy and simple movements by the dancers. This equivalence is at work in *The Gang's All Here*.

What immediately calls attention in the collective dancing sequences of the film is their geometric organization. Dancers (all of them looking almost the same, as typical in Berkeley's works) form long parallel lines — at least 50 dancers in “The Lady in the Tutti-Frutti Hat” number, at least 30 in the final sequence. These lines may be either straight or curved, but they are always simple — if curved, always concentric —, so they produce an idea of cleanliness, of organization, of a place where everything is easily found. Even when many dancers escape from the frame one can “know” where they are since the geometric forms, like grids, provide a general rule of organization, which renders some zoom and travelling shots more impressive, creating the effect of an endless set and hyperbolic choreography with an immense crowd of dancers.

As to the simple movements of the dancing assembly line, they appear clearly in “The Lady in the Tutti-Frutti Hat” number, when the dancers are manipulating gigantic bananas. First they form one long line, then they divide it in two parallel lines, forming figures in which the curves of bananas, above the dancers' heads, first diverge, then converge to form a tunnel, then intertwine, with the dancers of one line passing through the spaces between those in the other line. After lowering the bananas, and turning their backs to each other, the dancers of one line lift their bananas, while the others lower theirs, so that the collective figure is that of a surface whose latitudinal cut is a kind of “s,” with its inflection point near the line of heads. Then they repeat some of the previous routines, form a single line again, and spread. After a simple cut, there comes the overhead shot of a banana/strawberry kaleidoscope (described below). The dancers that circumscribe the kaleidoscope then divide it

symmetrically into two lines, to be fused in one, which in the following shot performs a long, large, steady wave of bananas, for which each dancer starts making a slow circular movement with her banana a little bit after the previous one had started hers. In the whole sub-sequence with the bananas, all each dancer must do is walk to a predetermined point in the set and perform very simple movements (up-and-down or circular) with the bananas.

Both at the beginning and at the end, when, without the bananas, the dancers form two parallel circular lines around the banana trees, their movements are even simpler, since they just wave to Carmen, who is arriving in an oxcart. Still at the beginning, as a bridge from the banana plantation to the banana waving scene, the dancers form two parallel straight lines. In one of them, the dancers are standing up, and appear only from the thighs down, with their bare feet softly beating on the carpet of the set, at a very regular pace, not necessarily in step with the beat of the song. In the other line, the dancers are on their hands and knees on the ground, just tapping their hands, close to the other dancers' beating feet. The bare hands and feet look perfectly alike (both in color and shape), thus intensifying the sensation of uniformity. Ford's melting pot standardized workers by giving them shop floor outfits; here the dancers are shown as if uniformed by nature (which makes the cultural incorporation easier, as it will also be shown below).

In the final sequence, the analogy with the shop floor is multiplied by means of bicolor 25-inch discs (blue in one side, orange in the other) — which are the main props here, instead of bananas. There appears an staircase with large curved, concentric steps, like stage platforms for choir presentations. It is shown from an

angle, and from behind, so that the lowest step is invisible beyond the left end of the screen, while the dancers on the top step, some almost facing the camera, some facing the right side of the screen, could jump straight down to the set floor if they wanted. Each one of these dancers on the top receive flying discs that make a vertical trajectory departing from an invisible point below the bottom line of the screen. Then they make simple gestures with the discs, turn themselves (obliquely) to the front of the staircase, put the discs on the floor of the next step and softly push them, so that they go on by themselves to the dancers on the following step down. The second line of dancers make the same gestures, while the first one are given more discs — and so on.

Now, what this dancing with discs suggests is a combination of several parallel assembly lines put at work simultaneously and constituting a matrix with the steps. Each “assembly line” works on the same disk, each stage of the “assembly” sequence being performed on a step. So the lines in which each individual disk is manipulated are radial in relation to the circular lines of the steps. Each dancer is at the intersection of a circumference and a radius, developing two simultaneous activities: receiving the discs, which come in circular lines, and manipulating them along one radius.

Enriching the analogy between choreography and assembly lines, there is the organized way in which things enter or leave the set, as is the case with raw materials and final products (as well as with visitors, to a large extent) in a defense plant. The logical way in which the discs come and go in the final sequence (the way they leave the staircase is not shown in the sequence²) has already been described. In “The Lady

² It probably would demand a modification in the structure of the “factory,” so as to avoid the accumulation of discs and dancers close to the center.

in the Tutti-Frutti Hat” sequence, Carmen Miranda may be considered, in the analogy, both as a visitor and as a combination of raw material and final product. Since there is no activity in that “plant” without her presence, she would be like an authoritative visitor to a plant of lazy workers. If she is seen as raw material and final product, the analogy should bear a close relationship with cultural incorporation, as developed below. Here, too, the “plant” looks circular itself, since the entrance and the exit of Carmen (in an oxcart, accompanied by men) happens in the same place.

In addition, in both sequences the choreographic movements of bananas and strawberries are organized, disciplined, logical — as they are in kaleidoscopes in general, due to the symmetries of mirror images. Also in both sequences many visual elements highlight contiguity, metonymy: the transmission of the same movement from each prop (banana, strawberry, discs, etc) to another; the side-by-side positioning of the girls, the trees, and the props; the continuous travelling shots; and the smooth flow of the shots, with almost imperceptible cuts — including soft whip-cuts such as those in which a banana leaf of a first shot brings on the second shot while it vanishes from the screen.

The non-Americans

The analysis of the film as a metaphor of incorporation, by the American war-joy choreography, of elements supposedly representative of other nationalities is twofold. First I analyze how those elements are shown as non-American, focusing chiefly on Carmen’s figure. Then I show how the film suggests their incorporation.

As already argued in Chapter 3, the association of Carmen's figure with Brazil in *That Night in Rio*, arbitrary to a large extent, was due much more to the fact that it came ready-made from Brazil, and to the well known information that the language Carmen spoke was spoken in Brazil, than to any cultural reference her wardrobe could be offering. It happens as if — just as in Magritte's drawing mentioned in Chapter 3, "Personnage éclatant de rire" (see Foucault, *Isto não é um cachimbo* 44-55) — the word "Brazil" were written on the space occupied by Carmen. In *The Gang's All Here*, her Brazilian-ness is even more weakly marked, imprecise, and arbitrary. She was known to be Brazilian-born, bearing some Brazilian references, such as a few words in Brazilian Portuguese; the band backing her played Brazilian-origin instruments; but the ornaments she wears resembled the Bahian "balangandãs" (bangles) of the first costumes only for those who knew at least a little of the history of that strange figure created by Carmen in 1939.

The arbitrariness of the attribution of nationality is clear from the opening sequence: "Brazil" (or "Brasil") is the first word heard in the first line of Ari Barroso's patriotic song (a hit in Brazil), "Aquarela do Brasil" ("Brazilian Watercolor"), performed by Aloysio de Oliveira — who shows only the right half of his face against a totally black background, which already hints at a partial, incomplete, weak knowledge of Brazilians. Right after this opening shot, the word "Brazil" appears again, now written on the hull of the big passenger ship, the *S.S. Brazil*, from which Carmen is unloaded as if she were part of the imported goods, like coffee, sugar and fruit. Actually she appears in a metonymic relationship with the fruit: her fruit-adorned hat appears as a vertical travelling shot goes downward from a huge net full of fruit

hung from a derrick. Then she starts singing the same song, repeating the same word, "Brazil," clearly addressing American ears, by producing an American "r" in her strange accent.

Yet, Carmen's figure was clearly non-American, which was made fully apparent mostly through her difference from the American characters (chiefly the WASP women), rather than through her weak Brazilian-ness. Only she wears clothes strongly different from the simple, economic dresses, blouses and skirts worn in America in the early 1940's, when all luxury materials were being saved for the defense industry. The only other character with a non-American accent is Tony de Marco, who nevertheless cuts an extremely elegant and conventional figure. And the only other character who dances in an odd style is Charlotte Greenwood, who nevertheless jokingly refers to American square dancing rather than anything exotic.

