

Imagining Brazil

Seduction, Samba

BY NATASHA PRAVAZ

En utilisant des paroles de chants rythmés sur la samba et d'autre matériel ethnographique, l'auteure détecte la présence du mulâtre et de propos racistes dans la construction du nationalisme brésilien et discute sur l'évidente ambivalence dans le discours ethnique local entre le désir et la rejection envers ce personnage.

A polysemic category, *mulata* in the Brazilian context can refer to “a woman of mixed racial descent,” but it also connotes voluptuousness, sensuality, and ability for dancing the samba. In its restricted sense, however, it names an occupation. That is, only women who engage in dancing the samba in a commodified spectacle and receive some form of remuneration for it can be called *mulatas*. Under this specific signification, the concept of the *mulata* can be contrasted to that of the *passista*, a solo dancer in the Carnival parades who performs, not for money, but out of love for samba and for her Samba School of choice. However, regardless of the subtleties of this and other distinctions, *mulata* and *passista* are perhaps merely privileged signifiers in a larger paradigmatic chain associating multiple cultural terms such as *cabrocha*, *morena*, *crioula*, *brasileira*, *negra*, *pretinha*, *baiana*, to name just a few. These multiple signifiers denoting “black woman” in Brazil may be seen as lexicological crystallisations of what has been described by Marvin Harris as a fluid “system of racial classification.”¹ In Brazil, “race talk” has a dermal character, where slight

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gradations in skin colour are constructed as distinctions begging specific denomination. Depending on the context of utterance, most of the above mentioned racialized and gendered terms carry with them a certain fetishistic quality. In Brazil, the *mulata* is commonly portrayed as a woman always ready to deploy her tricks of sorcery and bewitching, embodying sensuality, voluptuousness, and dexterity in dancing the samba. She has become a figure of desire in the Brazilian imaginary. It is due to this semantic proliferation that I have decided to use the Brazilian lexicon, rather than

to reduce its meaning by making reference to a “mulatto woman.”

Using a series of samba lyrics as my ethnographic material, I will address the figuration of the *mulata* as the embodiment of sensuality in the Brazilian imaginary; explore the use of racialized tropes and the figure of the *mulata* in the constitution of Brazilian discourses of national identity; and briefly discuss the conspicuous ambivalence between desire and abjection toward the *mulata* in local discourses of race.

The Eurocentric myth of Brazilian national identity as the product of “miscegenation” is well known.² Its main characteristics have been described by anthropologist Roberto DaMatta as “the fable of the three races.” According to DaMatta, “blacks,” “whites,” and “natives” are seen in Brazil as the basic entities of a racial triangle, contributing equally to the process of nation formation. In this unwittingly racist tale, which has acquired the status of a dominant ideology, Brazilian history and its social identity are understood in naturalized terms, that is, “social knowledge is reduced to something natural such as ‘races,’ ‘miscegenation’ and biologically given attributes of which the ‘races’ would be carriers” (Da Matta 60). Although DaMatta’s treatment of racial categories as “natural” vis-à-vis “socially constructed” history is problematic, what makes his analysis relevant for our purposes is the insight that this fable, as DaMatta puts it,

enables the common man, the wise and the ideologue to conceive of a highly hierarchical society as a totality integrated by bonds formed through sex and complementary “racial” attributes; finally, it is this fable which allows for the conception of our society as something singular—a specificity which is given to us by the harmonious encounter of the three races. (70)

In other words, “racial mixing” is regarded both as the means par excellence through which Brazilian identity is forged and as a process of mediation between the three angles of the “racial triangle,” through the creation of interstitial types (Da Matta 82).

