



“CARMEN MIRANDAESQUENESS” STYLIZING GENDER/EN-GENDERING STYLE

FERNANDO DE SOUSA ROCHA
University of North Florida

To Susana Cid-Hazard, for all her gaiety

In “Bananas Is My Business,” a documentary on Carmen Miranda’s life and her cross-cultural trajectory, Helena Solberg casts a drag-queen to perform the Brazilian bombshell, the lady in the tutti-frutti hat, the soon-to-be Hollywood star. Nothing more appropriate, one might think, since Carmen Miranda has presently become a queer icon. With her exaggerated, outlandish costumes, Carmen Miranda appears to be a very appropriate figure for the contemporary notion of queerness and, consequently, for the possibility of thinking gender through the lens of performativity. As Judith Butler suggests, the very concept of gender appears to be entangled with that of performativity. Nonetheless, if one may say, tongue-in-cheek, that Carmen Miranda is the queen of queens, isn’t that precisely because we must somehow also throw the notion of style into the mix?

The purpose of my paper is to examine the connections between gender, performativity, and style in the figure of the Hollywoodian Carmen Miranda. With that purpose in mind, I shall first discuss recent theories on gender and style in order to evince a possible crossroads between the two notions. My contention is that, if both gender studies and stylistics have moved towards a contextualized mode of thought that avoids essentialism, either in the form of a gender ontology or in that of a textual identity that is the effect of “immanentist” readings, then we must not only see both gender *and* style as doings or performances, but also account for the interventions of style in the gender performative and of gender in the doing of style. After this preliminary discussion, I shall demonstrate, taking as a starting point Rick Altman’s readings on the American film musical as a dual-focus narrative, that Carmen Miranda’s gender performative cannot be dissociated from the ethnicity performative, in that both operate in an uprooted, untranslatable, self-parodic fashion, whereby the doing of style is brought into our field of vision in all its excessiveness.

I. Putting Gender/Style into Action

Some of the recent theories on gender which are based on the notion of a construct suggest that gender is an act. For Candace West and Don H. Zimmerman, it is a “doing” that “involves a complex of socially guided perceptual, interactional, and micropolitical activities that cast particular pursuits as expressions of masculine and feminine ‘nature’” [4], whereas for Judith Butler it is “a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being” [*Gender Trouble* 33]. Although, as Molly Moloney and Sarah Fenstermaker point out, one should be aware of the points where the two theories diverge, one should not let these differences obscure the possible points of contact. Moloney and Fenstermaker themselves attempt in their essay to “reconcile” the two theories from which I have just quoted, stating that, “[i]n both conceptualizations, gender is not an attribute but an activity” [194]. The main point of contact is therefore not only the fact that in both theories gender is seen as an act, but also that this notion implies a refusal of the so-called “natural” quality of gender. Such a refusal will bear important consequences on both theories, in the sense that, if gender is not a natural essence or substance inevitably associated with specific sexual categories, it must be contextualized, so that its constructed character become evident.

Thus, for West and Zimmerman gender is a “situated doing,” meaning that it occurs in specific social situations and within two general arenas, the interactional and the institutional [4]. As such, it does not require the actual presence of other social agents for the doer to recognize the gender that, according to his or her sexual categorization, must be enacted. That is possible because “[a]ctions are often designed with an eye to their accountability, that is, how they might look and how they might be characterized” by others [12], a notion that we gain, one might infer, by listening to and producing accounts of activities and social agents. Due to accountability the doing of gender becomes indeed a socially guided activity, inasmuch as social agents may foresee, given the perceived location of activities within a social framework, the probable accounts that may be generated in response to the activities that he or she does in order to do gender. To be situated refers then not only to the social situation, but also to the accounts, the narratives that provide a frame for the doings.