When Carmen dances and sings, the cultural references involved in her performance are a mixture of samba, choro, maxixe, rumba, and mambo, that is, a mix of Latin American rhythms and traditions; Alice Faye, on the other hand, sings only in a sober, romantic style. In addition, Carmen's name, Dorita, is clearly Hispanic (in Brazil the corresponding name would be Dorinha, as a tender diminutive for Dora). In the sequence where Dorita, Phil Baker and Eadie (Alice Faye's character) meet at the train station, Carmen is wearing a stylized Chinese hat, which is not only nonsense, but also showy, while her turbans in other scenes derive from Arabic dress.

Carmen's speech is also clearly non-American, not only due to her accent — carefully preserved along her 16-year American career — but also to Dorita's errors in English. When she wants to say, for instance, that she is going to sleep, she says "I

will turn myself in,” instead of “I will turn in,” which results funny and even plausible: a foreigner is likely to confound the idioms and add the word “myself,” as if being ready to surrender to the police. But there is at least one of those English mistakes that does not seem plausible at all: to guarantee a promise, Dorita makes an imaginary cross with her thumb on her chest, and says “I scratch my heart,” instead of “I cross my heart.” Linguists would agree that a foreigner would hardly replace both the meaning and the sound of a word for cross, while making a gesture indicating a cross, for a word like “scratch.” This makes clear an exaggerated effort by the production to characterize Dorita as a foreigner — even though she is not made into a stupid foreigner, since she is the first one to notice (and the only to deal with) the problem that structures the romantic plot: two girls in love with the same man (James Ellison).

Actually, Dorita’s insertion in the story precisely plots her difference from Americans, as is made clear by the title under which the film came out in Brazil, *Entre a loura e a morena* (“Between the Blonde and the Brunette”). Indeed, Dorita’s hair is almost always completely hidden under the turbans, and she is inserted precisely between the two American girls, Eadie Allen (Alice Faye, the blonde) and Vivian Potter (Sheila Ryan, the brunette), trying to avoid the confrontation between them, who are both expecting to marry Andy, or Sgt. Andrew Mason, Jr. (James Ellison) after his return from battles against the Japanese, in the Asian sector of WWII.

Both girls have a very well defined place in American reality at the time, while Dorita’s origin is not at all well defined. Vivian, the brunette, is the daughter of Peyton Potter (Edward Everett Horton), who has for long been the commercial partner of Sgt. Mason’s father, Andrew Mason, Sr. (Eugene Pallette). The latter produces a revue by

Phil Baker at Oakwood, the Potters' fine country house, to greet his son, who is returning from the war as a hero, and collecting from each guest a \$5,000 war bond — the "gang" of the title refers to Phil Baker's troupe. The relationship between Vivian and the Sergeant, who met when she was 10 and he was 12, is the result of the long-lasting link (both in business and friendship) between the Potters and the Masons, two rich New York families — rather than real love.

Eadie, the blonde, is a chorus girl in the Club New Yorker, and one of those American girls who were hired to dance with soldiers, obeying some rules such as not getting involved with them. To convince her to act otherwise, the Sergeant pretended he was a poor soldier, about to risk his life in the middle of nowhere for the country, and for a free world. When Eadie asked his name, he said "Sgt. Casey," after a baseball player he had heard about minutes before. At the train station, they were already sure they were in love.

Vivian does not learn about the rivalry. Dorita knows it because she had seen Eadie with the sergeant before, certainly in the night-club, which is made clear at the train-station: Dorita arrives after Andy's dramatic embarking, but still refers to a "Sgt. Crazy" as the soldier to whom Eadie had probably said good-bye minutes before (Eadie corrects her: "Sgt. Casey, Dorita," suggesting a funny day-by-day kind of dialogue between the two night-club colleagues). Dorita skillfully avoids a confrontation by carefully confirming her suspicions and then telling only Eadie about it. The latter nobly resigns from her love in favor of Vivian and the relationship between the families. In the end, however, Eadie wins out, and is united with her true

love, whereas Vivian, who admits she had never really loved “Andy,” decides to start her own artistic career as a dancer with Tony de Marco.

Though rivals in love, Eadie and Vivian end up as friends. Eadie justifies her withdrawal to Sgt. Mason by arguing that girls must be loyal to each other. More than non-American, Dorita is different from those girls, she is *strange*, and so strange that not even that supposedly universal bond among girls seems to fit her. She learns about the problem of the two girls in Oakwood, when Vivian, in her bedroom, shows Andy’s picture. Dorita recognizes him as Eadie’s sweetheart: “Sergeant Mason? [No,] he is Sergeant Crazy.” Vivian attributes Dorita’s doubt to a possible effect of her many language problems, and indulgently laughs at it, saying that Dorita was the one who looked crazy. When Vivian says the man in the picture is the one she is to marry, Carmen berates her in her bad English, accusing him of cheating. After that, suspecting that Andy may really be playing around, Vivian asks: “Dorita, are you a woman?” The question is rhetorical, and it works in the dialogue as if Vivian were saying, “Dorita, since you are a woman you will understand my concerns.” However, Dorita is really so different, in terms of clothes, language, facial features, and behavior, that the question acquires another meaning. Carmen is neither a man nor a “normal” (much less a WASP) woman — and could be either under her costumes. So, the concept of *woman* at use is suddenly at stake when referring to Carmen.

Following with the conversation, Vivian asks Dorita whether she recognized the man in the picture. Evasive, Dorita says that at first she thought he was someone she knew, but after that she realized he could be someone’s look-alike (like “twin sisters,” she says). Then Eadie knocks on the door and calls Vivian from the outside,

interrupting the conversation. When Vivian goes to open the door, Dorita takes the picture and hides it behind her back; then she tells them she is going to sleep. Her behavior is made exaggeratedly strange, her eyes almost closed, her voice a contralto, and her relationship with the language peculiar.³ It is so strange that Eadie, who is an actress, tells her to “stop looking like Lady MacBeth.”⁴ The general trend of interpretation in the film is naturalist, but Dorita acts so illogically that Carmen seems to be performing against the general trend.

The difference between Dorita and the two girls is also underlined by the fact that she merely mediates their rivalry; actually she seldom interacts with Andy. There is no hint that she might be involved with him, not even as the possibility of an amusing surprise — there is no film in which Carmen ends up living happily ever after with the handsome male American hero. Dorita only tries to seduce Vivian’s father, the serious Mr. Potter, a sympathetic caricature of an American bureaucratic capitalist (and she almost succeeds); at one point, he becomes sexually interested (and nothing else), but his wife (Greenwood) interrupts the seduction game, and reaffirms Carmen’s foreign-ness, by automatically pointing out, as usual, her Brazilian-ness — Mr. Potter alleges that the lipstick on his face is ketchup, and she retorts it probably comes from a Brazilian tomato.

Carmen’s figure is not only different from that of the WASP women, but also deeply ambivalent, both as to gender and nationality. What one can see clearly in both films is that gender and nationality are intrinsically connected in Carmen’s figure, and

³ In *That Night in Rio*, as seen in Chapter 3, Carmen’s anger made her speak in Portuguese. In *The Gang’s All Here*, the same solution is applied to Tony de Marco, who only speaks Spanish instead.

⁴ She had already used the same joke structure with Andy, when he was being too gallant, telling him not to act like Don Ameche.

their *undecidability* in both categories defines her as non-American. Returning to the idea of Carmen as a version of Siva, one can note that Siva is a male god, and is commonly represented by symbols for both sexual organs (*Enciclopedia Universal* 934) — and a male god whose function is to destroy the universe, while Brahma and Visnu are linked respectively to creation and preservation.

The sequence starts in the Club New Yorker, with the orchestra playing the first chords of “The Lady in the Tutti-Frutti Hat.” The camera moves towards the stage, along with a hurdy-gurdy player, who bears a little monkey on his instrument — the song is given a hurdy-gurdy sound in this initial part. The little monkey climbs a banana tree, and after one of those “imperceptible” whip-cuts made with a banana leaf, the camera zooms out showing several banana trees, side by side, already in the theatrically represented space, each tree with a monkey amid its leaves. The setting is filled out with almost 50 dancers (all of them female, and looking very much alike), lazily lying on the ground, among other banana trees, and being awakened by the yelling monkeys, which announce Carmen’s arrival — the sound of the monkeys is confused with that sharp, loud whine of the oxcart. Then they form two parallel curved lines in a space where dunes can be seen on the background, while Carmen enters the banana field on an oxcart driven by bulky tanned men featured as rural laborers, and followed by the Bando da Lua (whose musicians wear stereotypical “tropical clothes” — yellow scarves on their heads, echoing those worn by the dancers, white-and-gold, horizontally striped T-shirts, black fabric tied around the waist as a belt, and loose yellow trousers). Set on the ground by the laborers, Carmen starts singing the song,

whose lyrics, with linguistically peculiar grammatical and stylistic errors, describe herself thus.