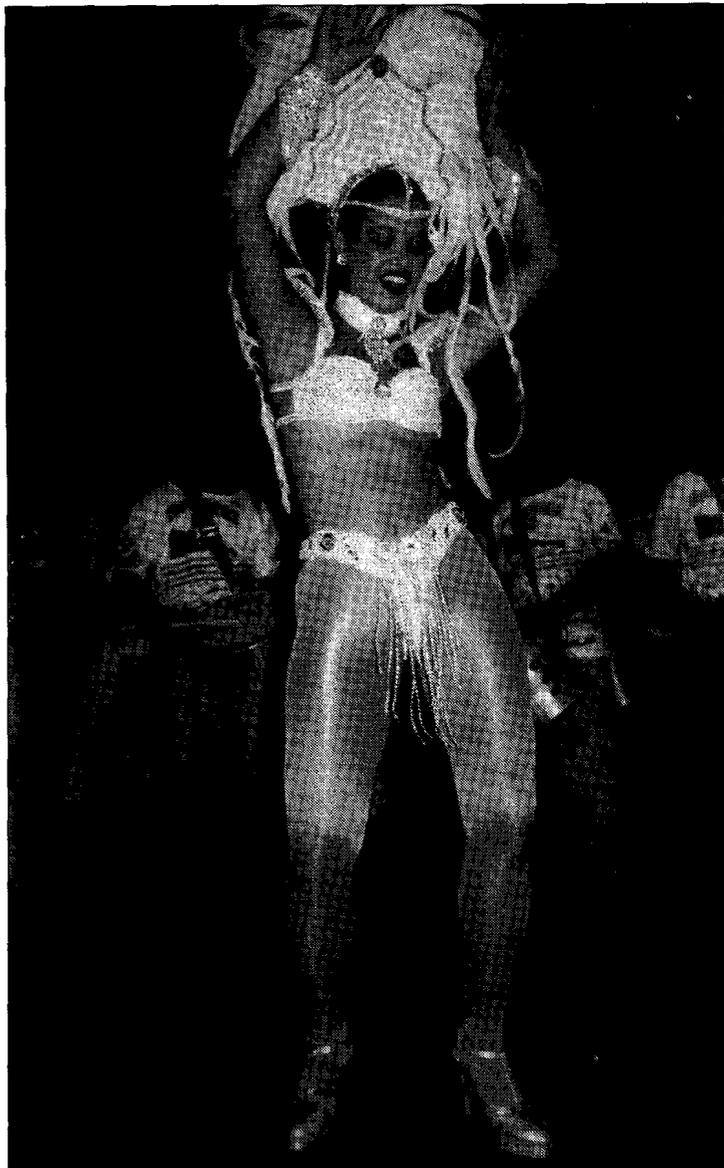
The *mulata* comes into the picture as one of these mediating figures. In Brazilian culture, she represents the concrete and symbolic synthesis of sexual intercourse between a white master and his black female slave. The

and the Mulata's Body

violence inherent in this form of rape is erased from the imaginary, for this intercourse is usually portrayed as a romantic encounter in which the woman becomes the seductress of a hopeless gentleman. While embodying all the idealized characteristics of the erotic "Other,"³ the *mulata* can at the same time be seen by the desiring white male as the perfect fusion of "self" and "Other." Not only is she a "whitened version" of the black slave, but her very body testifies to that which Brazilians have come to praise and glorify as the essence of their self-identity: "Mixture." The trope of mixture does not stop at the level of biology, however. At the level of popular culture in particular, we find that certain cultural expressions thought of as "mixed" or hybrid (see Vianna and Chasteen) also achieve the symbolic status of national icons. It is here that samba reveals itself as central to the constitution of both Brazilian national identity and *mulata's* images, through its lyrics and dance.

Samba is a musical and dance form which is said to have originated in the early twentieth century in downtown Rio de Janeiro. African-Brazilians from Rio and Bahia⁴ developed this particular music out of previous rhythms such as *lundu* and *maxixe*. The term *samba*, for example, comes from the Angolan (Kimbundu) *semba*, meaning navel. In *lundu* performances, participants would stand in a semi-circle, and dancers would invite others into the centre by bumping them—navel to navel. As with *samba*, this dance was characterized by pronounced, grinding movements of the hips and by the thundering sound of percussion instruments (see Appleby; Lopes *et al.*). One of the most important sites of *samba* production was the house of Aunt Ciata, a Bahian matriarch who held *Candomblé* sessions of worship to African-Brazilian deities. After these sessions, expatriate Bahians, *samba* composers, and middle-class bohemians would gather and engage in music-making for hours on end.