Given the poststructuralist vein of Butler’s genealogical investigation of gender identity, context emerges more evidently from the set of narratives that limit performative acts. Precisely because one of Butler’s contentions is that gender should not be understood as a natural quality, one of the questions she poses in *Gender Trouble* is the extent to which this “naturalness” is “constituted through discursively constrained performative acts that produce the body through and within the categories of sex” [viii]. One should thus understand these limiting narratives not merely as a demarcation or definition, but rather in relation to “regulatory fictions of sex and gender” [32]. Since there is nothing “natural” that may support the “naturalness” of gender (not even sex), it can only be sustained by means of these regulatory fictions. In this sense, the performativity of gender that

Butler proposes cannot be understood “solely in theatrical or dramaturgical terms,” as Moloney and Fenstermaker remind us [197]. On the contrary, since her notion of performativity is derived from speech-act theory, one should not regard utterances merely as linguistic events, thereby dissociating actions from speech. Not only does the discourse on gender give existence to what it names, but it does so by means of multiple actions. In fact, as a category gender only exists as an effect of “institutions, practices, discourses with multiple and diffuse points of origin” [Butler, *Gender Trouble* ix], all of which guarantee the constant performance of constant genders. Describing thus the reproductive character of gender might lead us to think of a closed system in which agents cannot but reproduce the gender identities whereby they come into social existence. Some critics, Moloney and Fenstermaker observe, contend that Butler’s and West and Zimmerman’s theories “are overly deterministic and do not allow enough room for agency or resistance” [195]. Such contention, however, appears to simplify both frameworks.

The concept of accountability, which is central to West and Zimmerman’s gender theory, does not imply a direct, unmediated translation between social frameworks, accountings, and activities. On the contrary, “to ‘do’ gender is not always to live up to normative conceptions of femininity or masculinity; it is to engage in behavior *at the risk of gender assessment*” [13; emphasis in the original]. Similarly, Butler defines “compulsory performances” as the “ones which none of us choose, but which each of us is forced to negotiate,” which means that the compulsory or normative character of gender performances “does not always make them efficacious” [quoted in Moloney and Fenstermaker, 196]. Butler has, in fact, insisted on the fact that the site for agency, within her theory, is precisely that of repetition. If, as she states, “all signification takes place within the orbit of the compulsion to repeat[,] ‘agency,’ then, is to be located within the possibility of a variation on that repetition” [*Gender Trouble* 145]. For Butler, then, “[t]he task is not whether to repeat, but how to repeat or, indeed, to repeat and, through a radical proliferation of gender, *to displace* the very gender norms that enable the repetition itself” [148; emphasis in the original]. Inherent in the question of *how* to repeat is, I would suggest, the very concept of style. For, as Leech and Short note, one of the questions that concern literary stylistics (and stylistics in general, for that matter) is precisely “how”: “*How* is such-and-such an aesthetic effect achieved through language?” [quoted in Mills, 5].

On several occasions, Butler indicates that the repetitive performativity of gender also involves the stylization of bodies and acts. “Gender is,” she claims in *Gender Trouble*, “the repeated stylization of the body” [33]; “gendered bodies are,” she insists, “so many ‘styles of the flesh,’” but styles that are “never fully self-styled, for styles have a history, and those histories condition and limit possibilities” [139]. And she adds: “Consider gender, for instance, as *a corporeal style*, an ‘act,’ as it were, which is both intentional and performative, where ‘performative’ suggests a dramatic and contingent construction of meaning” [139; emphasis in the original]. Similarly, in the essay “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution,” Butler asserts that gender is “an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*;” it is “instituted through the stylization of the body”

[519; emphasis in the original]. Notwithstanding the obvious redundancy, these examples serve to illustrate the insistence with which Butler includes the notion of style into her theory of gender performativity, suggesting that it is an integral element of the theory and perhaps plays an important part in it.

But is it possible to extend our understanding of a stylization of bodies and acts beyond the common sense of a conventional representation? What does it mean to say, for instance, that gender is a “corporeal style”? Perhaps that it is at the same time a style of the body (pertaining to and characteristic of it) and a style that possesses a certain materiality. Or rather, gender is a style whose materiality is the body, understood here not as a surface on which social significations are inscribed, but as an embodied “set of boundaries, individual and social, politically signified and maintained” [Butler, *Gender Trouble* 33]. There is, in other words, no “materiality prior to signification and form” [130], and, if the body in fact constitutes the materiality of style, it does so only to the extent that the body does not exist before style, nor does style exist immaterially. Contextualized in this manner, style, as in “corporeal style,” entails an action, a doing which is made explicit in Butler’s use of “stylization” and “stylized.” Nonetheless, the doing of style cannot be merely equated with the doing of gender. It is rather superimposed on the latter, occurring concomitantly with it. A “stylization” or “to stylize” is to perform a manner of doing while doing gender (but also to make them consistent with certain rules of performance) and is therefore active in the construction of gender identities.