I wonder why does everybody look at me
And then they begin to talk about a Christmas tree
I hope that that means that they are glad to see
The lady in the tutti-frutti hat

The gentlemen they want to make me say "si, si"
But I don't tell them that, I tell them "yes-sirree"
And that's why they come to date to me
The lady in the tutti-frutti hat

Some people say I dress too gay
But everyday I feel so gay
And when I'm gay I dress this way
Something wrong with that?

Americanos tell me that my hat is high
Because I will not take it off to kiss a guy
But if I ever start to take it off yi, yi — yi, yi
I do that once for John Smith, and he is very happy with
The lady in the tutti-frutti hat

Brazilian señoritas they are sweet and shy
They dance and play together when the sun is high
But when the tropic moon is in the sky yi, yi — yi, yi
They have a different kind of time, and even I forget the time
The lady in the tutti-frutti hat

After singing the first four stanzas, appearing most of the time from the waist up, the camera focusing on her face and gestures while she sings, she appears in the place where the (female) dancers are. After surrounding Carmen with a creative circular xylophone made of bananas, on which she joyfully plays some jazz-like musical phrases,⁵ the dancers perform with the huge bananas mentioned above. After that, another group of dancers, lying on the ground, uses strawberries as props and forms with them, and with the simple movement of their legs (always straight, alternately opening and closing), the inner part of a round kaleidoscopic figure. Then the huge bananas come from the outside, first surrounding and then invading the

⁵ Being circular, the xylophone does not take the spatial logic that leads from low to high notes.

strawberry section, again in up-and-down movements toward the center, completing the kaleidoscope. The pace of the banana movement is the same as that in which the other dancers' legs open and close inside the banana circle. The result is a logically organized and rhythmically smooth collective representation of sexual intercourse, somehow calm and pleasant, with no stress at all, in a tropical female-only paradise.

Divided into those with bananas and those with strawberries, the girls look sexually self-sufficient. They dismiss men. Actually, both the bulky laborers and the non-attractive thin musicians of the Bando da Lua are kept outside. In addition, on the one hand traditionally the Bando da Lua only supports Carmen musically (similarly to the way the laborers do physically here), never interfering in the character's life; on the other hand, the bulky laborers clearly resemble eunuchs, so that the entire male group is dominated by the notion of castration (a notion reinforced by the oxen).

Carmen's gendered ambivalence is made clear. To begin with, apart from the monkeys, she is the only character who is in contact with both males and females in this sexualized sequence, as if bridging genders. More than that, she also bridges those two self-sufficient female sexual groups, carrying on her hat both bananas and strawberries (while the dancers carry neither on their turbans) — the bananas erect, the strawberries flowing down smoothly like a kind of charming, curly hair. By that time, it had become traditional in Hollywood musical numbers for the leading performer to be escorted by a group of singers and/or dancers of the opposite gender; here, Carmen is the leader both among the girls and the boys, in separate performances. Her presence seems to stimulate sex among the girls, who in contrast to the lethargic boys, and though being lazy themselves at the beginning and at the end, are ready to dance when

energized. Back by the oxcart, among the men, Carmen sings the rest of the song, stressing that she, as well as “Brazilian señoritas” (again adopting a Spanish word, along with “si, si”) is a very different person in the sunlight and in the moonlight, when her sense of time is lost — and she maliciously stresses the “yi, yi” in the line about the moonlight.

Again, in the whole sequence, as well as in a good part of the film, meaning is fluently transferred from one image to another, chiefly through metonym. The spectator’s eyes move smoothly from the night-club to the hurdy-gurdy, to the monkey, to the banana trees, to the lazy girls, to the oxcart that brings Carmen, then to the banana-strawberry connection, and to the bi-sexual girls and the kaleidoscopic hyperbolic self-sufficient sex. The latter is a climax from which the metonymic flow goes back to Carmen, to the oxcart, to the monkeys, to the long, well-organized line of hurdy-gurdies, and to the night-club, in a circular structure. This flow of metonyms, linking Carmen to monkeys and making her bridge genders and sub-gender categories, stresses the hybrid feature of her character — which also suggests, as an extension of hybridity, a monstrous feature, since she can be transformed by change from sunlight to moonlight, like a werewolf.⁶

After this circle of “The Lady in the Tutti-Frutti Hat” number is closed, when the camera goes back to the night-club, through apparently imperceptible cuts, along with the monkeys and hurdy-gurdy players, there is a coda to the sequence, a tying off shot, which became one of the most famous in Carmen Miranda’s career: after a long zoom away from her face, her body appears tiny in the middle of the lower half of the

⁶ I thank Anelise Corseuil for this insight.

screen, her giant banana hat grows enough to take on its entire upper half, and two lines of strawberries grow from both sides of her body in symmetric perspective. Here, Carmen's monstrosity is made explicit. The strength her body should have, if the shot were to be de-metaphorized, to support the weight of all those bananas is not human.

The geometric structure of the shot, with its precise symmetry between left and right, bananas and strawberries, and with Carmen in the center of it, may stress Dorita's *in-betweenness*, separating the blond (Eadie) and the brunette (Vivian). The shapes of the banana hat and the strawberry lines, however, lead to other meanings, again through metonymy. Both kinds of fruit seem to emanate magically from her body and go on far beyond the frame — as if that monstrous body had an endless energy to produce, by itself, an infinite number of bananas and strawberries. It is also worth noting that the bananas, the male part of the tropical female's sex-sufficiency, grow from her head, while the strawberries grow from her pubis — reiterating the gendered association of male with intellectuality and female with sensuality.

In addition, the giant banana hat has itself the triangular shape of the female pubic area, suggesting an effect of amplification of the bi-sexual meaning of the body that supports it: a female pubis made of phallic fruit. The hat may also allude to the triangular shape of a Latin America map,⁷ by which Carmen would, again, be bearing the weight of representing a whole continent in Hollywood. The hat's lateral lines may also point to Latin America's ambivalent relationship with the two poles of the war, both represented on the map above the Equatorial line (here, above the strawberries): the U.S. on the left side, German on the right. This idea may be reinforced by the

⁷ I thank Raúl Antelo for this insight.

image of the bananas long associated with Latin America and exported to North-Atlantic countries.

Female bodies representing nationalities and national values were not a novelty at the time, of course. As seen in Chapter 2, Tarsila do Amaral's *Abaporu* (1928), for instance, could already be read as a new way of valuing Brazilian national identity by proudly attributing to it an autochthonous female feature. The French Marianne, and all the representations of the Brazilian nation through female figures in Phrygian caps in the early years of the republic constitute a ready-made model for that use of Carmen Miranda.

An innocuous incorporation

Yet, the deep strangeness of Carmen's figure seems to be stressed in *The Gang's All Here* mostly as a rhetorical means of supporting the image of Americans as a people able to absorb cultural differences. The film started with the reiteration of the word "Brazil," and with the arrival of the *S.S. Brazil*, that brings Carmen among the commodities, but it goes on in a spirit of good-neighborhood: Phil Baker enters in a snazzy convertible preceded by a band, gets out and walks up to Carmen, asks her if she has any coffee with her (actually "on" her), and gives her a big golden key, in the name of New York's Mayor, Fiorello La Guardia.