In the 1930s and with the help of official policies developed under Vargas's office, *samba* underwent a process of nationalization. The populist and authoritarian regime had to establish a certain relationship with an emerging urban popular culture, and exclusionary practices were not the best political option. Rio de Janeiro was the national capital, and its carnivalesque associations such as *ranchos* and Samba Schools were to receive financial support from the government. In 1932, for example, the most important Opera Hall in town held its first



"Fabiana, queen of percussionists of Mangueira Samba School," 1998.
Photo: Natasha Pravaz

Carnival Ball. As well, during Vargas's New State of 1937 the composition of sambas received important incentives in the form of public policy. In particular, Vargas was interested in lyrics that would talk about progress and work discipline, although as we will see, he was not very successful in reinforcing this policy (see Vianna; Rivera). With the help of the radio and record companies, *samba*



"Passistas, vocalist, flag-bearer, and main male dancer of Grande Rio Samba School at a TV Studio," 1998. Photo: Natasha Pravaz

would eventually become Brazil's trademark, representing the nation at home and abroad.

"Restless *Mulata*," one of the most famous sambas of the 1930s, was created by Ataulfo Alves, an African-Brazilian and son of a musician of Zona da Mata, Rio de Janeiro, who began composing at the age of eight responding to the improvisations of his father. This song will be the first of five lyrics I will attempt to analyze here.

Mulata Assanhada

— Ataulfo Alves (1930s)

O, mulata assanhada
 Que passa com graça
 Fazendo pirraça
 Fingindo inocente
 Tirando o sossego da gente

O, mulata assanhada
 Ai, mulata se eu pudesse,
 E se o meu dinheiro desse,
 Eu te dava sem pensar,
 Esta terra, este céu, este mar
 E ela finge que não sabe,
 Que tem feitiço no olhar

O, mulata assanhada
 Ai, meu Deus, que bom seria
 Se voltasse a escravidão
 Eu comprava esta mulata
 E levava pro meu barraco
 E depois a pretoria
 É que resolvia a questão
 O, mulata assanhada

Restless Mulata

— Ataulfo Alves (1930s)

O, restless mulata
 Who passes by with charm
 With her antics
 Playing innocent
 Taking my sleep away

O, restless mulata
 Oh, mulata if I could,
 And if my money could afford it,
 I would doubtlessly give you
 This earth, this sky, this sea,
 And she pretends she doesn't know
 That her eyes cast a spell,

O, restless mulata
 Oh, my God, how good it would be
 If slavery returned,
 I would buy this mulata
 And take her to my hut

And later the pretoria
 Would solve the problem
 O, restless mulata

"Restless *Mulata*, who passes by with charm/ With her antics/ Playing innocent/ Taking my sleep away," begins the song. Right at the onset the image of the sensual body of the *mulata* passing by disturbs the peace of mind of the man who dreams of giving her land, sea and sky. Projecting onto her his own desire, the narrator accuses her of feigning naiveté, pretending she doesn't know that "her eyes cast a spell." The violence against the enslaved black woman is romanticized as she is given the agency of a seductress sorcerer. At the same time that her agency is thus conceded, however, it is immediately denied in the next turn of phrase. Through its particular enunciative modality, the mulatto's text mimics the white master, who literally could, in times of slavery, "buy this *mulata* and take her to his hut." The implication here is that the *mulata* can be desired as long as she remains the unthreatening "object of domination," an inert possession among others. In this way, access to the benefits of full participation in social life is denied to her, and claims to a legitimate union cannot be laid.