Devising style as an action or a doing is perhaps more consistent with the development of stylistics itself. Not unlike gender studies, stylistics has evolved so as to incorporate the question of context into its analyses. As such, contemporary stylistics is “much more directly in line with modern literary theory, since the latter is similarly characterized by a move away from essentialism and towards constructivism” [Weber 7]. The first step in this general movement within stylistics is perhaps most evident in Leo Spitzer’s intellectual trajectory, which, as Stephen Ullmann points out, begins as an attempt to establish links between an author’s psychological makeup and his or her style by means of a technique that, based on Freud’s psychoanalytical technique, works “from the surface to the ‘inward life-center’ of the work of art” [quoted in Ullmann, 122]. Having come to the conclusion that “‘psychoanalytical stylistics’ was no more than a special form of what is known as the ‘biographical fallacy,’” Spitzer developed a method which he called a “structural” approach and which was based on the idea that the elements for stylistic analysis are to be found within the text, seen now as a poetic organism [quoted in Ullmann, 125]. Needless to say, one may find several problems with either approach, but a crucial one traverses them both and most stylistic readings, especially prior to contextualization: that of a self-identical identity.

Like Freud’s psychoanalysis, Spitzer’s “philological circle,” as he called the technique utilized in his first approach, is problematic because of the distinction he establishes between surface and depth. In this dichotomous scheme, depth stands for the “truer self” of the text and corresponds to the “truer self” of the subject, the one that psychoanalysis is

supposed to dig up. At first sight, one might think that this problem disappears with the second approach, since it involves neither the writer's biography nor his or her personality. Nonetheless, any "immanentist" stylistic reading, such as Spitzer's structural approach, creates the idea of either an authorial or a textual identity that passes for what the reader identifies in his or her reading of the text. Spitzer himself warns us that "the first step, on which all may hinge, can never be planned: it must already have taken place" [quoted in Ullmann, 124]. The contradiction inherent in Spitzer's phrase gives us a glimpse of the pitfalls of "immanentist" readings. On the one hand, the first step can never be planned, which means that the critic cannot bring any preconceived idea to his reading of the text. However, it must already have taken place. But before what? Before it does in fact take place? How exactly is this temporality of the "already-have-taken-place" to take place? Should we see in it an indication of the self-evident nature of texts, which reveal themselves in front of the reader? But, if that is correct, how can we explain the fact that the initial step may never occur, as Spitzer also alerts us, if not by the reappearance of the reader in his approach? In *Gender Trouble*, Butler insists on the fact that there is no "before" in terms of subjectivity. Instead, "[t]he performative invocation of a nonhistorical 'before' becomes the foundational premise that guarantees a presocial ontology" of the subject [3]. Likewise, isn't the non-historical 'before' of textually fixed styles what guarantees the pre-reading ontology of the author or the text?

One of the problems of "immanentist" readings, Weber notes, is that "a huge leap of faith is required to move from description to interpretation" [2]. Even functionalist approaches to style "still assume a fixed correlation between form and meaning, and ignore the indeterminacy and plurality of the functions and meanings of particular language items" [2]. In its "immanentist" mode, stylistics would thus resemble, as Stanley Fish suggests by means of a parody, those texts that proclaim to be able to tell us the meaning of our dreams (including Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*, I would say), but leave us dumbfounded, wondering how the interpreter got from A to B, from dream to interpretation. For Fish, stylistics is only possible if one takes into account that interpretive acts, whereby meaning is produced, are already at play in the very process of description, which, in "immanentist" readings, would correspond to a simple mapping of a text's formal composition. Fish has been criticized on two main points: the relativism implicit in his approach and his emphasis on the reader over the text. One might, however, read Fish's essay "What Is Stylistics and Why Are They Saying Such Terrible Things about It?" in a manner that is more in tune with a contextualizing mode of thought. Both Jean-Jacques Weber and Sara Mills argue that, if style is not inherent in the text itself, it is not solely produced by the reader either. For Weber, style is "an effect produced in, by and through the interaction between text and reader" [3], whereas for Mills "what the critic 'finds' in the text is [...] the result of a negotiation between the reader and the text" [25]. The concepts of "interaction" and "negotiation," however, are not at all discordant with Fish's view of stylistics, and even the notion of the text as a participant in the act of reading keeps reappearing in Fish's essay.