This official welcome suggests, good-humoredly, that the whole city, and even the whole country, appreciates Carmen herself, and her successful debut in American show-business; but it is also self-congratulatory: the production seems proud to be part of a culture that so easily incorporates so many cultural differences. The song

performed right after the delivery of the key, by a group of blond Busby Berkeley chorus girls, says that in New York one can feel the precise atmosphere of any place in the world — to hear guitars, smoke cigars and build castles just like in Spain, to order a chow mein, to get a kiss from Switz and Swiss girls, or to see rumba dance in a night-club — until being disillusioned by a detail specific to New York. As to Brazil, for instance, the song goes on thus: “You feel you are in Brazil,/ and the ladies will understand you,/ then you start to pay the check they hand you,/ and you discover you’re in New York.” Carmen sings the last stanza of the song, which alludes to sex (as in most lyrics Carmen was usually given in Hollywood), saying that you could want to be with a big strong man, in a Latin atmosphere, but then you notice that the man is sleepy, “and you discover you’re in New York.” Singing the final phrase, she finds Phil Baker leaning, as if sleepy, against a lamppost. Then he “wakes up,” holds his top hat upside down, and Carmen puts a small coffee bag into it. As if his mission were only to conquer Carmen and Brazilian friendship he says: “Now I can retire.” Then he adds: “Well, that’s Good Neighbor policy.” And to Carmen: “Com’on honey, let’s good-neighbor it.”

The transformation of the name of the famous policy into a verb is an easy operation in English, but the inviting tone (“let’s do it”), in a phrase that could also have been said by Baker in the name of La Guardia, suggests an effort of persuasion, a defense of the Good Neighbor policy. So, the film deliberately presents itself, together with Carmen, as part of the policy, and echoes what had been said about Carmen from her first performance on Broadway, when Willela Waldorf, for instance, argued that

“as an advertisement for Roosevelt’s good-neighbor policy, . . . [Carmen was] worth half a hundred diplomatic delegations.”

On the one hand, as seen in Chapter 3, *That Night in Rio* suggests a violent attitude of *correcting* Brazilians in Brazil, which ran counter to the non-interfering attitude of Good-Neighbor policy: Carmen’s character, also named Carmen, had to learn English, and even samba, though living in her own country. In contrast, in *The Gang’s All Here*, with a Hispanic name (Dorita), and performing a mix of samba and other Latin American rhythms, Carmen’s character indeed lives happily in New York. She appears perfectly inserted in what is shown as a happy American life, among people proud of their sons and sweethearts who are fighting in the U.S. armed forces, people who vigorously dance to the Benny Goodman orchestra, chew gum, dunk donuts in coffee, support the Dodgers etc. Just as it appears in the lyrics reproduced above, John Smith “is very happy with The Lady in the Tutti-Frutti Hat. Here Carmen quits old habits like throwing shoes at her boyfriend, or speaking Portuguese when angry; her wrong English is OK for American ears; her strangeness is funny and likeable, rather than threatening, and her role in the plot is really important, smoothing away the rivalry between WASP women.

The idea of a full adaptation of both Camen (as a commodity among others) and Dorita (as a strange funny character) to American culture and day-by-day life is highlighted by the smooth fluency of images and sounds in *The Gang’s All Here*. In the musical numbers, as is common in Berkeley’s work, the crane magically allows the camera some long flights over characters and props, making meanings flow steady and fast. This happens, for instance, in the “You Discover You’re in New York” number,

with the camera flowing from one chorus girl to the other — all of them below it, as if the spectator were a tourist, in a panoramic flight above them, seeing them talk about life and culture in New York City. Such smooth camera movement enhances the metonymic character of the flow of meanings in “The Lady in the Tutti-Frutti Hat” number, as images softly (as if naturally) go from the night-club to the hurdy-gurdies, to the monkeys, to the banana trees, to the lazy girls, to the oxcart (and the notion of castration), to Carmen’s character, to the banana-strawberry connection, to the kaleidoscopic hyperbolic self-sufficient sex, and all the way back to the night-club.

This smooth circular sequence of metonyms, in turn, connects, at the end of the film, to the final number (the one that bridges “The Polka Dot Lives On” and “A Journey to a Star”) in two ways: (1) the smooth flow of images, through a magical crane and almost imperceptible cuts, and (2) the explicitation of the idea of circles. Circles, indeed, are the main element of the final number; they start appearing with the stylized polka dotted glove of a polka dancer, a large image detached from the arm of one of about 20 children dancing the polka in “The Polka Dot Lives On” number, performed by Alice Faye — polka, thus, seems to be another element of foreign cultures to be smoothly absorbed and choreographed by the film.⁸ From the big glove, the circles are transformed (by fusion editing) into white neon circumferences, which leave the glove to form, one after the other, a curved line, on a black background, that ends in another circle, in turn formed by nine neon circumferences. Curiously, the whole figure (the curved line with a circle at one end) form a big number 9.

⁸ The song argues that many Nineteenth-Century social manners related to the polka, as the shocking stockings shown by the ladies who danced it then, went away in time, but, as the title reiterates, also arbitrarily, the dots live on.

Circles are symbols of perfection and homogeneity *par excellence*, and the number nine refers in several mythologies to gestation, and also to totality. Since three represents innovation (a third element breaks a simple opposition), nine, the square of three, represents universality, the totality of a universe of possible innovations, of all possible ways to go. The entire sequence is a cascade-like reiteration of the ideas of perfection, homogeneity, equilibrium, and universality, that can be reached after a good process of creation. The process, in turn, as usual in Berkeley's works, is shown as an industrial one, and the notion of a perfect industrial process is suggested by the smoothness with which images follow each other, as well as by how the circles interact with each other and with their different materials, colors, movements and spatial relationships.

The whole sequence, in this sense, may be described as follows. After a travelling shot over the 9 made of white neon circles, the spectator is confronted with other parallel lines of neon circumferences below, and at an angle with, the long curved "leg" of the 9, which in turn introduces the image of a large curved staircase. Then the camera focuses on one neon circumference, while many smaller red neon circumferences appear below it, all on the same level, forming an imperfect grid, i.e., with some lines and columns forming acute or obtuse angles (afterwards one realizes that the effect is due to the circularity of the staircase). The white circumference moves down, along with the camera, and stops when it reaches the level of the red neon circumferences. The camera, however, does not stop with the white circumference, and starts showing all circles from a low angle. Now, all the neon circumferences hover over some (female) dancers in tight-fitting blue futurist suits,

one circumference to each dancer. The dancers are half-lit in a white glowing light that comes from the right side of the screen. They receive the circumferences, whose level is slowly, magically lowered enough to within the reach of their arms. Then they hold the circumferences in front of their faces and start making circular movements with them.

After a zoom out, circumferences and dancers' silhouettes appear on the curved staircase, nine of them at a circular end of it, on the level of the highest step, supported by a cone. The camera then focuses again on only one neon circumference, which is invaded, from the background, by a white disc that quickly grows and occupies the whole screen. After a simple cut, the white screen suddenly gives way to a set of white round spots that after a while are shown as regularly disposed on the vertical back wall of the staircase. Then the camera on the crane is lifted up enough to show the highest step, with the girls on it, facing the rear part of the staircase, with the blue/orange 25-inch discs mentioned above. The dancers make circular movements with the discs, then put them on the next lower step, in a single line along the curve of the step; in the next counter-shot, the blue face of the discs appears to the camera, and the dancers make them roll down in a sort of cascade toward somewhere below the bottom limit of the screen. After a zoom-in on the disc cascade, the camera focuses on only one disc, which grows quickly until it fills out the whole screen with its blue color. After a simple cut, the staircase is again shown from the rear, with the girls on the highest step receiving the discs that come flying straight up from below the bottom of screen. Then they start handling them in movements analogous to those on an assembly-line.

Next, the orange face of a single disc takes up the whole screen, yielding a simple cut after which a blue-eyed blonde dancer's face is detached from the others, shown in a close up from right above, against a background formed by the shiny blue fabric of her own dress. The blue/orange dichotomy somehow corresponds to the relationship between the blue of the dress and the eye, on the one hand, and the yellow of the hair and the white of the skin, on the other. The double discs moving mechanically in an assembly-line-like choreography metonymically affect the features of a white woman and make that subject more visible, in an intimate relationship with the process by means of which it is constituted in an industrial society ruled by method and logic, and relying more on clear dichotomies than on ambivalence. This also sheds more light on the intense similarity among all those Berkeley chorus girls: they occupy individually well-defined, discreet positions, distinguishable more by their positions than by any trace of individuality, personality, or specificity; no individual deviation is permissible in such a visually organized Technicolor context.