The proposition also unmask the tension lurking behind the apparently seamless masculinist lust. The author not only desires the woman, he desires to occupy the subject position of the plantation master, in all its unrestrained power. The objectifying desire for the proverbial *mulata* is therefore one of the ways in which men of all colours celebrate, at the symbolic level, a patriarchal alliance that intensifies the divide between blacks and mulatos, African-Brazilian men and African-Brazilian women, and between black, *mulatto*, and white women, reproducing patterns of existing social relations and representations.

The next two lyrics I will be looking at were written by

famous composer Ary Barroso. In the 1930s, samba was already the most cherished musical form amongst the lower classes, particularly during Carnival. White middle-class musicians with a sensibility for popular forms of cultural expression acquired an interest in participating at the social gatherings of African-Brazilian musicians taking place in the bars of Rio, and incorporated into their repertoire this new rhythm. Amongst them was Barroso, the son of an attorney from Minas Gerais state, who moved to Rio at the age of seventeen. His songs “Pure Luxury” and “Brown Woman with Golden Mouth” both speak to the overt fascination and suffering the *mulata* exerts over a helpless man who can’t resist being seduced by her tricks and sensual ways.



“Passistas from Mangueira Samba School performing the samba for locals and tourists alike.” 1998. Photo: Natasha Pravaz

Morena Boca de Ouro
—Ary Barroso (1930s)

Morena boca de ouro que me faz sofrer
O teu jeitinho é que me mata
Roda morena vai não vai
Ginga morena cai não cai
Samba morena e me desacata

Morena é uma brasa viva pronta pra queimar
Queimando a gente sem clemencia
Roda morena vai nao vai
Ginga morena cai não cai
Samba morena com malemolência

Meu coração é um pandeiro
Gingando ao compasso de um samba feiticeiro
Samba que mexe com a gente
Samba que zomba da gente
O amor é um samba tão diferente

Morena samba no terreiro
Pisando vaidosa cestrosa meu coração
Morena tem pena de mais um sofredor
Que se queimou na brasa viva do teu amor

Brown Woman with Golden Mouth
—Ary Barroso (1930s)

Brown woman with golden mouth, you make me suffer
Your ways kill me
Go round, brown woman, go, don’t go
Swing, brown woman, fall, don’t fall
Dance the samba, brown woman, and scorn me

Brown woman, is a hot coal ready to burn
Burning us with no compassion
Go round, brown woman, go, don’t go
Swing, brown woman, fall, don’t fall
Dance the samba, brown woman, and scorn me

My heart is a tambourine
Swinging to the beat of the enchanting samba
Samba that moves us
Samba that makes fun of us
Love is such a different kind of samba

Brown woman dances in the yard
Proudly stepping on my heart
Brown woman, take pity on yet another sufferer
Who got burnt in the hot coal of your love

“Brown woman with golden mouth, you make me suffer. Your ways kill me. Go round, brown, go, don’t go. Swing brown, fall, don’t fall. Dance the samba, brown, and scorn me.” Brown, or *morena*, in this context is synonymous with “mixed-race.” Although in its literal definition *morena* means both “tanned woman” and “brunette,” Brazilians in general and samba composers in particular tend to use it as a racial term denoting *mulata* or black woman. The colour of a woman’s skin can thus become a vocative, that is, a noun used in addressing a person. This particular form of hailing produces a racialized subject-position which is qualified by other elements such as enchantment and coquetry. As with our former example, the *morena* appears in Barroso’s song as the inescapable seductress, scourning the man who “got burnt in the hot coal of her love.” It is interesting to note however, that the form in which her seduction takes place most forcefully here, is through samba.