In describing his own experience of reading the beginning sentences in Joan Didion's *Play It As It Lays*, Fish states that he has "been able to make use of formal characterizations [...] by regarding their content as *cues* for the reader to engage in activities" [110; emphasis mine]. If such contents are indeed "potential cues for the performing acts" [Fish 111], but are not produced solely by the reader, in which case readings would be the acts of culturally unbound, socially unmarked agents, then the text does partake in the production of meaning, perhaps functioning also as a frame in it. Cues, clues, and frames orient us then in the act of reading, understood here as the reproduction of a text and of its possible formal characteristics, including style. They induce us to provide a context for the text we reproduce, a context that must not be understood merely as an outside or a backdrop for the text, but as a possible system of relations whereby the text becomes significant to the reader, that is, it becomes reproducible.

Gender, I would argue, has often been at play in these possible systems of relations for the reproducibility of texts. As West and Zimmerman suggest, the category of gender is an omnirelevant one, which means that "a person engaged in virtually any activity may be held accountable for performance of that activity as a *woman* or a *man*, and their incumbency in one or the other sex category can be used to legitimate or discredit their other activities" [13; emphasis in the original]. Precisely because of the omnirelevance of gender, feminists have attempted, through the concept of "feminine" writing, either to value what had normally and negatively been categorized as a "female" mode of writing or to produce a different type of writing, one that would better correspond to (if not express) women's experiences. There are, however, several problems with the notion of a gendered sentence, text, or writing, particularly because it falls back onto essentialism, as Mills so aptly points out [57]. Implicit in the notion of a "feminine" writing is the idea that the feminine constitutes a gender identity and, moreover, that such an identity is pertinent to women. But, as Butler suggests, the task of feminism is not the (re)construction of a gender identity, which is often based on the "common" experience of "being" a "woman." On the contrary, what "appears to be necessary in order to formulate a representational politics that might revive feminism on other grounds" is precisely "a radical rethinking of the ontological constructions of identity" [Butler, *Gender Trouble* 5]. If there is indeed no "feminine" writing because, as Monique Wittig provocatively puts it, there is no such a thing as woman [15], how do we understand the notion of a gendered style? As Mills suggests, one might view the idea of a "feminine" style as "an attempt to set up a particular subject-position for females in the real world" [57]. Such an attempt is also, I would contend, an instance of performing gender, inasmuch as "feminine" writing, however we define it, functions as a performative whereby the effect of a certain gender identity is produced. Bearing in mind then that the doing of style often partakes of the gender performative and vice versa, what follows now is a contextualized reproduction of filmic texts so as to negotiate, in the very repetition that realizes gender and style, both the stylization of gender and the engendering of style.

II. *Wo/Man: The Mirandaesque Musical Performance*

In *The American Film Musical*, Rick Altman proposes that one should not analyze musicals in the same manner that one examines sequential narratives, either in literature or in film. Rather than constructing a sequence of events that suggests a cause-effect relation between scenes, one should view American musicals as a dual-focus narrative. This means that what one may construct in his or her filmic experience are “the simultaneity and the parallelism” of the scenes [17], thereby establishing a contrast between the male and female protagonists. In American musicals, the “dynamic principle remains the difference between male and female” [20], as if gender difference were a key structuring device in the production and reproduction of such films. As Altman puts it, in musicals “[i]mage follows image according to the nearly iron-clad law requiring each sequence to uphold interest in the male-female coupling by including parallel scenes and shared activities” [32]. Nonetheless, these shared activities, which function more as a pretext leading to the fe-/male protagonists’ encounter or as a point of contact for the protagonists to interact with each other in the social space, do not obfuscate secondary dichotomies. Sexual duality is thus paralleled by a series of dichotomies, and such parallelism functions as a mutually supporting specularity. However, if the fe-/male protagonists are to be so clearly distinct from one another, often bearing “diametrically opposed and mutually exclusive” attributes [Altman 25], at some point (generally the end of the movie) there has to be a resolution of differences, otherwise the dichotomy between the two gendered protagonists may lead to a breach in social structuring. “These problematic dichotomies,” Altman observes, “are eventually resolved only when the resolution of the sexual duality (marriage) is used as a non-rational mediatory model for the attendant thematic oppositions, bringing together categories and individuals that seemed irreconcilably opposed” [26]. Although viewers of American musicals may gain the sense of social stability by means of a possible resolution to social contradictions or paradoxes [Altman 27], it is not the final resolution itself (the being together of the fe-/male protagonists) that actually matters to viewers. After all, moviegoers in the 1940s and 1950s were well acquainted with the happy ends of American musicals. “What then,” Altman wonders, “is the purpose of the stars’ first meeting” in a musical [19; emphasis in the original]?