Now, the image of the white girl shown from above, against the background of her own blue dress that bounces horizontally, is the first image in a long sequence of a kaleidoscopic delirium composed of dancers's bodies or their parts, always in hot colors, circumscribed within a circle. Suddenly, Palette's round face rises from the middle of the kaleidoscope, totally isolated from his body, and printed on a blue disc. Both the face and the disc appear first as a small spot in the center of the screen, then grow to take up on the foreground, while the face sings two phrases of the refrain of "A Journey to a Star," in Palette's extremely deep register. Then both the face and the disc vanish, and Charlotte Greenwood's singing face appears in the same manner, on

another disc, going on with the song. The sequence continues in the same way with Horton's, Sheila Ryan's, Goodman's, Carmen's, Phil Baker's, and Faye's faces, one by one growing on a disc of a different color. Then the contour of Faye's blue disc disappears beyond the limits of the screen, but her face remains, and soon starts to diminish, giving room for Ellison's face beside it. The two isolated faces go on singing and diminishing towards the blue background. At the same time, the other singing faces appear again, without their discs, on the same background, and in the end there are 34 small singing faces scattered on the screen, performing the last chords in a final harmonious apotheosis.

In the blue background, all isolated singing American faces (Tony de Marco's face does not appear, at least not clearly enough to be identified), one in each region of the screen, are bound together by a romantic song, and a passage in it brings in the sound of the orchestral "tutti" — the song speaks of a journey (of all people together) to a star, that "could not be very far, / as long as it would be with you." The apotheosis of circles and discs in harmonious industrial movements, starting from a big initial (gestating) number nine, suggests perfection, balance, homogeneity and totality in which all those people participate.

And it is in the very center of this totalizing image that Carmen's face appears, in a big turban that makes it seem larger than the others. The connection between both circular sequences ("The Lady in the Tutti-Frutti Hat" and the one with the circles), and with the metonymic flow of images and meanings in both of them, reinforce the idea of incorporation. The smoothness with which Carmen's figure flows among the other characters is underscored by the way the points in the circle monotonously and

unendingly follow from each other. The futurist look-alike dancers of the final sequence, who are all almost perfect physically, suggest a rational, industrial production of perfection from the raw material that form the kaleidoscopes. Bridging the sequences, as the only character common to both, Carmen also bridges the two paradises mentioned above: a tropical one, and an industrial one, in which extremely simple gestures allow amazing kaleidoscopic effects with the bodies involved in it.

In addition, the rising of the faces in the center of the discs, and their smooth growth, simultaneous in all directions, suggest a possible rule of incorporation and delimitation: everything that has an acceptable relationship with what happens in the center is acceptable as "ours," is welcome within "our" boundaries. In the very last shot, when faces appear scattered on the blue background, in a kind of constellation, harmoniously singing together the refrain of "A Journey to a Star," there is no circumscription, so that one can think of that whole system of singing faces inscribed into a limitless universe, with Carmen in the center. Since Carmen from the beginning suggests incorporation, incorporation turns into the organizing rule of the system. If one associates the other characters (Tony de Marco does not appear) with American culture, incorporation appears as an important feature of the definition of American national identity.

But such constituting incorporation is only superficial, which is made clear, for instance, in the two-dimensionality of the discs (they are neither spheres nor cylinders). In addition, although Carmen's character has an important role in the plot, there is not the slightest hint at a possible love relationship between her and the American hero. Actually Carmen's difference from Hollywood pin-ups was always

insurmountable, even though she was the highest paid actress of Twentieth Century Fox — as star photographer Ted Allen testified: “I was surprised when Carmen Miranda started asking me about my portraits, about the glamour stuff. ’Cuz I didn’t connect her with this sort of things. She was the ha-cha-cha girl as far as I was concerned.”⁹

Indeed, Dorita’s difference from WASP women suggested by her hidden hair (she is neither blonde nor brunette) can be extended to Carmen’s own positioning in the American star system. The idea of her (primal, intense) sex appeal does not come from any erotic image possibly associated with her hair. She only showed her hair on TV in the 1950’s, and only in a black and white TV show. Though long, voluminous, wavy, star-like, her hair, which had never been so openly exposed while she performed in Technicolor, appeared gray — neither black nor white. While sensuously shaking her hair, Carmen ironically make it possible for the spectator to notice how Hollywood had produced her as an artificial character: “that’s not my natural color. They bleach you in Hollywood. They changed the color of my hair. But I have a lot of fun. But don’t forget, people, I make my money with bananas, you know that. I make my money with bananas. So, very glad to *bleach* you. Good bye.”¹⁰

In *The Gang’s All Here*, the superficiality of incorporation appears, too, in its deliberate fakery. The entire tropical sequence is so clearly fake that one can hardly think of any tension between temptation and fear, seductiveness and monstrosity. First, the whole sequence happens on a magical stage, within the night-club. Almost all the

⁹ Transcribed from Helena Solberg’s *Bananas is my Business* (Brazil, 1994).

¹⁰ Transcribed from Helena Solberg’s *Bananas is my Business* (Brazil, 1994).

props — the plastic bananas, the trees, the dunes, the water — are clearly synthetic, produced only for the stage, for a space of representation. The only real elements were the people and the animals — monkeys and oxen. The whole idea of a lazy community, of a “carefree country” (“Carmen Miranda and the Samba...”), all different from America, is reduced to the dimension of a circus-like spectacle of monkeys and hurdy-gurdies. And the very incoherence of associating strawberries and bananas, as if strawberries were also tropical fruits, stresses the absolute fakery of the sequence.

Actually, the artificiality that testifies to the superficiality of incorporation is constantly reinforced in the film, which mocks itself and 1940’s Hollywood musicals as a genre. This is clear, for instance, in the dialogue between Eadie and Andy, romantically placed on a ship, in the moonlight, when he asks her to sing; she acquiesces, makes a conductor-like gesture, and mentions to the invisible orchestra that accompanies her singing, asking Andy: “[Can you] hear the orchestra?” Surprised, he says: “Yeah, where does it come from?” And she answers: “Where is your imagination?” A few minutes before this, she tells him to “stop acting like Don Ameche,” who was one of the most paradigmatic Hollywood male stars at the time. As it happens in many of Busby Berkeley’s works, allusions to the making of representations through dance and music — to show-business, to artists’ idiosyncrasies etc — are frequent, and almost central to the plot. In this case the self-referentiality is part of the plot, which involves the production of a musical show.

In short, all the showy colorful solutions of Berkeley’s dance sequences refer to Hollywood as a market of singing stars, and justifies Carmen’s exaggerated figure as one made only for the universe of spectacles. Actually, Carmen thus complements

Berkeley's exaggerations. As Woll describes it, the film "combined the talents of the queen of comic excess with the king" (Woll 117).

Yet at the same time the deliberate and undisguised artificiality of the film points to the superficiality of cultural incorporation as constitutive of American national identity; this is metaphorized at the very beginning of the film, when Carmen, with fruits, coffee and sugar, was imported, turned into an *American* commodity — melted in with other imports to constitute a part of America. The deep ambivalence of her figure was already superficialized in *That Night in Rio*, when she was a representation to be corrected. In *The Gang's All Here* she was supposedly incorporated into American culture, precisely through her and Berkeley's showy artificiality, keeping the superficial marks of her difference as a "cha-cha-cha girl" who "scratches her heart," and who notices that in "Hollywood an accent is an asset" (Goldberg). Now, therefore, her already superficialized and industrialized ambivalence is itself turned into an asset for show-business: she is now American precisely by being a non-American.

The Gang's All Here, thus, can be seen as much more of a good-neighbor film than *That Night in Rio* because it is all-American. It does not interfere with those who go to America in the name of good will, nor does it correct the foreigners. With Carmen in the center of a showy view of American national identity, the film represents, for the world, an American industrial paradise of superficial respect, inclusiveness, opportunity, harmony, incorporation, and good-neighborhood.