The *morena*’s ability to “dance,” “go round,” and “swing” “to the beat of the enchanting samba,” places her allure in a very particular social space, that of African-Brazilian popular culture. The lyrics of this song celebrate not only the *morena* but samba itself, a cultural form which has been reconceptualized as an expression of Brazil’s soul. By dancing the samba in a way no one else can, the *morena*

becomes the perfect embodiment of “African-Brazilian culture.” In doing so, she is also transformed into a privileged symbol of Brazilian-ness, not only for being *mestiça*, but most importantly now for exuding samba, the “new cultural expression” of the nation. In this way, *morena* and samba become synonymous, or at least metonymically linked signifiers of national identity.

This notion is best expressed in Ary Barroso’s samba “Pure Luxury,” also first recorded in the 1930s.

É Luxo Só

—Ary Barroso, Luiz Peixoto (1930s)

Olha, esta mulata quando dança é luxo só
Quando todo o seu corpo se embalança é luxo só
Tem um não sei quê que faz a confusão
O que ela não tem, meu Deus, é compaixão

Olha esta mulata quando dança é luxo só
Quando todo o seu corpo se embalança é luxo só
Porém seu coração quando palpita e se agita
Mais ligeiro nunca vi compasso tão brasileiro

Eta samba cai pra lá, cai pra cá, cai pra lá, cai pra cá
Eta samba cai pra lá, cai pra cá, cai pra lá, cai pra cá

Mexe com as cadeiras mulata, e o requebrado me
maltrata

Pure Luxury

—Ary Barroso, Luiz Peixoto (1930s)

See, when this mulata dances, it’s pure luxury
When all her body bounces, it’s pure luxury
She has something that creates the confusion
What she doesn’t have, my God, is compassion

See, when this mulata dances, it’s pure luxury
When all her body bounces, it’s pure luxury
However, when her heart beats and gets agitated
So swift, I’ve never seen such a Brazilian rhythm

It’s samba, falls there, falls here, falls there, falls here
It’s samba, falls there, falls here, falls there, falls here

Bounce the hips, mulata, and your swing abuses me

The second stanza reads: “See, when this *mulata* dances/ it’s pure luxury./ When all her body bounces/ it’s pure luxury./ However, when her heart beats and gets agitated/ So swift/ I’ve never seen such a Brazilian rhythm.” In one and the same turn of phrase, “Brazilian rhythm” is identified with both “the rhythm of samba,” and “the rhythm of the *mulata*’s body.” The slippage of meaning produces the effect of dance itself, now here, next there, and you don’t know how or where it all started. The core of the

mulata’s body, the beating of her heart, is associated in the song with the “essence” of Brazilian-ness, and the way in which that “essence” is expressed is through music and dance, most specifically, through samba. Desiring the *mulata*, therefore, should not be seen as merely a masculinist and racist practice of objectifying and consuming “Otherness.” It is a practice situated within the ambivalent and complex process of Brazilian identity formation. This process makes use, in particular, of African-Brazilian forms of cultural expression, and of African-Brazilian bodies, celebrating and “transforming ethnic symbols into national ones” (see Fry). In this way, concrete racial and social relations articulated within Brazilian society can be, if not erased, at least misrecognized and devoid of all contradiction.

The fourth song we will be looking at, “She Says She Has,” is more explicit in the celebration of samba as nationalism. Recorded by Carmen Miranda in the early 1940s, the song talks about a woman who has “brown skin, a feverish body, and inside the chest, love of Brazil.”

Ela Diz Que Tem

—Carmen Miranda

(Paiva & Cruz, October 13, 1941)

Ela diz que tem, diz que tem, diz que tem
diz que tem, diz que tem, diz que tem, diz que tem
Tem cheiro de mato, tem gosto de coco
Tem samba na veia, tem balangandã

Ela diz que tem, diz que tem, diz que tem
Diz que tem, diz que tem, diz que tem, diz que tem
Tem a pele morena, e o corpo febril
E dentro do peito o amor do Brasil

Cantei em São Paulo, cantei no Pará
Tomei chimarrão, e comi vatapá
Eu sou brasileira, meu corpo revela
Que a minha bandeira e verde é amarela