For Altman, it is the resolution of their differences. I would suggest, however, that what matters is doing difference and doing style when performing difference. Doing difference, as West and Fenstermaker propose, is a sort of generic term for the interconnections and simultaneity in the ongoing interactional accomplishments of diverse categorical memberships (“Doing Difference”). From this viewpoint, the part that Carmen Miranda may play for us in the musical gender performative is more complex than what one might have initially thought. For one should see the “predetermined parts” that men and women alike played “in an already written scenario” [Altman 24] as an instance of the interconnection and simultaneity of the constant performances of constant gender and ethnic identities. Carmen Miranda’s appearance (both on Broadway stages and on

Hollywood screens) indeed articulates from the very beginning the doings of gender and ethnic identities. In *Down Argentine Way*, the first Hollywood musical in which Carmen Miranda performs, she first appears singing "South American Way" right after the opening credits and before a few shots of famous sites in Buenos Aires. Since the background against which she sings is a simple window, therefore offering no context to viewers, one might initially think that Carmen Miranda, not unlike the shots, functions as evidence of the authenticity with which Hollywood directors used Latin America as a setting for their films. As Ana M. López notes, these "real" shots of "real" Latin American places serve a legitimizing function, "testifying to the authenticity of the film's ethnographic and documentary work" [417]. Nonetheless, as the film narrative progresses we discover that Carmen Miranda is an entertainer in a nightclub in Buenos Aires and that the window (actually a door) which we see in the beginning of the movie is part of the setting for her performance.

Thus, since her first appearance in Hollywood musicals, Carmen Miranda does not constitute, after all, an evidence of authenticity, but rather a performer of ethnicity for both an Argentine audience and an American girl (diegetically) and an American audience that sees an American girl travel to a South American country with her aunt and see there a South American performer sing about South America (extradiegetically). There are in fact two instances in the film when the distinction between "real" and "fictive" Argentines, "authentic" and "inauthentic" performances is mocked. The second one, in terms of film narrative, is when in the scene of the village *fiesta* Ricardo Quintana, played by Don Ameche, tells Glenda Crawford, played by Betty Grable, that in that village she would find the "true Argentine," to which she responds by pointing out her aunt dancing among the crowd. The first instance, which interests me most here, is when Glenda asks her Argentine escort to compliment a couple who have just performed a "real hot conga," something you would not see in New York, as the escort puts it. To their surprise, the couple does not understand Spanish and informs them that they are from Syracuse, New York. As the music keeps on playing and the couples resume dancing, we hear laughter, as if Glenda were amused with their own naïveté. Perhaps there are, in fact, more Americans in the nightclub than one might have initially thought, for, as a response to the escort's comment I have just mentioned, we hear a chorus of voices that says "No." Are these the voices of Argentines who have already been to New York or of the New Yorkers who could hear the escort's commentary? It is obviously impossible to answer this question with certainty, but what matters is the insinuation and the fact that Glenda apparently laughs at the fact that she mistook American for Latin dancers. Moreover, could not the American spectators take this self-ironic laughter further and be amused with the fact that they themselves have mistaken Americans performing an Americanized style of the conga, in terms of both music and dance, for Latins performing a conga in the Latin style?

Although it is true that, as López suggests, "Hollywood does not represent ethnics and minorities," but rather "creates them and provides its audience with an experience of them" [405], one must note that this creation, within the Carmen Miranda musicals, takes the form of a self-conscious stylization of Latin America, on the part of both producers and consumers.