Conclusion: The Right to Be Ambivalent

It is now possible to draw from the preceding discussion some general propositions about the relationship between Brazilian and American national identities, and about relations between the two nations. On the one hand, most considerations in the preceding chapters refer to specific realities, thus I will not propose generalizations and national essentializations, but only suggest a way of *imagining* the national communities under examination, and the relationship between them, in all their historical complexity. In so doing, I want to reject traditional totalizations (such as that which associates Brazilian-ness with poverty, and American-ness with wealth), and to propose different ones, relying on facts, especially on the fact that imagination itself is constitutive of nations.

The first chapter indicated the existence of an effort, during World War II, by many Americans involved in the armed forces, the defense industry, show-business, the arts, and the press, to build a general image of what can be called the *American war-joy choreography*: the image of a whole "nation in flux," moving steadily together towards a position in leadership of a free and happy world in the future, after victory at war. Victory, in turn, according to this optimistic image, was to be achieved by taking up a golden historical opportunity brought to America by fate, combining a glorious goal (the spread of "American values" throughout the world) with the right tool to achieve it (American ingenuity in industry).

The awareness of this golden opportunity gives the relationship of many Americans with the war its joyful character. The choreographic feature of this national image can be seen in collective actions, such as military routines and production in the

defense industry, in descriptions of such collective actions, in the visual synthesis of the national war effort made on posters or insignias, in the involvement of many artists with the war effort, and principally in some Hollywood films such as Busby Berkeley's *The Gang's All Here*, analyzed in Chapter 4. In fact, this national war-joy choreography is metaphorized most notably in many of Berkeley's choreographic works in film.

The second chapter suggested the existence, in Brazil, of a long *tradition of self-doubt, self-pity, and resignation*, affecting images of Brazilian national identity. In contrast to what was the case in the U.S., these images did not derive from a single paradigm of national ideals. Thus it can be seen as a tradition that causes many Brazilians to oscillate between pride and shame regarding their national identity: being Brazilian, in general, yields shame, but some aspects of Brazilian culture generate a compensatory pride. Perhaps the best example of this, as also shown, is samba, which in the four decades before WWII developed from a marginalized cultural manifestation to a symbol of national identity highly valued as autochthonous, and authentic — made especially valuable in the 1930's, under the impact of Brazilian modernism in literature, music and the arts, when the autochthonous element was turned into a source of national pride, unlike previous evaluations of images of Brazilian identity that brought in a sense of inferiority in relation to North-Atlantic nations.

The historical account of the evolution of samba in Rio also showed, in Chapter 2, how this genre, considered as authentic because it originated among the poor, helped associate Brazilian national identity in the WWII era with poverty. At the same

time, however, Rio (and a good part of Brazilian culture) was itself becoming Americanized. As American cultural elements circulated more and more in the city, most of them with a note of Hollywood glamour, the association of Brazilian national identity with poverty was reinforced by the opposite association between American national identity and wealth — hence the idea of a national pride as a pride for not being rich.

Chapter 3 focused on the good-neighbor policy, which was developed in the Roosevelt era, as the encounter of a well defined paradigm for national identity (American) with ambivalent images of national identity that lack such a paradigm (thus vulnerable to the Brazilian *tradition of self-doubt, self-pity, and resignation*). This encounter involved a peculiar form of diplomacy that was ambivalent itself, imposing American leadership over the continent precisely by not explicitly imposing it. On the one hand, good-neighbor diplomacy allowed for the complexity of the problem of national identities in general, and for the ambivalence of Brazilian national identity in particular. On the other hand, American industrial modernization (Hollywood included), with all its normativity, could be seen, following Bauman's theory of modernity, as a fight against ambivalence. That was the key for the analysis of Irving Cumming's *That Night in Rio*, an analysis according to which the film could be seen as opposing the good-neighbor strategy of non-intervention in other cultures, and a good example of a violent relationship between American and Brazilian nationalities: the one according to which some *strange* Brazilians were in Rio to be *corrected* by the imposition of the American way of life.

Finally, in the fourth chapter Busby Berkeley's *The Gang's All Here* was analyzed, in accordance with conclusions from the three first chapters: the film may be seen as a synthesis of American war-joy choreography, since it incorporates, as compatible with American national identity, an ambivalent image of Brazilian national identity — Carmen's strange figure is shown as incorporated by the paradigm of American national values. The film indicates the superficiality of the incorporation, by Americans, of foreign cultural elements, by highlighting the absolute fakery, the theatrical character, of such incorporation, made clear by the sophisticated and magically smooth movements of the camera, together with the cast and props, and by its own self-consciousness, which mocks itself and the genre it belongs to. *The Gang's All Here* was much more consistent with good-neighbor diplomacy than *That Night in Rio*, because in the former the superficial incorporation of a supposed Brazilian-ness by American culture is presented as definitely achieved, though superficial features of cultural difference are preserved, as if in respect for difference.

Moving on to some propositions of totalization, one can say that *The Gang's All Here* suggests a definition of America as a magical melting pot where, by means of industrial ingenuity and "American values," any identity can be partially kept while also being smoothly integrated. This national image is reiterated up to these days by Hollywood films, reinforcing the idea of America as a paradise of cultural diversity that now assumes a politically correct attitude — though the incorporation of Brazilian-ness, particularly, is much less visible than it was up to 1945.¹

¹ Since 1945, with the end of the war, when Latin America lost its strategic value for the allies, Latin American cultural manifestations have become more common in the U.S. as commodities in American show-business. Brazilian music, even with the impact of Bossa Nova in the 50's, occupies a small portion of this market, and Brazilian commodities such as coffee, sugar and banana lost their privileged positions as well.

In Brazil there is also a clear continuity in the attitudes of pride and shame identified during the WWII era through the reception to Carmen Miranda films — attitudes still affected by the *tradition of self-doubt, self-pity, and resignation*. Even now, many people in Brazil agree about the authenticity of this or that version of samba, and many still seek authenticity so as to feel proud of being Brazilian. Conspiracy theories still put the blame for Brazilian misery on “the American” (in the singular, as an essence) — even though no longer referring to “Yankee imperialism.” Self-doubt, self-pity, and resignation still affect many Brazilians’ views of Brazilian-ness, reinforcing the general feeling of inferiority, together with the daily reiteration, in most of the Brazilian press, of the notion that most things are really better in the so-called “First World.”

What this study wants to argue for is, in part, based on what Antonio Candido suggests in his “Dialética da Malandragem.” He argues that the comic feature that is part of Brazilian *anomie* “gives way to “all sorts of accommodations (or negations), which sometimes make us [Brazilians] look inferior against a vision stupidly nurtured by puritan values, as it is in capitalist societies, but which will facilitate our insertion in a world eventually more wide open” (“Dialética da malandragem” 53). Candido wrote this during the military dictatorship in Brazil, and while other Latin American republics were living under dictatorships as well, at the climax of the Cold War. Most political relationships among countries were then tensely polarized between Soviet and American imperialism.

One can say that capitalism is now being sold as the only successful economic model, the Cuban system proving exhausted and China opened to international capital.

Nevertheless, the relaxation of Cold War tensions allowed national states in general to have some more space for autonomous decisions about directions to take. Many separatist movements that exploded throughout the world after 1989 also testify to this pluralization of models. Even if this does not prove to be that “more widely open world” Candido was referring to, there really is much more political room to question the hierarchy of values that distinguishes a “First” from a “Third” world. As Millie Thayer pointed out in the realm of feminism, globalization, on the one hand, has really increased the distance between the rich and the poor, and led to the centralization of power around speculative capital, but, on the other hand, it has allowed small communities, previously isolated, to associate politically with each other, by means of extra-national bonds — she points to the women of the Rural Women Workers’ Movement (MMTR) in Northeastern Brazil as an example, as they could associate with European NGOs such as Oxfam-UK (the largest British development agency in 1992) and become not only objects in the international debate on gender, but also active participants.

With more political room to question the international hierarchy of values, it might be the right time to question the *tradition of self-doubt, self-pity, and resignation* that for two centuries has affected images of Brazilian national identity. There might be a way for jokes about Brazilian inferiority to stop making sense, and for everything in America to stop being naturally considered better. In addition to the above mentioned relaxation of the bi-polar tension of the Cold War, and the possibility of easy extra-national association among small communities, one might consider the

failure of the American project of leading a free and happy world through American values.