Eu digo que tenho, eu tenho muamba
E tenho no corpo o cheiro de samba
Eu quero para mim o moreno fagueiro
Que seja do samba e bom brasileiro

She Says She Has

—Carmen Miranda

(Paiva & Cruz, October 13, 1941)

She says that she has, she has, she has, she has, she has,
she has, she has

Has the smell of forest, taste of coconut
Samba in the veins, and balangandas

She says that she has, she has, she has, she has, she has,
she has, she has

Has brown skin, and a feverish body
 And inside the chest, love of Brazil
 I sang in São Paulo, I sang in Pará
 I drank chimarrão and ate vatapá
 I am Brazilian, my body reveals
 That my flag is green and yellow

I say that I have, I have muamba
 I have in my body the smell of samba
 I want for myself the hot brown-skinned guy
 That belongs to samba and is a good Brazilian

Again, skin colour is linked to the passionate embodiment of national identity. “I am Brazilian, my body reveals that my flag is green and yellow.” But the lyrics go beyond the recognition of samba and *mulata*-ness as privileged tropes of Brazilian-ness. North, South, East, and West come into play, as the woman travels from São Paulo to Pará, in Northern Brazil, and drinks *chimarrão* or *mate*, a kind of hot infusion common in the South. The *mulata* thus “colonizes” the rest of the country, “showing-off” her samba in the veins and her closeness to nature. The sensuality of her being is expressed in her “smell of forest” and “taste of coconut,” a kind of animality that still leaves room for the civilized desire for the nation. “I want for myself the hot brown-skinned guy that belongs to samba and is a good Brazilian,” she says, introducing the trope of the woman’s desire into the scene.

It is possible to see this desire as a mere mirroring of the masculine gaze. In the first place, the tropes used reproduce those describing the *mulata*: Knowing how to dance the samba, being a good Brazilian and having brown skin. As well, her desire possibly expresses a projection of the authors’ fantasy, enacting their wish that the *mulata* would want them as partners. I have no background knowledge about the composers, but present this as an open question. Despite this conspicuous mirroring, however, we must acknowledge that the introduction of the feminine perspective takes the woman away from the place of “object,” and gives room to the possibility of “embracing” the subject-position of *mulata* as a practice of identification. In this case, the identification is with a celebrated /self-celebrating figure in the Brazilian imagination, the perfect embodiment of sensuality, “miscegenation,” and samba.

Not all samba lyrics present such a straight-forward celebratory impulse, however. Lamartine Babo’s song “Your Hair Doesn’t Deny It” gives us a complicated version of the quintessential *mulata*. The song was put into the market in January of 1932 and had such an overwhelming impact and acceptance that ten years later the LP had to be recorded again due to the wear and tear of the matrix copy. Again in 1952, another recording was made, and the song became the “official” Overture of Carnavalesque balls. A close look at the syntax and semantics of the song might give us a clue into the reasons

why the Carnavalesque march has come to be considered one of the most important recordings in Brazilian popular music and one of the most successful Carnival songs of all time.

O Teu Cabelo Não Nega

—Lamartine Babo, João, Raul Valença (1932)

O teu cabelo não nega, mulata
 Porque és mulata da cor
 Mas como a cor não pega, mulata
 Mulata eu quero o teu amor
 Tens um sabor bem do Brasil,
 Tens a alma cor de anil

Mulata, mulatinha, meu amor
 Fui nomeado teu tenente interventor
 Quem te inventou, meu pancadão,
 Teve uma consagração
 A lua te invejando fez careta, porque
 Mulata, tu não és deste planeta
 Quando nem bem vieste à terra
 Portugal declarou guerra
 A concorrência então foi colossal
 Vasco da Gama contra o batalhão naval

O teu cabelo não nega mulata,
 Porque és mulata da cor
 Mas como a cor não pega, mulata
 Mulata eu quero o teu amor

Your Hair Doesn’t Deny It

—Lamartine Babo, João, Raul Valença (1932)