That is indeed quite evident in Bosley Crowther's review of *Weekend in Havana* (1941), published in *The New York Times*, where he explicitly points out that Hollywood's Havana, which viewers expect to see, is "motion-picture make-believe." The notion of constructedness, which one may read implicitly in Crowther's idea of motion-picture make-believe, may indeed be reproduced in the filmic experience. To this viewer, *The Gang's All Here* (1943) is, in this respect, a fine example. When Eadie, played by Alice Faye, sings "A Journey to a Star" for the first time in the movie, she and her courting partner are on a boat. So she asks him, when the music starts playing, if he can hear the orchestra, to which he replies that he does. He then asks her where it is coming from, to which she in turn says, "Where's your imagination?". This type of filmic meta-commentary plays precisely on the film producers' and consumers' notion of the constructedness of a film setting, including the ethnicity performative that Crowther alludes to in his Buenos Aireses, Rio de Janeiros, and Havanas.

One should not forget that, in many of the movies in which she performed, Carmen Miranda played a performer in nightclubs that cater precisely to foreign audiences, or at least to that foreign presence that the female protagonist embodies. These protagonists, as that of Betty Grable in *Down Argentine Way* or Alice Faye in *Weekend in Havana*, occupy, diegetically, the same position that the American public occupies extradiegetically: that of a tourist whose gaze is directed towards Hollywood's Latin America. As López notes, *Weekend in Havana* is a prototypical example of the visual representation of travel that appears in many of Carmen Miranda's movies, inasmuch as it shows "a window display promoting 'Sail to Romance' cruises featuring life-size cardboard cutouts of Carmen Miranda [she plays Rosita in the film] and a Latin band" [417]. That Carmen Miranda (or Rosita) should be a tourist attraction configures the form of consumption through which she, and the ethnicity performative that she enacts for the audience, should be seen. Since her costume could not be culturally associated with the social figure that she refashioned for Brazilian stages and screens, and which was later refashioned once again in America, her figure could only be seen as uprooted and somewhat untranslatable to Americans in all its different aspects.

Thus, in the song "Chica Chica Boom Chic," which appears in *That Night in Rio*, Don Ameche's character says that "it don't make sense the chica chica boom chic," and in *The Gang's All Here*, in which Carmen Miranda's character, Dorita, twists her English and thereby produces "a sign of her otherness as well as of the artificiality of all otherness" [López 419], James Ellison's character reacts to Dorita's statement "I must do some rehearsals" by making a face. In so doing, it is as if he were not only displeased with the fact that Dorita scolds him, but also saying that she did not make any sense, although he did, of course, understand what she meant. Senseless are indeed Carmen Miranda's language slips, her attire, her gestures, and facial expressions, that is, all that composes her characters. That does not mean to say, however, that the figure of Carmen Miranda is foreign to viewers because it is uprooted. On the contrary, rendering it insignificant is precisely what makes it culturally significant. For, if moviegoers in the 1940s were already acquainted with the *topos* of the exotic land

in Hollywood movies, Carmen Miranda's appearance constitutes precisely one of the moments when the spectators "encounter" the exotic. Not unlike tourism, the cinematic experience thus becomes an expected and wished-for encounter with the unfamiliar. Such a contradiction in terms is part of the uncanny side of that experience, a side that ultimately involves self-conscious stylization as well as self-parody.

As López points out, in Carmen Miranda's musicals the aural register "inflates the fetish, cracking its surface while simultaneously aggrandizing it" [419]. Through shifting registers of tone and pitch, Carmen Miranda engages in a process of "[t]ransforming, mixing, ridiculing, and redefining her own difference against the expected standards" [López 420], which viewers might see as simultaneously proposed and mocked in musicals. One should bear in mind here that, before starring in Hollywood musicals, Carmen Miranda had a long and successful career in Brazil as a singer, and that in many of the songs she recorded she displayed the ability to construct certain characters through the use of different accents, intonations, and variations of pitch.

Thus, in her Hollywood musicals she creates self-ironic nuances not only within the mother/foreign tongues distinction, as López notes [419], but also within all other dichotomous distinctions that seem to constitute musical *personae*. For instance, in the song "Paduca," which appears in *The Gang's All Here*, Benny Goodman's big-band-orchestra style of singing is followed by Carmen Miranda's pointy tone, at times creating a comic effect that is later taken to an extreme when, in the last verses, she increases the speed and tone in which she sings "Paduca, Paduca, Paduca." Musical sequence might suggest thus a series of possible parodic nuances. Is she undoing, with her tone and speed, the naïve romanticism of the lyrics and of Benny Goodman's interpretation of the song? Is she parodying herself and what she has just sung a few verses before? Or is she downplaying the stylization of the song as a Brazilian *chorinho*, which comes right after she finishes singing, as if she were, as Dibbell points out, "a reminder, too, of the unfortunate self-caricature any peripheral culture still must undergo in order to get noticed in America's central media market"?