Changing images of national identity is difficult. In contrast with the high speed of technological transformation in the news industry, the media in general seems slow to notice changes in socio-economic realities. For instance, in any big city in the world, elements that were once considered as belonging exclusively to a “First” or to a “Third” world are now irredeemably mixed, and the classification has lost much of its usefulness. Likewise, it is difficult to change, for the eyes of the general public, traditional associations such as that of Brazilians with poverty and Americans with wealth. In Brazil, the dialogue between academic and journalistic discourses, which could make it easier to affect notions of national identity, hardly exists. In the U.S., the academic discourse that has a more intense relationship with the media in general tends to work towards increasing normativity, regulations and definitions — and reducing the right to be ambivalent and incoherent.

In the introduction of this study I referred to a way of seeing nations that simply does not consider what should be obvious: that one country can neither represent itself nor other countries. In effect, a nation is an abstraction, a political convention — perhaps a collective delirium. Therefore, one does not need to respond nationally (or patriotically) to proposals of nationality (or any other); one does not need to believe that nationality circulates in veins, or that it is inscribed on the genetic code, to obey to the norms and laws of a community.

So, what I propose here, in terms of the relationship between American-ness and Brazilian-ness, is simply not to forget four premises: (1) that there is no need to

believe one's belonging to a "nation" is something natural; (2) that the definition of American-ness as a nationality still bound to Enlightenment values, capable of incorporating (though superficially) any other nationality in an effort to build a world of freedom and happiness, is no longer as useful as it once was to establish American leadership over large areas of the globe; (3) that there is no need to be poor, much less to be proud of not being rich, in order to be happy as a Brazilian; and (4) that industrial normativity and Cartesian logic are only useful and advantageous in certain kinds of human activity, such as industrial works, while ambivalence is not necessarily a bad attribute, in any nationality (as Cordell Hull and Sumner Welles seemed to have learnt).

Moving from the general to the particular, approaches to Carmen Miranda have shown, for more than 60 years, that discourses of national identity may be surprisingly unaware of assumptions underlying them, and of alternatives. When her figure burst upon American show-business, in 1939, images of Brazilian and American national identities that associate Brazilian-ness with poverty, and American-ness with wealth, were being formed much the way we know them today. In 1941, *That Night in Rio* suggested that Carmen's figure was one to be corrected according to an American yardstick. In the same year, the undefinability of such a figure still surprised a critic, as it had two years before on Broadway: "What it is that Carmen has is difficult to describe; so difficult, in fact, that dramatic critics have grown neurotic in their attempts to get it into words that would make sense and at the same time not brand them as mad sex fiends. Nevertheless, it must be attempted again" (Sullivan). In 1943, *The Gang's All Here* suggested that the same figure was already smoothly incorporated to American culture.

In 1945, Carmen was the highest paid actress in the U.S., but after the end of the war, and the end of the good-neighbor policy as it had been developed since 1933, the interest of Hollywood studios in Carmen diminished, and she never recovered her initial success. In 1955, her death deserved no more than small discrete notes in the main American newspapers.² In the 60's, with the growth of gay and lesbian movements, Carmen's figure regained some visibility, as she was adopted by drag queens, not only in the U.S..³ Now, she appears once in a while in art exhibitions, as a subject of art works, as an academic subject, and in historical accounts on film, Hollywood musicals, feminism, etc.⁴

In Brazil, in contrast, the appearance of Carmen's figure is somehow atavistic. Her performances and figure hold an important place in discussions of Brazilian national identity, especially the way she points to the reactions of pride and shame about Brazilian-ness (Veloso, "Caricature and Conqueror"). Back in the sixties, Caetano Veloso and the "Tropicalist" movement adopted Carmen's figure to explicitly propose a different notion of Brazilian national identity that addressed the way in which, according to his view, Hollywood approached Brazilian-ness (Veloso, *Verdade tropical* 52-3) — even though this approach was not consistent for all 14 American films in which Carmen performed. In 1972, Império Serrano, a "samba-school," won the Rio Carnival parade with Carmen as the central theme of its performance. The year

² Although she was fully booked with on-stage performances in casinos, night-clubs and hotels all over the country, she starred 9 films from 1941 to 1945, and only 5 from 1946 to 1953. On her death, see, for instance, "Obituary," and "Died."

³ In Corrêa and Maria there is a picture of a Carmen Miranda-like drag-queen in the gay pride parade of São Paulo, on July 17, 2001. See also Barsante 238-39. Also, if transferred from one context to the other, the lyrics of "The Lady in the tutti-frutti hat" song, reproduced in Chapter 4, curiously help reinforce the relationship between Carmen's figure and gay pride: "Some people say I dress too gay / But everyday I feel so gay / And when I'm gay I dress this way / Something wrong with that?"

⁴ See, for instance, Roberts, Woll, and Enloe.

of Carmen's 90th birthday would have been 1999, and there were then some exhibitions and commemorative events, but 2001 seems to be a real "Carmen year," with some more exhibitions, but also with an ambitious production for the stage in Rio, by Miguel Falabella, of a Carmen Miranda Songbook by Eduardo Dusek, and a Brazilian tour with songs made famous by her in the 30's and 40's, now performed by Ney Matogrosso (Silva).

And now, sixty years after Carmen's first performance on Broadway, she is still taken as undefinable. Her success, as seen in the Introduction, made her a kind of national hero, but it is still considered a "mystery," a phenomenon one need not even try explaining. In February 1999, a Brazilian commentator gave up defining Carmen, arguing that "popularity phenomena, huge and perennial like Carmen's, you do not explain: you relish" ("E ela com isso?"). As has become usual since the huge popular commotion in Rio about her death in 1955, Carmen's image is, more often than not, taken as a positive value in Brazilian cultural history, a compensation for the supposed inferiority of Brazilian people. Simone Sá's doctoral dissertation, which is also to be issued in 2001, also inserts Carmen in the bright side of Brazilian-ness, and claims for her "a place of honor in the same pantheon that features those characters acknowledged as the 'pillars' of Brazilian popular music" (Sá 133).

In Brazil, thus, the constant reappearance of Carmen's figure in discussions on national identity indicates, above all, a sort of vicious circularity in these nationalistic discussions around pride and shame. But the constitution of Brazilian-ness does not necessarily depend on pride or shame in images of national identity; much less does it depend on an image that for so long combined nationality with class, opposing Brazilian-ness/poverty to American-ness/wealth. Brazilian-ness does not necessarily

need to assert anything to be inserted in a “concert of nations.” In contrast to what Tropicalism proposed almost 40 years ago, the constitution of Brazilian-ness does not necessarily need Carmen’s figure, at least no longer; Brazilian-ness can now dismiss Carmen, the same way American-ness did in 1945.

Carmen Miranda, thus, is not to be forgotten as an artist, as a cultural manifestation, and as an important part of a rich cultural history involving at least two countries. She was a good artist, who knew how to compose a character, and a visually sophisticated one. And she was self-conscious enough to help other artists to parody herself and to ironize the relationship of the Hollywood entertainment industry with her — saying, for instance, that her accent was an asset, that “Hollywood bleaches you,” and even despite all that “a lot of fun.” As to her huge success in the U.S., which some relish, others do not, it may (or may not) prove many things, still provoking endless and heated discussions on talent or fate, but it can prove absolutely nothing in terms of what being Brazilian should or should not be like.

Carmen’s self-consciousness in this sense (as one who lived real lives in both countries, falling into the eye of the hurricane of national identities) appears in the famous episode in which she refused to record her friend Assis Valente’s song, “Brasil Pandeiro,” thus refusing to naïvely sing that it was time for those tanned people to show their value, and refusing to innocuously challenge Uncle Sam to play “our” *batucada*. As seen in Chapter 3, Carmen’s ambivalence (both in terms of gender and nationality), together with the ambivalence of the Good Neighbor policy itself, of which she was considered an ambassadress, hinders such oversimplifying views of Brazilian and American national identities in the wartime.

Once one accepts that Carmen had never necessarily represented real communities, Brazilians, should benefit much more, when recalling her figure, from becoming aware of a historical tradition in which most of them are *not* represented in national symbols such as the flag and the anthem (as José Murilo de Carvalho pointed out) than having either pride or shame about the way her character appeared in Hollywood. Carmen's figure would be representing the very interdependence between Brazilian-ness and Brazil's social injustice, precisely by not representing real people, that is, by arbitrarily indicating people who were never represented politically. Through this negative representation she could be turned into a symbol of the historical revisionism I am proposing here.