Your hair doesn’t deny it, mulata
 Because you are a mulata of colour
 But since colour isn’t contagious, mulata
 Mulata, I want your love
 You have a very Brazilian flavour
 Your soul is the colour of the sky

Mulata, little mulata, my love
 I was nominated your inspector lieutenant
 To whom invented you, “my congratulations
 You are consecrated”
 The jealous moon is pulling a face, because
 Mulata, you are not from this planet
 When you came to earth
 Portugal declared war
 The competition was colossal
 Vasco da Gama against the naval battalion

Your hair doesn’t deny it, mulata
 Because you are a mulata of colour
 But since colour isn’t contagious, mulata
 Mulata, I want your love

"Your hair doesn't deny it, *mulata!* Because you are a *mulata* of colour./ But since colour isn't contagious, *mulata!* *Mulata* I want your love." Another way of translating the first sentence, "*O teu cabelo não nega, mulata*" would be "Your hair betrays you, *mulata*." This statement makes reference to a frequently misrecognized characteristic of Brazilian racial terminologies, that is, mulattoes are not the perfect "mixture" of blacks and whites, one more concept among the inexhaustible proliferation of "mediating" categories. Rather, in terms of the cultural effects of social intercourse and social structure, mulattoes are constituted as blacks. The ways in which this is achieved include, among other things, the recognition of certain phenotypical characteristics such as hair type as markers of race. This is why the song states that she is a "*mulata* of colour," "betrayed" by her hair.

Since every *mulata* is by definition, of colour, what this statement really means is that the *mulata* is "from colour." And here colour stands for race. In everyday language people say that someone is "from race," or "from colour," meaning that they are black. It is this inescapable "blackness" which poses a menace to the invisible "whiteness" of the composer/singer. "Blackness" becomes identified with a threatening, albeit non-contagious disease. Its non-contagious nature allows for the unrestrained consumption of the *mulata* as object of desire and icon of nationalism, without "staining" the "pure colour" of the colonizing Self. But apparently the author is not 100 per cent sure that this is the case. He would rather have her blue and get rid of the dilemma. The recognition of the *mulata's* skin colour and race are thus denied in the following sentence: "your soul is the colour of the sky," and her "flavour" becomes therefore an acceptable index of Brazilian identity.

The contradictions at the heart of these samba lyrics exemplify the main tropes of Brazilian nationalist and racist discourses. These discourses deploy notions of "miscegenation," "samba," and "seduction" as central elements in the production of a common identity for the nation, and the *mulata* becomes one of the privileged signifiers in this equation. In this process, women's subalternity in the social structure is denied, and embodying the subject-position of an idealized social type in the fleeting Carnival parades and cabaret shows becomes one of the only ways of social recognition for many white, black and mulatto women in contemporary Brazil.

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¹The hegemonic discourse of race in Brazil is deployed through the trope of "colour," as opposed to racial origin or ethnicity (see DaMatta). Marvin Harris, for example,

sees it as a consequence of the Brazilian lack of a rigid descent rule in its racial classification of peoples. "A Brazilian child is never automatically identified with the racial type of one or both of his parents, nor must his racial type be selected from one of only two possibilities. Over a dozen racial categories may be recognized in conformity with the combinations of hair color, hair texture, eye color and skin color which actually occur. These types grade into each other like the colors of the spectrum and no one category stands significantly isolated from all the rest.... a given Brazilian might be called by as many as 13 different terms by other members of his community" (Harris 57-8).²See Ortiz; Mota; Skidmore; DaMatta; and Costa for a critique.

³The category of the "Other" is used here to denote those subjects who are "marked off," exoticized, eroticized and pathologized from a western and phallogocentric perspective (see Gilman).