Indeed, Carmen Miranda does get noticed in American musicals, often in a caricatured or self-parodic form. In *The Gang's All Here*, for example, when Dorita, played by Carmen Miranda, arrives at a businessman's mansion, his wife remarks, alluding to Dorita's clothes, "I'll have to watch my bell cords and lampshades." Later Dorita repeats this remark when she sings "The Lady in the Tutti Fruti Hat," which begins with the verses: "I wonder why does everybody look at me? And then begins to talk about a Christmas tree." Similarly, when Dorita hides Andy's picture behind another one, so that Eadie, played by Alice Faye, would not know that her sweetheart was already engaged to be married with Vivian, played by Sheila Ryan, Eadie calls Dorita's action a "trick." But what Eadie then calls Dorita's "trick" is more properly named "clowning" by Vivian.

Not unlike the ethnic performative, Carmen Miranda's musical gender performative also constitutes a clowning, a form of doing gender that translates the untranslatable by excessively doing a style of excess. In both *Weekend in Havana* and *The Gang's All Here*, Carmen Miranda performs

a “hot,” aggressive woman of a type that is for the most part incomprehensible to American men (or at least to the American men as they are performed in the film) to the point that it functions either as a turnoff for the American male character whom she attempts to seduce or as a disturbing sexual element. Under the influence of Carmen Miranda’s sexuality, the American man becomes socially unrecognizable. In *The Gang’s All Here*, for example, there is a scene when Mr. Potter, an American businessman played by Edward Everett Horton, is sexually aroused by Dorita’s kisses. He is, to his own surprise, transformed, as if she had awakened in him a masculine aggressiveness, an awakening that he points out by showing her the picture of a feline hunting a gazelle. The scene, however, is interrupted by the appearance of Mrs. Potter, which functions much to Dorita’s advantage, since she was taken aback by Mr. Potter’s surprising transformation.

Given that, as López so aptly notes, Carmen Miranda’s characters often operate within “the permanent never-never land of prolonged and unconsummated engagements” [418], Mr. Potter’s arousal could only be a temporary one. Rather than being re-signified as a form of social structuring through love or marriage, Carmen Miranda’s performance of sexuality must be “diffused, spent in gesture, innuendo, and salacious commentary” [López 418], and its potential threat transposed to the stage so as to be dissipated “by its sheer visual and narrative excess” [420].

Is it possible that, due to the exaggeration and outlandishness of her Hollywood figure, Carmen Miranda represents an awry look into style? And, if that is the case, could one say that such style is, more specifically, a borderline meta-style, situated between non-style and style? To judge from the other characters’ impressions of Carmen Miranda’s characters, one might say that the uprootedness, the untranslatability, and the self-parody that inform Miranda’s doings of ethnicity and gender, underscore the doing of style to such a degree that it becomes this diffusion into excess.

In no other film is that so evident as in *The Gang’s All Here*, where, as Julian Dibbell rightly points out, one sees “an Amazon River of bananas flowing heavenward, shrinking her to a doll-like appendage of its excess.” Thus, from a stylistic point of view one would have to correct the characters’ perception of Dorita in the film, for the Hollywood Carmen Miranda’s doings of social memberships are neither tricks nor clownings, but rather drags, in the general sense of the term. As Dibbell notes, drag is “the use of costume to identify (impossibly and effortlessly) with the Other.” What is impossible and effortless here is precisely the ontology of a gender or ethnic identity, which can only be transposed culturally by means of doings or performances. In Solberg’s documentary *Bananas Is My Business*, what we see is a man, in drag, apparently exaggerating Miranda’s exaggerations. In the scene in which Carmen Miranda’s death is enacted, Barreto slightly slants one of his feet inwards, as if he were performing femininity and at the same time exposing style through its embodiment.

If we take Barreto’s act as an accurate enactment of gender (but also as an accurate en-gendering of an act), one may say, like Dibbell, that “we can make identity our plaything and get away with it—if we’re lucky. And

Carmen wishes us luck." Indeed she does. With her busy hands, lips, hips, lips, hats.

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