Through this negative representation, too, Carmen would suggest that Brazilian-ness might well mean a simple "joy," which should be "the proof of the pudding,"⁵ as Oswald de Andrade suggested in his "Manifesto Antropófago," rather than "pride;" that Brazilian-ness should abandon the idea of an absolute inability for a happy life metaphorized in Noel Rosa's "Com que roupa?", but without adopting the opposite position of "there's no can't do for us." Her figure could stop being seen as a Brazilian symbol in a Pantheon, and her deep ambivalence could be assumed in a non-Cartesian political strategy, as a reinforcement of a notion of human-ness that humbly allows for ambivalence.

⁵ "Alegria é a prova dos nove" (Andrade [1928]). I thank Renata Wasserman for the translation.

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- A Date with Judy* (USA, 1948). Color. 35 mm. 113 min. Metro Goldwin Mayer. Directed by Richard Thorpe and Harold F. Kress. Produced by Joe Pasternack. With Jane Powell, Carmen Miranda, Elizabeth Taylor, Selena Royle, Wallace Beery, Robert Stack, Xavier Cugat and his Orchestra.
- A voz do carnaval* (Brazil, 1933). B&W. 35mm. Cinédia. Directed by Adhemar Gonzaga and Humberto Mauro. Produced by Adhemar Gonzaga. Screenplayed by Joracy Camargo. With Carmen Miranda, Gina Cavaliere, Lu Marival, Regina Maura, Naná Figueiredo, Pablo Palitos, Lamartine Babo, Jararaca e Ratinho.
- Alô, alô carnaval!* (Brazil, 1936). B&W. 35mm. Waldow-Cinédia / DFB. Directed by Adhemar Gonzaga. Produced by Wallace Downey and Adhemar Gonzaga. Screenplayed by João de Barro and Alberto Ribeiro. With Carmen Miranda, Aurora Miranda, Heloísa Helena, Alzirinha Camargo, Dircinha Batista, Francisco Alves, Mário Reis, Oscarito, Almirante, Hervé Cordovil, Pery Ribas, Bando da Lua, Os 4 Diabos.
- Alô, alô, Brasil!* (Brazil, 1935). B&W. 35mm. Waldow-Cinédia / Metro Goldwyn Mayer. Directed by Wallace Downey, João de Barro, and Alberto Ribeiro. Produced by Wallace Downey and Adhemar Gonzaga. Screenplayed by João de Barro and Alberto Ribeiro. With Carmen Miranda, Aurora Miranda, Dircinha Batista, Francisco Alves, Mário Reis, Almirante, Ary Barroso, Bando da Lua.
- Babes in Arms* (USA, 1939). B&W. Directed by Busby Berkeley.
- Banana da terra* (Brazil, 1939). B&W. 35mm. Sonofilmes / Metro Goldwyn Mayer. Directed by João de Barro. Produced by Wallace Downey. Screenplayed by João de Barro and Mário Lago. With Carmen Miranda, Aurora Miranda, Dircinha Batista, Linda Batista, Emilinha Borba, Almirante, Oscarito, Orlando Silva, Aloysio de Oliveira, Carlos Galhardo, Mário Silva, Bando da Lua.
- Bananas is my Business* (Brazil, 1994). Color/B&W. 35 mm. 91 min. Directed by Helena Solberg. Produced by Helena Soberg and David Meyers for International Cinema Inc. in association with Channel Four Television, Juca Filmes, Paulo José Cardoso dos Santos and Carlos Salgado. Narrated by Helena Solberg. With Letícia Monte, Erik Barreto, Cynthia Adler. Distribution in VHS by Sages.
- Carmen Miranda* (USA, 1998). Produced by A & E Biography.
- Copacabana* (USA, 1947). B&W. 35 mm. 92 min. United Artists. Directed by Alfred E. Green. Produced by Sam Coslow. With Carmen Miranda (Carmen Navarro and Mme. Fiffi), Groucho Marx, Steve Cochran, Gloria Jean, Ralph Sanford, Andy Russell.
- Doll Face* (USA, 1946). B&W. 35 mm. 79 min. 20th Century Fox. 20th Century Fox. Directed by Lewis Seiler. Produced by Bryan Foy. With Vivian Blaine, Dennis

O'Keefe, Perry Como, Carmen Miranda (*Chita*), Martha Stewart.

Down Argentine Way (USA, 1940). Color. 35mm. 92 min. 20th Century Fox. Directed by Irving Cummings. Produced by Darryl F. Zanuck. Screenplayed by Darrell Ware and Karl Tunberg. With Don Ameche, Betty Grable, Carmen Miranda (*Herself*), Charlotte Greenwood.

Estudantes (Brazil, 1935). B&W. 35mm. Waldow-Cinédia / DFB. Directed by Wallace Downey. Produced by Wallace Downey and Adhemar Gonzaga. Screenplayed by João de Barro and Alberto Ribeiro. With Carmen Miranda, Aurora Miranda, Sylvinha Mello, Mesquitinha, César Ladeira, Almirante, Jorge Murad, Mário Reis, Bando da Lua, Irmãos Tapajós.

Four Jills in a Jeep (USA, 1944). B&W. 35 mm. 89 min. 20th Century Fox. Directed by William A. Seiter. Produced by Irving Starr With Alice Faye, Betty Grable, Carmen Miranda, Jimmy Dorsey and His Band.

Gold Diggers of 1933 (USA, 1933). B&W. Directed by Busby Berkeley.

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Greenwich Village (USA, 1944). Color. 35 mm. 20th Century Fox. Directed by Walter Lang. Produced by William Le Baron. With Don Ameche, Vivian Blaine, Carmen Miranda, William Bendix, Emil Rameau.

If I'm Lucky (USA, 1946). Color. 35 mm. 20th Century Fox. Directed by Lewis Seiler. Produced by Bryan Foy. With Vivian Blaine, Perry Como, Harry James and his Orchestra

Nancy Goes to Rio (USA, 1950). Color. 35 mm. 99 min. Metro Goldwin Mayer. Directed by Robert Z. Leonard. Produced by Joe Pasternack. With Ann Sothern, Carmen Miranda, Jane Powell, Barry Sullivan, Bando da Lua.

Scared Stiff (USA, 1953). B&W. 35 mm. 108 min. Paramount. Directed by George Marshall. Produced by Hal Wallis. With Dean Martin, Jerry Lewis, Lizabeth Scott, Carmen Miranda (*Carmelita Castinha*), Dorothy Malone.

Something for the Boys (USA, 1944). Color. 35 mm. 20th Century Fox. Directed by Lewis Seiler. Produced by Irving Starr. With Vivian Blaine, Michael O'Shea, Carmen Miranda, Cora Williams, Judy Hollyday, Perry Como, Bando da Lua

Springtime in the Rockies (USA, 1942). Color. 35 mm. 91 min. 20th Century Fox. Directed by Irving Cummings. Produced by William Le Baron With Betty Grable, Carmen Miranda (*Rosita Murphy*), John Payne, César Romero, Charlotte Greenwood.

That night in Rio (USA, 1941). Color. 35 mm. 20th Century Fox. Directed by Irving Cummings. Produced by Fred Kohlmar. Screenplayed by George Seaton, Bess Meredith, Hal Long and Jessie Ernst, based upon the play by Rudolph Lothar and Hans Adler. With Don Ameche, Alice Faye, Carmen Miranda, Maria Montes, Lillian Porter, J. Carrol Naish, S. Z. Sakall, Bando da Lua.

The Gang is All Here (USA, 1943). Color. 35 mm. 20th Century Fox. Directed by Busby Berkeley. Produced by William Le Baron. With Carmen Miranda, Alice

Faye, Phill Baker, Benny Goodman (and his orchestra).

Week-end in Havana (USA, 1941). Color. 35 mm. 81 min. 20th Century Fox. Directed by Walter Lang. Produced by William Le Baron. With Alice Faye, Carmen Miranda (*Rosita Rivas*), John Payne, César Romero, Cobina Wright, George Barbier.

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