⁴In the late 1800s many inhabitants from Bahia migrated to Rio de Janeiro as a consequence of the Canudos War, the decline of plantations in Bahia state and the abolition of slavery in 1888. They worked at the docks, as street vendors, and as domestic servants. Bahians brought with them African-Brazilian percussion jams and dances, and settled in the local favelas. See McGowan and Pessanha; Ben Ratliff; Lopes *et al.*; Vianna.

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About the Guest Editors ...

Ana Isla recently completed her PhD at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto, specializing in development and women's studies in the Adult Education and Community Development Programme. Her theoretical and research interest is in the social, political, and economic impact of globalization on women and communities. She is committed to social justice and ecological health.

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Cynthia Wright was Assistant Professor at the Institute for Women's Studies and Gender Studies at the University of Toronto from 1995-2000. She is currently a Visiting Scholar at the same location and a long-time activist. Among her recent articles is "Nowhere at Home: Gender, Race and the Making of Anti-Immigrant Discourse in Canada" published in *Atlantis* (Spring 2000). Her book on Eaton's College Street is forthcoming.

About the back cover...

The launch of our poster is the culmination of a year-long community-supported campaign to readdress the harm done by the Toronto Police Association poster. A concerted effort was made to involve youth in the design and production process of this poster. The photographer, graphic designer, and models who participated, were all members of the community. These individuals became involved, not for financial reasons, but because they support the poster's public nature and its anti-racist message. They are aware of the urgent need to respond to the Toronto Police Association's racist stereotyping of our community.

The design of the poster was done on a consensus-basis, involving discussions about the type of message and image that the Latin American Coalition Against Racism wanted to convey. Those of us, who were involved in the creation of this poster, did so with a strong sense of public responsibility and an awareness that the message being conveyed would resonate with the wider community.

Beyond responding to the Toronto Police Association poster, this is also the starting point of a broader public campaign. This campaign intends to question deeply-rooted stereotypes that persist about the Latin American peoples—both within and outside our communities. We are not a homogenous community. We are very diverse in terms of nationality, race, ethnicity, religion, and social standing. And, although we identify as Latin Americans and speak Spanish and Portuguese, as well as English, we are also Aboriginal, African, Arabic, Asian, Jewish, and European descent. Our campaign aims to celebrate this diversity, while emphasizing the need to address and confront racist stereotyping.

We are planning to hold educational workshops, particularly with youth, who are often the most vulnerable members of our community. Currently, our main goal is to have the Latin American Coalition Against racism poster widely distributed. We have set up a website in order to publicize the campaign on the internet. We want this poster displayed in people's homes, in schools, universities, community centres, libraries, storefront windows, restaurants, bars, dance clubs (where youth frequent), as well as police stations—as a strong, public reminder that racism is wrong, that it's a crime and that it harms, not only the communities being targeted, but the public at large.

Finally, it is our view that Toronto's Latin American community needs to have a stronger voice in local matters of public concern affecting our well-being: matters such as systemic racism, policing and social policy-related issues. We also want to establish links with other communities, particularly communities of colour and Aboriginal communities, that are also being impacted by racism. The Latin American Coalition Against Racism represents an emerging grassroots voice that will contribute to a process of strengthening the visibility of our communities.

—Text of the speech given by LACAR member Iliam Burbano, at a press conference which launched the poster in the subway system at Yonge and Bloor in Toronto.



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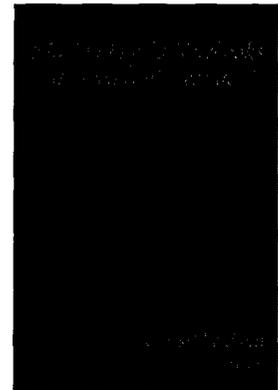


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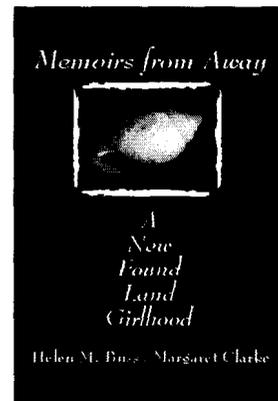


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